

# THE DARK ENLIGHTENMENT

America is no longer **democracy**.



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The government has been captured.

**The Dark Enlightenment** is a school of thought that believes the only way to make things better, is by **formalizing** that capture.

The difference between kingdoms and democracies, according to Dark Enlightenment thinkers, is that kingdoms own people and land as property – while democratic rulers only have temporary usage of them. This leads to “temporary caretakers” of democracies who engage in short-sighted exploitation – in contrast to kings, who invest in their property at least.

Seeing beyond kingdoms and democracies, Dark Enlightenment thinkers offer a different arrangement – a corporate state. The corporate state would neither own nor have rights over residents, but treat them as **customers**, with all of the monopolistic powers of a state today. Dark Enlightenment thinkers argue this would lead to more effective services, as a corporation provides.

To formalize the government capture, the thinkers would first identify those who hold political capital – the people who receive bribes for political favors. Based on the cost of those bribes and political favors, insiders would be given according shares in a corporate state, reflecting the power structure today. Ordinary people who get “bribed” for their votes would also receive shares – though, in comparison, their holdings would be miniscule.

Once the shareholders of this corporate state are established, they would vote on a CEO for the **gov-corp** and begin rational corporate governance of the state. The CEO would have an explicit and transparent mandate to maximize value for shareholders. This is implicitly the goal of American democracy already – maximizing value for political insiders, along with the monied interests who hold capital. Formalizing this, according to Dark Enlightenment thinkers, would improve the governance and operations.

**Gov-corp** would concentrate on running an efficient, attractive, clean, and secure country, of a kind that is able to draw residents/clients. There would no longer be a need for residents to take any interest in politics whatsoever. In fact, to do so would be to exhibit semi-criminal proclivities. If gov-corp didn’t deliver acceptable value for its taxes, residents could notify its customer service function, and take their lives elsewhere. No voice, but free exit.

Dark Enlightenment thinkers, among them Peter Thiel and J.D. Vance, argue this would be like cities Singapore and Hong Kong.

High standard of living, high personal and economic freedoms, with little-to-no political freedom.

And this is all a compelling argument. America is no longer a democracy. The state's purpose presumably is, and always has been, to serve the interests of those who own political power.

But is all we can do make that system more ... *formal*? Transparent? To align the incentives, and run plutocracy more ... efficiently?

Or is there another possibility for our world?

... **Dark Enlightenment thinkers**, under all, subscribe to Hobbes' theories of violence and the state.

In the 1600s, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes argued that before the state, all men were enemies to one another. In a world with no overriding authority, the only way to resolve conflicts was through violence.

It isn't clear what evidence Hobbes was basing his theories on, because looking at relations in the natural world and societies all around us, we see a very different story.

But instead of starting from history or the world we live in, Hobbes began by *imagining* what life would be like without a state – and called this “the state of nature.” He believed this would be a world where every individual had a right to everything, which would lead to a war of all against all. This quote from Hobbes is one of the best known passages in English philosophy:

*In such condition (the state of nature), there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, **solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.***

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Chapter XIII.: Of the Natural Condition of Mankind As Concerning Their Felicity, and Misery.)

If we're just imagining a world where millions of people *pop* into existence, this may make sense.

But that's not history. We were always here, living together, for millions of years. From the non-human world to human societies, we can see Hobbes' state of nature – underpinning the whole Dark Enlightenment – is far from reality.

Peter Kropotkin, a prince who fled the Russian noble family and prison to live with working communities, summarized many such histories in his 1902 essay, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Seeking to reject "social darwinism", an idea that mistook Darwin's theory of evolution to be about individual survival, Kropotkin demonstrated a *social* and *cooperative* theory of evolution.

Kropotkin shows this through ants, birds, coyotes, deers, and animals of all kinds: "sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle." And beyond the more-than-human world, Kropotkin shows this to be true throughout human history and societies as well – from regions, continents, and cultures all around the world.

Dark Enlightenment thinker Curtis Yarvin asks: **"What is the evidence for fraternism?"**

Kropotkin gives the answers.

In the human world, Kropotkin begins with a survey of clan structures. Groups of people with a common ancestry and language, living on a common territory, where they hold self-jurisdiction and administration over their affairs.

Decisions in clans would be (and are) made by a gathering of the people, discussion until everyone in the clan consents or refuses to object. In some cultures, chiefs or temporary rulers are selected from the community, to represent the clans in various affairs, including outside conflicts and matters of defense. Disputes within clans would be resolved in a similar way – people coming together, and deciding together what judgment is fair, with the *utmost interest* in preserving justice. If a person feels they have been treated unfairly, it could cast a bad spirit over the entire clan. If a person defects from the clan to join another over such unfairness or injustice, it could be one of the clan's greatest shames.

