

Dumbed Down and Dumber

by doug - NYT *Saturday, Oct 4 2014, 5:07am*

international / prose / post

There appears to be some very sinister goings-on at The New Times these days. A friend linked me a recent article in the NYT, titled, "The Cult Deficit," which one would think, would be an analysis of the subject indicated by the title -- but no such thing; it turns out to be a flimsily veiled propaganda piece 'apologising' for widespread social ignorance, lack of social/global awareness and the deficit in intellectual ability that American culture suffers from today.

I shall only refer to certain paragraphs in the article and repost it in its entirety below in order for you to read and to determine for yourself what the subtextual message/s are.

Here are a few extracts (not in order of appearance) for you to digest prior to reading the piece, should you choose to continue:

"Perhaps the sacrifice is worth it, and a little intellectual stagnation is a reasonable price to pay for fewer cults and Communists."

An innocuous enough sentence at first glance, however, it carries some secondary messages not the least of which is transmitted by the reference to the once universal American 'crowd manager,' the 'Communists under the bed' scare tactic which kept the population on constant fear alert and under tight social control prior to the 'Bin Laden/terrorist' replacement since the collapse of Communism! It should also be noted that the piece pretends that cults are a thing of the past notwithstanding the abundant number of far more destructive cults today -- what is ISIS if not a fascist, militaristic, murderous religious cult, and that is only one of many in a particular religious subcategory?

"But today, ... fewer Americans "take unorthodox ideas seriously," and while this has clear upsides -- "fewer crazy cults" -- it may also be a sign that "we have given up our sense of wonder at secrets left to be discovered."

Consider the following treatment:

'But today ... fewer Americans "take unorthodox ideas seriously," [Or today, fewer Americans have the courage to assert their opinions and preserve hard won (now surrendered) social rights, liberties and freedoms, as they have been terrorised into subjugation by a sinister elite that finds expression through elitist organisations such as the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and its mass media agenda. Today the privately owned, America mass media produces a constant stream of repetitive 'mis and dis-information.' designed to obfuscate, misinform and terrorise the population in order for the 'military/surveillance complex' to expand and sustain its sweeping new powers over western culture/s today.]

'Communists under the bed' have been replaced, to great success, with manufactured for the task, Jihadists and other Islamic terrorist groups that are 'now' able to appropriate huge swathes of territory from nations in the Middle East -- my favourite group is jack-in-the-box IS/ISIS that popped up fully formed and functional to conquer, kill and behead anyone that gets in their way. ISIS' timing

couldn't have been more in tune with America's latest strategy to carve up Syria, Iraq and other nations in the Middle East! ISIS also seems to have a penchant for mass media presentations, we note the large convoy of similar model [Toyotas](#) proceeding through the desert and the regular beheading videos.

Would it be presumptuous to claim that ISIS' appearance and the American agenda are too closely synchronised for there to be any doubt about the tight relationship between Washington and ISIS -- either directly or indirectly -- via Saudi, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey and Israel, which supplied hospital beds for wounded ISIS fighters in Tel Aviv! I'm not even going to mention the USS Liberty or the three Mossad agents arrested dancing and cheering in New York while the Twin Towers were collapsing -- another superb demolition job as any honest professional in the field would inform you! But I digress, suffice to say at this stage that the article in question is more soft propaganda and apologetics in nature than anything else -- 'we're so grateful and lucky to be misinformed, kept ignorant and terrorised/managed by a sociopathic, homicidal globalist cabal hell bent on the futile 'megalo' pursuit of global domination.

“... whole swaths of political, ideological and religious terrain that fascinated earlier generations have been mostly written off in ours.”

The facts are directly opposite to that stated above; it is abundantly clear that the number of political, ideological and religious extremist groups are on the rise compared to earlier periods in history. The difference is the social awareness/mobility of the past compared to the mis-informed, contained, oppressive cultures of today.

I would conclude by stating that the article uses total fictions and misleading information to soft-sell that 'we're all better off living in dumbed down and terrorised, American style police State societies and that the price of pan-surveillance/containment, as Madame Albright once infamously said, "is worth it!"

