

Daily Meditation 2-2-26

More Lessons From Soviet Occupation Re Government Violence in Minneapolis

Good morning.

I'm grateful to Adam Bucko for the excellent articles that he encouraged me to share with you in the Saturday Daily Meditation, and in this morning's on Monday. He did such a fine job of presenting his experience of state terror that he went through as a boy in Poland, under the Iron Fist of the Soviets.

And he brings in, of course, the dimension of contemplation. And all contemplation is not a flight from struggle, but a way to enter more deeply into it, by developing what Eckhart called that solitude, that inner solitude that we carry with us, wherever we are, whether in battle or in joy.

I'd like to share with you today an article that I highly recommend, that you can find yourself. It's called *How to Deprogram the Cult of MAGA*. How to deprogram the cult of MAGA, and it is an interview that appeared on a program called *The Left Hook*. The Left hook is a Substack. It's just thelefthook@substack.com, entitled *A Cult Expert Explains How to Deprogram the Cult of MAGA*. The person being interviewed is named Dr. Steven Hassan, H, A S, S, A N. He wrote a book a few years ago, called *The Cult of Trump: A Leading Cult Expert Explains How the President Uses Mind Control*.

Now, Stephen Hassan's background is very interesting. When he was 19 years old and he was a practicing Jewish young man, he joined the cult, not knowing it was a cult, of Moon, the Unification religion, emerging from South Korea. He was a Moonie for two and a half years. And he said that he was brainwashed and deceived and preyed upon by Mr. Moon, and he was so committed to Moon that he, quote, "was ready to kill or die for him," unquote. It was a serious thing. And he says that thankfully, his loving family intervened, and refused to give up on him. And when they did intervene, and he woke up to what was happening to him, he committed his life to exploring this process by which people become programmed, and how to deprogram individuals who have been victims of cult behavior, which includes insidious brainwashing and hero worship and being divorced from reality and facts and even their own family.

I might add, that I think Opus Dei employs these very same methods, certainly the part about separating you from your own family. And as he points out, January 6, 2021,

thousands of MAGA supporters participated in a violent insurrection, because they believed the lies of their leader, Donald Trump. And today, a majority of GOP voters still believe this Big Lie.

Now, Hassan was invited about 10 years ago to speak in Aspen about how ISIS uses propaganda, and gains recruits that way. So ISIS, too is a cult in that regard. And he wrote his book on *The Cult of Trump* in 2019, and he thinks it's even more relevant today in 2026 than it was back then. And he points out how many corporations, including tech companies, have bent their knee in this country, and that something parallel is happening in parts of Europe today.

But he says, *The world witnessed this during Nazi Germany as well. What will happen after Trump dies? What happens when the fever breaks? Is it possible to deprogram millions of Trump followers, including Congresspeople, at all?*

And that's what's really interesting about this interview that I recommend you see for yourself. But I'll I will share with you, I took notes on it, I hope I can read them. I'm not the most careful with my penmanship. I'll share with you a few of the strong points that struck me. He says that a cult can be violent. See, he went on and got a doctorate in psychology and so forth, but his specialty was examining what really goes on in the brain of people who submit to cult worship. That fascism itself is a cult, and it was in Germany in the 1930s, and it can be, and is today, in America. How do you deprogram Americans from this form of psychosis?

He says that there was a line that was repeated by the Moonies when he was there. Quote, "God hates democracy." God hates democracy. And it was not just uneducated people, it was people with degrees and so forth, who participated. Of course, that happened very much so in Germany too, that the universities, great numbers in universities, of professors and others, went along with the spirit in the milieu that was building around the lies that Hitler was spreading. "Brainwashing is a big part of the whole experience," he says. "Minds become hijacked." And Mr. Moon was part of that, and creating himself as a Messiah.

And they worked him very hard when he was member of the Moonies: 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Sounds very much like an Opus Dei practice as well. And there was a link between the Korean CIA of the day and the Moonies. So it was political as well as ostensibly being religious. He says that his book on Trump has held up, that he got it right back then, and it's even more visible and clear today.

Now, one of the terms that he brings up comes from Eric Fromm, the great psychologist, who, of course, came out of the Holocaust experience, being Jewish himself. And Fromm came up with the term malignant narcissism. Malignant narcissism, that this term for him is nearest you can get to summarizing what drove Hitler and people like him: malignant narcissism.

Now, there have been studies of that since Eric Fromm passed on. There was a whole book called *Malignant Narcissism: Recognizing a Dangerous Disorder*. And they say that *intrinsic to this pathology, the largest concern about malignant narcissists is that some have the ability and wherewithal to rise to great positions of power and influence to affect large numbers of people*. And while there are everyday narcissists, and plenty of them around — and perhaps we're all tempted at times toward that kind of egoism and selfishness — the malignant narcissist is the extreme example of narcissism, that includes sadism and lack of empathy. And I might add that some of Trump's closest advisors, such as Elon Musk, put down empathy. Musk has said that "empathy is killing Western civilization."

So the key to challenging this experience of attachment, says Steve Hassan, is not to go about it directly, but to bring up these other examples, and get into conversation with MAGA people about what they think of the malignant narcissism of people like Hitler and so forth. There are many examples in history. You get them to talk that way, because it is a brain thing. He says, the brain gets physically attached to the narcissistic malignancy, and so you don't deal with it directly. You can't do that; calling Trump names or something like that, does not work. But to get people to think about others that way, they kind of step out of their current mind state. And then in conversation, they get more aware that they have been seduced, that they're living in a prison, that their mind has been hijacked.

This is how he was deprogrammed, if you will: how he woke up one day when his parents kept up their relationship with him, were able to talk about things with him. He woke up one day and realized that he had shut down his mind, and his mind had been hijacked by the Moonies.

So again, I recommend you look at his book, or you look at this long interview, it's an hour interview, very solid. And I think, extremely pertinent to the moment in which we are living.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.