Judgements, with an interest of fairness, were often based on "an eye for an eye" – an equal amount of bloodshed for an equal amount of bloodshed, an equal amount of material compensation for a loss caused – both for conflicts within clans, and disputes between

opposing clans. This did not come from an interest in violence. Rather, it came from an interest in peace. To make a fair judgment meant a satisfactory ending to the conflict for all parties, with no more violence or bloodshed than strictly necessary. If the judgment went too far, it meant the conflict could continue and get even worse. This form of justice was a key matter for clans – a matter that continues to this day.

In addition to commonly held territory, goods and tools were also often held in common in clans. No one went hungry as long as another had food. In some cultures, any items collected by a person over their life would be buried with them, to mitigate accumulation of wealth over generations. In others, if private property did become an institution (often brought via interactions with other cultures), when a person or group amassed a great sum of wealth, they would give it all away.

*When a man has grown rich, he convokes the folk of his clan to a great festival, and after much eating, distributes among them all his fortune. On the Yukon river [near Alaska], Dall saw an Aleonte family distributing in this way ten guns, ten full fur dresses, 200 strings of beads, numerous blankets, ten wolf furs, 200 beavers, and 500 zibelines. After that they took off their festival dresses, gave them away, and putting on old ragged furs, addressed a few words to their kinsfolk, saying **though they are now poorer than any one of them, they have won their friendship.***

– Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (p. 82)

Over time, however, certain factors arose that led to “separate families” within clans. Sometimes this was due to a spouse, taken from a different clan, and thus outside the matrilineal customs. Sometimes it was due to migrations and conflicts. In any case, as these “separate families” arose within clans – marked by their patriarchal structure, an accumulation of wealth and property, and hereditary transmission of private property – separate families tended to cause the disintegration of clans, which presented a new challenge.

Separated families could now choose to live on in a loose agglomeration in the region – in which case, the families that held the most wealth and power would have authority over all the others. Or, the separate families could find a new way to organize, and survive the threats around them – ongoing migration, conflicts, natural disasters, war.

This was the emergence of **the village community**.

In some places and contexts, separate families from disintegrated clans united together into **village communities**. Village communities lived on commonly held land, with communal self-jurisdiction – while also acknowledging the independence of families, and not interfering in different family enclosures.

In some communities, individual families owned property, though even this – tools, cattle, even structures – was limited to “movable property.” The land itself was held in common, and could never be owned. At most, it would be divided into lots, for different families to tend for a certain number of years.

This is similar to the housing model in Singapore, where houses are owned by the state – instead of buying properties, people will purchase 99-year leases on them. It's unclear whether a corporation state, maximizing value for its shareholders, would refuse selling property to the highest bidder ... and if Dark Enlightenment ideas, about high standard of living and economic freedom in places like Singapore, could work without such communal institutions.

Back to the story:

Common works in village communities, such as hunts, agriculture, irrigation, harvests, and public works, were also decided upon and completed in common. There may have been richer and poorer families – but like with clans, there were strong customs to ensure that all were treated fairly, and all received what they needed to survive.

***“Don't say that you will never wear the beggar's bag, nor go to prison,”*** is a proverb of Russian peasants. The Kabyles of Algeria practice it.

*The Kabyles consider poverty an accident which may visit every one, and no difference can be detected in the external behavior between rich and poor.*

*When the poor convokes an “aid”, the rich man works in his field, just as the poor man does it reciprocally in his turn. Many like customs continue to exist. Mutual support permeates the life of the Kabyles.*

*During the famine of 1867-68, the Kabyles received and fed every one who sought refuge in their villages, without*

*distinction of origin. While people died from starvation all over Algeria, there was not one single case of death due to this cause on Kablyian soil. While the European settlers took all kinds of police measures to prevent thefts and disorder resulting from an influx of strangers, nothing of the kind was needed on the Kabyles' territory – their village communities needed neither aid nor protection.*

– Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (p. 115-116)

Clans and village communities like these were “universes in themselves.” In communities like the Kabyles, there was also room for initiatives and associations – like crafts, interests, hobbies – which became a way of building bonds between families, and between different communities as well.

This life was no monarchy. These were communities living on common territory, exercising sovereignty over their affairs in common, and surviving together, with strong bonds between them.

This form of organization was also a powerful defense against outside forces, who were amassing wealth and power and aiming to conscript villages into serfdoms. Those families that had broken from clans and failed to form village communities were more vulnerable to conquest.

Village communities and clans greatly preferred peace to war. Especially after the fall of the Roman Empire, they preferred peaceful agricultural work to battle – so they left matters of defense and protection to “armed brotherhoods” – roving associations of men, specialized in the arts of combat. The village communities contracted them for defense alone, and tolerated them only so long as they respected the peace.

