# Swallowing Up the Competition: Culture Disease with a Cure

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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When Nestlé buys mineral water companies and mass markets the "product" in plastic, solely for fantastic profits, this trend cannot be reversed by laws. Laws against wrongdoing and greed at the top are hard to pass and harder to enforce. "Owning" watersheds was so foreign to the native Americans that the European invaders reaped an advantage we can call the warped mind disengaged from heart. Yet, in the long run, which culture is sustainable? Only one of them respects natural laws that, among a few other basics, revere water as the source of life for all.

An opposing reaction to industrial take-over, if it isn't to be hopelessly piecemeal, comes down to a cultural change. This is much more rare and systemic than reforms. "Difficult" isn't quite the right word, but "inevitable" must be, when culture change encompasses and assures so much.

When the big entities take over the small and the good, and when big-that's-bad becomes known as good, what kind of a world do we have when bad is good and good is bad? Orwellian and most unstable.

Condoning this is acceptance of the supposed just course of Western Civilization. But some of us cannot continue to revel in modernity, such as the often questionable wonders of technology and other features of anthropocentric culture. It all goes together: the lifestyle of consuming, enjoying endless convenience, amenities for entertainment and transitory pleasure, individual isolation and alienation (part of divide and conquer) -- and the drive to extinction.

Either you can get behind this news or you cannot: "U.S. Corporate Profits Hit Record in Third Quarter" (New York Times, Nov. 23). More and more people cannot stomach it, even when such news seemingly negates concerns over peak oil, climate destabilization, and infinite funny-money from Wall Street and the Federal Reserve. You have opinions and may be alarmed, but what say do you have?

The choice is to keep your head down, hoping the trough is kept full enough for the growing number of mouths, or, stand aside in resistance, picking up acorns or diving in dumpsters. I have personally tended toward the latter. Truth is sustenance. Oh, and send money of course.

Can the resisters be swallowed up like the business competition has been? Yes, swallowing up or buying off is a prime tool of the Establishment. There are many other means that range in severity and overtness. Given this winnowing out of the competition (not so much of business but of minds), the hope for mass change is for a critical mass of participants. The first purpose of the Establishment is to discourage this. Maintaining the power structure, as it pushes life over the ecological cliff and whips our hard-working backs in the process -- playing with our minds with images of sex and wealth -- is the name of the game from the top on down.

The most effective swallowing up of the competition has been corporate media consolidation in the last couple of decades. Gotta love that Democrat, Bubba Slick Willy. Six entities now own almost every major outlet in the U.S.; this reaches abroad. The independent outlets claiming to represent the taxpayer have dubious names for their acronyms: NPR is called National Propaganda Radio and PBS is the Petroleum Broadcasting System. As children in the U.S. we were taught that freedom of the press and of free speech is perhaps the main foundation of our democracy. But we've lost it, and carry on somewhat aimlessly to the cliff. We march like sheep, if sheep could march, hearing the megaphone of the corporate state's message: "Fear terrorists! You get to vote! Freedom is to shop as dutiful workers! Tough luck for the poor and sick, we're the greatest nation! Don't worry about the environmental crisis when we'll always have technological progress!"

Those of us with a radical critique -- whether bitter foes of the system and/or the positive-sounding activists -- don't have a loud alternative megaphone. The cost of magazine production and distribution, and paper from trees, went up and up so that the ownership of a printing press -- defined wryly as enabling a true, free press -- has become almost completely impractical. The advantages of a magazine in one's hand, over electronic screens, include low-tech access, tactile experience, low-cost and efficient sharing, and inserting scents (although only done by corporate purveyors of petrochemicals).

When left-brain approaches to opposing the false values of our artificial world don't get traction -- i.e., by forming a growing movement -- and are dependent on money and other rules of the dominant game, it must be time for a new day of the right-hemisphere of the brain. This means our hearts participate with our minds to find and offer the true path for humanity and the survival of species. There is not one "true path," but can we agree on sustainability and mutual respect while sharing a finite planet?

Art, music, street theater, and joyful rejection of globalism and consumption promise everything. They even deliver it. I have proposed a strategy several times publicly for many years: if enough people don't buy new cars, and just buy used ones if they must, this will keep money local and starve the corporate economy within months, so as to bring it to its knees. Yes, jobs will be lost -- as they will anyway as petrocollapse intensifies. But with more mutual aid and focus, we can hasten and maximize the meaningful work needed globally for resilient neighborhoods and self-reliant communities.

Let's say we don't try to achieve it until forced by collapse. But if things somehow go in a better direction, even local autonomy can be regained in far greater measure (if that has appeal). With industrialism as well as its habit of swallowing up coming to an historic end, we may reconnect intimately with the interdependent and balanced universe that appears to want to be our friend (we're alive, right?). May you tread upon this path with loved ones and with joy and good health.

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