Article from the NYT follows:

The Cult Deficit

by Ross Douthat

LIKE most children of the Reagan era, I grew up with a steady diet of media warnings about the perils of religious cults — the gurus who lurked in wait for the unwary and confused, offering absolute certainty with the aftertaste of poisoned Kool-Aid. From the 1970s through the 1990s, from Jonestown to Heaven's Gate, frightening fringe groups and their charismatic leaders seemed like an essential element of the American religious landscape.

Yet we don't hear nearly as much about them anymore, and it isn't just that the media have moved on. Some strange experiments have aged into respectability, some sinister ones still flourish, but over all the cult phenomenon feels increasingly antique, like lava lamps and bell bottoms. Spiritual gurus still flourish in our era, of course, but they are generally comforting, vapid, safe — a Joel Osteen rather than a Jim Jones, a Deepak Chopra rather than a David Koresh.

Twice in the last few months I've encountered writers taking note of this shift, and both have made a similar (and provocative) point: The decline of cults, while good news for

anxious parents of potential devotees, might actually be a worrying sign for Western culture, an indicator not only of religious stagnation but of declining creativity writ large.

The first writer is Philip Jenkins, a prolific religious historian, who argues that the decline in “the number and scale of controversial fringe sects” is both “genuine and epochal,” and something that should worry more mainstream religious believers rather than comfort them. A wild fringe, he suggests, is often a sign of a healthy, vital center, and a religious culture that lacks for charismatic weirdos may lack “a solid core of spiritual activism and inquiry” as well.

The second writer is Peter Thiel, the PayPal co-founder, venture capitalist and controversialist, who includes an interesting aside about the decline of cults in his new book, “Zero to One” — officially a book of advice to would-be entrepreneurs, but really a treatise on escaping what he regards as the developed world’s 40-year economic, technological and cultural malaise.

The implications of Jenkins’s argument are specific to religion. Cults can be dangerous, even murderous, but they can also be mistreated and misjudged (as Koresh’s followers were, with fatal consequences); moreover, spiritual experiments led by the charismatic and the zealous are essential to religious creativity and fruitful change. From the Franciscans to the Jesuits, groups that looked cultlike to their critics have repeatedly revitalized the Catholic Church, and a similar story can be told about the role of charismatic visionaries in the American experience. (The enduring influence of one of the 19th century’s most despised and feared religious movements, for instance, is the reason the state of Utah now leads the United States on many social indicators.)

Thiel’s argument is broader: Not only religious vitality but the entirety of human innovation, he argues, depends on the belief that there are major secrets left to be uncovered, insights that existing institutions have failed to unlock (or perhaps forgotten), better ways of living that a small group might successfully embrace.

This means that every transformative business enterprise, every radical political movement, every truly innovative project contains some cultish elements and impulses — and the decline of those impulses may be a sign that the innovative spirit itself is on the wane. When “people were more open to the idea that not all knowledge was widely known,” Thiel writes, there was more interest in groups that claimed access to some secret knowledge, or offered some revolutionary vision. But today, many fewer Americans “take unorthodox ideas seriously,” and while this has clear upsides — “fewer crazy cults” — it may also be a sign that “we have given up our sense of wonder at secrets left to be discovered.”

Thiel’s view of our overall situation is hotly contested, not surprisingly, on his own Silicon Valley turf. The Internet is cluttered with debates (some friendly, some less so) between Thiel and his peers over whether innovation has actually slowed down, whether recent technological progress is actually as disappointing as he frequently suggests.

But in the intellectual realm, the stagnation he identifies seems readily apparent, since whole swaths of political, ideological and religious terrain that fascinated earlier generations have been mostly written off in ours. As Mark Lilla noted in a recent *New Republic* essay, it’s not just that alternatives — reactionary, radical, religious — to

managerial capitalism and social liberalism are no longer much embraced; it's that our best and brightest no longer seem to have any sense of why anyone ever found alternatives worth exploring in the first place.

Perhaps the sacrifice is worth it, and a little intellectual stagnation is a reasonable price to pay for fewer cults and Communists.

Or maybe the quest for [elitist] secrets — material or metaphysical, undiscovered or too-long forgotten — is worth a little extra risk.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/opinion/sunday/ross-douthat-the-cult-deficit.html>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-1297.html>