This arrangement meant that defense became a profitable trade, and over time, armed brotherhoods were able to amass significant wealth and power. In an era of conflicts and violent migrations and natural disasters – which would sometimes result in families losing everything – the armed brotherhoods could then offer loans of land or cattle or seed to help people start all over. If those people ever fell behind on re-paying, they would end up in servile obligations to the armed brothers – allowing the militia class to accumulate further wealth and power. Still, underscoring their preference for peace, village communities even tolerated this arrangement – preferring subjugated toil to violence and blood-shed.

This desire for peace was arguably even more instrumental in the rise of states than wealth and military power – even explaining the rise of the Christian clergy, who first found prominence as “sentence-finders” for conflicts between village communities.

Christian clergymen were renowned for judgements that went above retaliation and “an eye for an eye”, – which was desirable, as a peaceful way of resolving disputes. Christian churches even developed a reputation as asylums, for people who were fleeing more violent sentences and blood revenge.

Like the armed brotherhoods, this role of “sentence-finder” was well compensated – another investment in peace. And even though the best sentence-finders would become renowned, their role was still limited to that – sentences over disputes brought before them. This was not rule or authority of any kind, which still belonged to the communities themselves – even under oppressive debts, they had refused to give up their sovereignty.

But over time, the wealth and power of the sentence-finders grew further – often building castles for themselves, alongside with the armed brotherhoods.

This was the beginning of feudalism in Europe – allowing these lords to consolidate power over the village communities, and enscript them into serfodms. All born from the utmost desire, and investment, from those communities to keep the peace.

But even then, the village communities still refused to relinquish their sovereignty.

*In all matters concerning the community's domain, the folkmote retained its supremacy and often claimed submission from the lord himself in land tenure matters. No growth of feudalism could break this resistance; the village community kept its ground.*

*And when, in the ninth and tenth centuries, the invasions of the Normans, the Arabs, and the Ugrians had demonstrated that military power of feudal lords were of little value for protecting the land, a general movement began all over Europe for fortifying the villages with stone walls and citadels.*

*Thousands of fortified centers were then built by the energies of the village communities; and once they had built their walls, once a common interest had been created in this new*



*sanctuary – the town walls – they soon understood that they could henceforward resist the encroachments of the inner enemies, the lords, as well as the invasions of foreigners. A new life of freedom began to develop within the fortified enclosures. The medieval city was born.*

*... No period of history could better illustrate the constructive powers of the popular masses than the tenth and eleventh centuries, when the fortified villages and market-places, representing so many "oases amidst the feudal forest," began to free themselves from their lord's yoke, and slowly elaborated the future city organization.*

This pendulum – communities facing external pressures, only to re-combine in new configurations for self-jurisdiction and tenure over their territory – went back and forth for the next thousand years, and still, is a pendulum we find ourselves on today.

As villages began to "free themselves from the lords' yoke", they joined together, and built fortified castle walls around them for protection, and chose defenders from among the community to take charge of defense and protect their rights. Together, these developments were a successful defense against centuries of external attacks and invasions to come – which allowed life within those cities to flourish, and notably, with the guilds.

*We know of guilds among all possible professions: guilds of serfs, guilds of freemen, guilds of both serfs and freemen; guilds called into life for the special purpose of hunting, fishing, or a trading expedition, and dissolved when the special purpose had been achieved; and guilds lasting for centuries in a given craft or trade. We also see guilds of priests, painters, teachers of primary schools and universities, guilds for performing the passion play, for building a church, or for special recreation – even guilds among beggars, executioners, "lost women", all organized on the same double principle of self-jurisdiction and mutual support.*

*Nothing illustrates better these medieval brotherhoods than the temporary guilds formed on board ships. All men on board – rich and poor, masters and crew, captains and sailors – agreed to be equals in their mutual relations, to be simply men, bound to aid each other and to settle their possible disputes before judges elected by all of them. So also when a number of craftsmen came together for a building or cathedral, and whenever a group of men – fishermen, hunters, travelling*

merchants, builders, or settled craftsmen – came together for a common pursuit.

Such were the leading ideas of those brotherhoods which gradually covered the whole of medieval life.

If a brother's house is burned, all the brethren must come to his aid. After his death, they must provide for his children if necessary: very often the widow becomes a sister to the guild.

The members treated each other as, and named each other, brother and sister – all were equal before the guild. They owned some property in common. They abandoned old feuds, and agreed that future quarrels should never become feuds or taken in the jurisdiction of a court beyond their own.

If the institution of the guild has lived thousands of years, reappearing again and again when similar conditions called it into existence, it is because it was more than an eating association, or for going to church on a certain day, or a burial club. It answered to a deep inrooted want of human nature; and it embodied all the attributes which the State appropriated later on for its bureaucracy and police. It was an association for mutual support in all circumstances and in all accidents of life, and it was an organization for maintaining justice – with this difference from the State, that on all these occasions a humane, brotherly element was introduced in the judgment. Even when appearing before the guild tribunal, the guild-brother answered before men who knew him well and stood by him before in their daily work, men who were his equals and brethren, not theorists of law nor defenders of someone else's interests.

– Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*  
(p. 132-137)

This was also a time when, unsurprisingly, workers were paid perhaps the highest in history –

Even in the fifteenth century, a mason, a carpenter, or a smith worker would be paid forty-eight pounds of bread a day, or 1/8th of a small ox. In Saxony, a builder could buy with his six days' wages three sheep and one pair of shoes. The more we learn about the medieval city, the more we are convinced that at no time has labour enjoyed such conditions of prosperity and such respect.

*We are laughed at when we say that work must be pleasant, but a medieval Kuttenger ordinance said, "every one must be pleased with his work" ... "and no one shall, while doing nothing, appropriate for himself what others have produced by application and work."*

*The workmen worked only forty-eight hours a week. And although school meals did not exist – probably because no children went hungry to school – a distribution of bath-money to the children whose parents found difficulty was habitual in several places.*

*– Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (p. 150-151)*

Despite the flourishing of guilds and associations, and the prosperity for those within them, all was not well in these times.

*In reality, the medieval city was a fortified oasis amidst a country plunged into feudal submission, and it had to make room for itself by the force of its arms.*

Beyond the city walls, countrysides and villages were under feudal domains – working for and paying taxes to their lords. These were the same peasants who produced food for the cities, which naturally put the cities against the feudal lords – not to mention, hating the feudal lords on ideological grounds as well.

*So the cities sent out emissaries to lead revolt in the villages, and they waged direct war against the nobles. In Italy, where the land was thickly sprinkled with feudal castles, the war assumed heroic proportions. Florence sustained for seventy-seven years a succession of bloody wars, in order to free its contado from the nobles.*

*But the bows and the hatchets of the arts and crafts had not always the upper hand in their encounters with the armor-clad knights, and many feudal castles withstood the ingenious siege-machinery and perseverance of the citizens. Some cities, like Florence, Bologna, and many towns in France, Germany, and Bohemia succeeded in emancipating the surrounding villages, and were rewarded for their efforts by an extraordinary prosperity and tranquility.*

*But even here, and still more in less strong or less impulsive towns, the merchants and artisans from the cities, exhausted by war, and misunderstanding their own interests, bargained over the peasants' heads. They compelled the lord to swear*

*allegiance to the city; his country castle was dismantled, and he agreed to build a house and to reside in the city; but he maintained in return most of his rights upon the peasants, who only won a partial relief from their burdens. The men of the city could not understand that equal rights of citizenship might be granted to the peasant upon whose food supplies he had to rely, and a deep rent was traced between city and village. In some cases, the peasants simply changed owners, the city buying out the barons' rights and selling them in shares to her own citizens.*

*Serfdom was maintained, and only much later on, towards the end of the thirteenth century, it was the craft revolution which undertook to put an end to it – abolishing personal servitude, but dispossessing at the same time the serfs of the land. The fatal results of such policy were soon felt by the cities themselves; the country became the city's enemy.*

– Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (p. 155-156)

This looming opposition from the country wasn't the only danger to the cities. They were also facing manipulation by surviving nobles and the Church – who attempted to pit medieval cities against one another, to make them easier to conquer. In response, cities often formed another type of organization – federations, for common defense and mutual endeavors. These federations of small territorial units and leagues of cities became a new way of life.

But the challenge from those seeking domination was not over. New nobles would emerge over the centuries, who were more scrupulous or clever or talented at amassing wealth and power. They began building fortified cities for themselves in places where free cities had never taken hold – Paris, Madrid, and Moscow. These new rulers offered lands surrounding their estates to warlords, who would come and live by their side. The Church, which had failed to develop a theocratic empire in Europe, decided to place its bets with the new states. And the poor, who had been failed by the cities in the past – and still held sympathetic ties to the Church, to the time of sentence-finders and asylums from blood revenge – followed the Church in support of these new states.

The new states, inheriting institutions of professional Roman law and the divine authority of the Church, taught their disciples that one man, acting as the state and a spiritual vassal, could do anything in the name of "public salvation". The peasant subjects,

who for thousands of years had so deeply adhered to customs of peace and self-jurisdiction within and beyond their communities, now gave up those principles, tolerating and approving any administration or violence from the state and its rulers. The state absorbed all previous social functions of community – jurisdiction, mutual support, administration, and law-making. Even the Church became a religion of individualism, where parishioners were taught that the only good in the world could come from individual charity – disregarding the mutual support and communal spirit that had developed over centuries. And in turn, the state took aim at the very institutions that had eluded them – destroying associations, guilds, and craft organizations, while fostering cultures of individualism within the state.

Guilds, unions, and organizations of all kinds were made illegal, even with punishment by death. But owing to the essentiality of these forms, people fought for them at every turn, for centuries to come.

Towards the end of the 18th and 19th centuries, movements of people sacrificed their lives and won rights to live and work together again, and communal institutions resurged. People worked in common for local utilities like watermills, in common agricultural works and harvests, in common programs for healthcare. New community associations, such as cooperatives and labor unions, also formed, in the context of the Industrial Revolution.

People supported one another in strikes, practiced solidarity with strikers in other communities – other cities – even other continents, sending funds across the seas, when they had barely enough to survive themselves. All of this – their insistence, their resistance, their solidarity – based in a faith above religion – in a faith of the bonds among people.

Some of that aid even went to the U.S. – to striking workers in Baltimore and Ohio – where socialism and worker power was growing as well. Where, in a mere generation after the end of slavery, newly freed slaves had bought land and built prosperous cities across the country, in Oklahoma and Kansas and California. Where Indigenous populations, that had faced genocide and displacement twice-over, managed to preserve and retain their cultures and histories, which would resurge in the decades to come ... and even raised supplies to send their own aid to comrades in Ireland, as Irish communities suffered forced starvation and famine at the hands of the British empire.

As worker power and solidarity grew, this led to one of the greatest concessions for workers in modern history – the New Deal.

A compromise from the government to stave off demands for socialism, the New Deal offered the working classes a re-orientation of society: the 8-hour work day, higher wages, child labor protections, overtime laws, healthcare, social security, jobs guarantees, and the rights of unions.

Dark Enlightenment thinkers claim that this feat was not the result of political movements and worker power, but capitalism, and the growth created by the Industrial Revolution.

Looking at the conditions that workers established for themselves a thousand years before in medieval cities, and the communities who gave their lives over centuries to re-assert their common rights – under feudal lords, kings, and states – it seems history shows a much different explanation. Even in the Algerian famine, no one faced repression or starvation in the Kabyles – while associations between communities were flourishing. Even in the aftermath of slavery, communities with next-to-nothing worked together and raised prosperous cities, for the satisfaction of their mutual needs.

But maybe the question isn't whether Dark Enlightenment thinkers – the likes of Peter Thiel, J.D. Vance, Curtis Yarvin, Steve Bannon – are right about the causes of the New Deal, or where democracy can go from today.

Maybe it's whether they can build their vision of a world anyway.

And that work has already begun.

In the 1930s, a banker named Grayson Murphy was part of a group – including General Motors CEO Alfred Sloan, Murphy's bank boss J.P. Morgan, and Irene du Pont of duPont Chemicals – intent to stop the New Deal.

Looking for an alternative to both the rising tide of socialism and the New Deal, Murphy studied the rise of fascist movements in Europe, looking for ideas he could bring to America. Among Mussolini's Italy and Nazi Germany, Murphy found the model he liked best in Vichy France – a veteran-led fascist movement.

With that as a blueprint, Murphy began organizing World War I veterans for an eventual coup of the Federal Government. To lead this coup, Murphy called upon war hero General Smedley Butler, one of the most beloved figures in the armed forces.

General Butler was a veteran of some of America's most gruesome and colonial wars — in the Philippines, China, the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the Banana Wars in the Caribbean. By the time he died, he was the most decorated marine in U.S. history.

But these experiences led Butler to become an ardent anti-imperialist, staunchly against America's foreign wars and colonization. And when the coup plotters tried to enlist him, he warned Congress of the impending attack.

Butler informed a Congressional Committee that the Business Plot — led by Murphy, JP Morgan, Sloan, DuPont, and other industrialists — had amassed 500,000 former soldiers and three million dollars (\$70 million in today's terms) to assemble in Washington D.C., overthrow the federal government, and establish a fascist dictatorship.

Though the media initially mocked Butler's claims, Congressional investigations later validated him. He took to television to warn the country of the plot, and with his dissent, the coup failed. FDR remained President, and the New Deal went into action.

But even though this coup had failed — the fight against the New Deal, and for corporate power in America, had just begun.

While Murphy and the industrialists were plotting the Business Plot, another movement was gaining steam: cults, particularly in the economic hardship following the Great Depression. And among them, **"I AM" ACTIVITY**.

In 1932, a wallpaper hanger and occult bookstore owner named Guy Ballard, along with his wife and fellow occult bookstore worker Edna Ballard, started a cult called **"I AM" ACTIVITY** — offering teachings that mixed Nazi spirituality with American patriotism and self-help ideology, with promises of a new Golden Era to emerge in the United States.

- Gold is more than an allegory here. One of the incidents that incited Grayson Murphy and his conspirators to overthrow the government was FDR's decision to take American currency off the gold standard — in order to use debt spending to pay for public works and jobs programs. This will come back later.

As the "I AM" cult took off, this was the beginning of modern cult activity in the United States. These cults offered people a theory that everything was being taken care of, distracting them from the material conditions and impoverishment around them, and

the notion of changing it. The first conspiracies around UFOs even emerged around this time – which, still could be said, operate to keep people distracted by secrets and conspiracies, instead of cooperating to improve their material conditions.

Guy and Edna Ballard, pioneers of this modern cult movement, set up a base in Los Angeles and started a radio program to broadcast their I AM ACTIVITY teachings. By 1938, they had two million followers across the country – who would march in the streets, and chant: **Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt ... Blast! Blast! Blast! Their carcasses from the earth forever!"**

One of the people who joined the Ballards' operation was a radio worker named Robert LeFevre. Despite owing his first job at a Minneapolis radio station to FDR's jobs program, LeFevre began following the "I AM" Cult (initially to impress his boss) – and before long, he decided to move to Los Angeles to join the Ballards, and help raise the popularity of "I AM" across the country.

Soon, I AM's anti-semitic occult self-help teachings could be heard on radios across Los Angeles. But in 1939, Guy Ballard died – and the I AM cult leaders became embroiled in a series of mail fraud cases. LeFevre testified as a witness against Edna Ballard, before fighting for a few months in World War II, and eventually returning to Los Angeles – where his cult life continued, at a Beverly Hills mansion called "the Falcon Lair," known for both seance orgies and a non-profit foundation.

The Falcon Lair Foundation sponsored LeFevre and his wife to go on a speaking tour across the U.S., where LeFevre raised alarm bells about the growing threat of communism after World War II, and the threat of a "direct shooting war" with Russia.

Through LeFevre's tour and speeches, he connected with Joseph McCarthy, and proceeded to collaborate with McCarthy on blackballing "communists" from U.S. society. This even included a plot against the Girl Scouts of America, for a promotion involving the U.N.

For his work, LeFevre was hired by infamous Holocaust denier Mervin Hart for the National Economic Council – an organization that worked with the American Liberty League and National Association of Manufacturers, to serve the interests of oil companies and tycoons.

Going into the 60s, LeFevre used his following and experience to start an unaccredited school in California, called "The Freedom



School." At the same time, Mervin Hart and prominent anti-semites around the country were founding the John Birch Society – with figures like Fred Koch, of Koch Industries, in the room.

LeFevre's Freedom School was a spiritual branch of The John Birch Society, and Fred Koch's son Charles was enamored with it. A young Charles joined the Board of Trustees at the Freedom School, and became a Vice President. This prepared Charles Koch and his brother David not only to inherit their fathers' business interests (after decades of brutal family in-fighting to come), but also to advance their father's ideological missions from the John Birch Society as well.

... **It was 1970**, and the New Deal had become a foundational part of American life – for workers, communities, families, and public life. Though it had been a compromise to stave off socialism, it was far better than 12-hour factory shifts and the fascist dictatorship the Business Plotters were offering.

The New Deal era following World War II also included more international finance and debt swaps – which began to come to a head, at the end of the 1960s.

Debt swaps between nations had been denominated in gold, and European nations realized they could get an advantage by hoarding American dollars, and demanding gold from the U.S. in return. This situation was leading to a crisis in the USA.

To diffuse the situation, in August 1971, Nixon signed a temporary order – temporary, so he thought – to terminate the convertibility of dollars into gold, and eliminate the leverage European nations held over America.

Temporary or not did not matter. For the American tycoons and descendants of the Business Plot, and even the gold cultists of "I AM" activity, this was a line too far.

A week later, a corporate lawyer from Virginia named Lewis Powell, who had made a career representing Big Tobacco and corporations, issued a memo with a detailed blueprint for how corporate interests could take over every aspect of American society. This would go on to be called the Powell Memo – a blueprint followed by the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, ALEC, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Project 2025 to this day.

Within a month of Powell's memo, he was nominated by Nixon to the Supreme Court – where he was shortly confirmed, and sat as a justice until 1987. During his time on the Court, Powell earned

good-will and distinction from both political parties –by using progressive decisions on social matters, as cover for ground-shifting decisions for corporate interests.

Meanwhile, corporate-minded and anti-New Deal groups began emerging out of the woodwork. This included the **National Taxpayers Union**, which aimed to limit or eliminate taxes wherever possible, and attracted former members of the John Birch Society – including **William Bonner** and **Grover Norquist**, who would also go on to found Americans for Tax Reform at the urging of future President Ronald Reagan.

These are the groups that coalesced around Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign. The John Birch Society. The National Taxpayers Unions. Libertarians of the Freedom School and the Koch Brothers. Opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment (which prohibited workplace discrimination on the basis of sex.) Evangelical and Catholic groups. And those who were still mad about repeals of the gold standard. Reagan even filmed an ad during his campaign calling for a return to the gold standard – before being told by his advisers that it wouldn't be possible. In any case, the Reagan coalition turned out massive numbers in the 1980 election, and helped Reagan win the Electoral College in historic fashion.

President Reagan quickly got to work in their interests.

Among Reagan's policies, his **Executive Order 12333** was a monumental act that shaped government affairs and intelligence to this day.

Executive Order 12333 enabled U.S. intelligence agencies to outsource services to private companies, and raise private investment for political objectives.

This began a new era of public-private partnerships in the U.S. – allowing entrepreneurs, mostly with anti-Communist and libertarian agendas, to start absorbing government intelligence services for private profit. This is even how the Iran-Contra Affair got started – when **General John K. Singlaub** and **Lt. Col. Oliver North** raised private funds for far-right "freedom fighters" in Nicaragua. General Singlaub likewise used Executive Order 12333 for another public-private service – a company that collected information on citizens from police departments, digitized it, and made it available as dossiers for anybody who wanted to buy it. That data collection company was also involved in the Iran-Contra affair – it was used as a front to launder money to the Contras.

These intelligence activities got even bolder in the late 1980s, when public agencies gave Singlaub and a group of private citizens the go-ahead to try and extract gold from rumored deposits all around the Philippines. They set up operations, were misled by local treasure hunters, and wasted millions digging for gold in ludicrous locations – ending up with nothing. In the few places where they did find gold, the Philippine government that succeeded Marcos (who fled the country and was in exile in Hawaii) prevented them from removing any of it.

With these gaffes, and amidst a worsening economy, Bill Clinton found an opening and won the 1992 presidential election. His victory, however, came with a new generation of demagogues against the New Deal – including **Newt Gingrich**.

Other corporate voices emerging in the 90s included Christopher Ruddy, who went on to start **Newsmax** with **James Davidson** of the National Taxpayers Union, as well as **William Rees-Mogg**, whose son Jacob Rees-Mogg would later become famous as a Brexit ideologue in the UK. Cementing these ties between government intelligence and the private sector, Newsmax was originally funded in part from the estate of former C.I.A. director **William Casey**.

But bigger than Newsmax and Newt Gingrich, it was Davidson and Rees-Mogg who collaborated on the most consequential work to this story.

In 1997, Davidson and Rees-Mogg published a book called ***The Sovereign Individual*** – a libertarian fantasy about entrepreneurs who could live and work wherever they pleased, without government regulation – and wherever had the least taxes. This world was fueled by **"digital cash"**, a new kind of currency that would let entrepreneurs and CEOs lead their lives free from governments, taxes, and regulation. This meant a world where every service – schools, water, government, healthcare, protection – would be private, and what you got is what you could pay for. A world where the New Deal – workers protections and benefits, overtime pay, Social Security, health insurance, public works, regulation – would not exist.

*The Sovereign Individual* became the favorite book of a young Peter Thiel, who was on his way to building the digital payment company **PayPal**, among other future Silicon Valley billionaires – including Elon Musk, David Sacks, and Reid Hoffman. Together at PayPal, they were attempting to build the very "digital cash" proposed in *The Sovereign Individual*.

(Elon Musk has another tie to this story. During the 1930s, when tycoons were trying to overthrow FDR in the United States, Musk's grandfather Joshua Halderman was leading a movement to overthrow the Canadian government and replace it with a "technocracy" organization. The plot was eventually stopped, and Halderman was arrested for his activities in 1941.)

Back to the story –

While PayPal failed to build the untaxable, uncontrollable, international "digital cash" envisioned in *The Sovereign Individual* – the company had built a notable success in a fraud-detection system, that found signals of fraudulent transactions in massive streams of data.

After 9/11, Peter Thiel used this innovation and the abilities from Reagan's Executive Order 12333 to start a new company – Palantir – that would look at massive streams of data about U.S. citizens, and provide services to government agencies from it.

Palantir was named for an indestructible crystal ball in the *Lord of the Rings* – and has gone on to offer services surveilling U.S. migrant families, separating families on the border, facilitating A.I. drone strikes, and offering predictive policing services to Israeli forces in illegal occupations.

Palantir has also entered the world of corporate and non-intelligence services, including a contract to store all of the UK's public healthcare data from the NHS. As a result, Palantir is projected to become one of the largest A.I. companies in the world.

As Peter Thiel was starting Palantir, he also made another consequential bet: Facebook. Thiel was the largest outside investor in Facebook's history, and became a personal advisor to Mark Zuckerberg.

As Palantir and Facebook grew in the 2000s, and with Barack Obama running for president, a Libertarian named Ron Paul emerged on the scene – running for president on libertarian platform, and calling for a full return to the gold standard.

Though Ron Paul didn't win the election, one of his campaign advisors, Steward Rhodes, went on to found the Oath Keepers – a far-right mobilization of citizens with military and law enforcement backgrounds. The Tea Party also started to form in U.S. Congress, in opposition to the country's first Black president.

Cresting this libertarian far-right revival, in January 2009, an anonymous software developer with the handle "Nakamoto" released a digital currency called **Bitcoin** – that promised to be the "digital cash" proposed in *The Sovereign Individual*, in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

## **"Bitcoin is fulfilling PayPal's original vision"**

- David Sacks (former PayPal exec, Republican mega-donor)

Bitcoin has ties everywhere in this story – to digital cash and *The Sovereign Individual*, the anti-New Deal resentment and libertarian ideology, to a return to the gold standard, and even the I AM cult's beliefs in a "new golden era" – mirrored in the cultish online beliefs around Bitcoin today. One of Bitcoin's key principles, the idea of burning energy to "mine" coins, even mirrors a scheme from Musk's grandfather Joshua Haberman – whose technocratic coup to replace the Canadian government, would see money replaced with scarce "energy certificates" for citizens.

And leaders from all political parties have been captured by Bitcoin's lobbying interests – driven by people who view it as hope for a currency that cannot be taxed or regulated, and concurrently, a government that cannot tax or regulate as well.

For the world of *The Sovereign Individual*.

For the world of the Dark Enlightenment.

For the world we're seeing all around us today.

In Argentina – where a libertarian president campaigns with a chainsaw for cutting public services, and uses economic shock therapy with half of the country is in poverty. While offering free resources to foreign corporations, and rolling out "predictive policing services" and massive A.I. surveillance to see people jailed for crimes they did not commit.

In America, where the highest volume of crime is wage theft – and corporations on our streets like Waffle House, steal wages from 90% of their employees.

In deregulated industries, like the airline industry and rail, which are resulting in failing planes, unprecedented pollution, and companies assassinating whistleblowers in broad daylight.

In food and housing prices, as corporations engage in price gouging at the grocery store and price fixing on home listings.

In retaliations against organizing workers – attempts from Elon Musk and Starbucks to eliminate the National Labor Relations Board, and eliminate the right of workers to unionize and strike altogether – not far from the early European states, who punished it by death.

In corporations like Amazon, which monitor and surveil workers' every move – fining them for singing to the radio, demeriting them for bathroom breaks, forcing them to work in diapers and dangerous conditions.

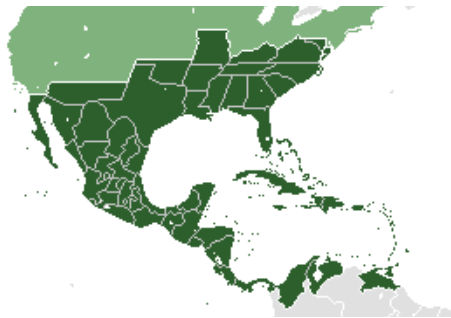
In the goods and services all around us – from McDonalds, Target, Coca-Cola – made using slave labor from for-profit prisons.

And in the history, lurking just under the surface of all of this ...

**In the 1850s**, slavery was becoming a divisive issue in America.

Among the groups fighting to preserve it, there was a secret society, that went by the name **The Knights of the Golden Circle**.

The Knights of the Golden Circle sought to create a new state, from the South all the way down through Latin America, and circling up through the Caribbean. It would be called the **Golden Circle**, and it would be a state where slavery would live forever.



To become a Knight of the Golden Circle, you had to have been born in a slave state, or held slaves in a free state. And upon initiation, you had to swear:

***"Should my State or any other Southern State be invaded by Abolitionists I will muster the largest force I can, and go to the scene of the danger."***

In 1859, future president **Abraham Lincoln** was elected, on the promise of ending slavery in America.

Preparing for this day, the Knights of the Golden Circle devised a plan to kidnap Lincoln on his way to the inauguration in 1860, where the military would orchestrate a coup and overthrow the federal government in Washington D.C.

Their coup was thwarted, and the Knights became deeply unpopular, splintering off into different groups.

However, the Knights' legacy lived on. Some even believed they had buried gold across the American West, as part of a stash that could eventually finance their resurgence and a second Civil War. And their ideas lived on as well.

***"Should my State or any other Southern State be invaded by Abolitionists I will muster the largest force I can, and go to the scene of the danger."***

***"I will muster the largest force I can, and go to the scene of the danger."***

MONTAGE:

- The assassination of Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theatre
- The ratification of the 13th Amendment in U.S. Congress, allowing slavery as punishment for crimes
- The first police and slave catchers in the 1870s
- KKK rallies and cross burnings in the early 1900s.
- The bombing of Tulsa and Black Wall Streets
- The Business Plot to overthrow FDR
- The I AM cult in the 1930s, chanting for the death of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

- Robert LeFevre's anti-communist sermons, sponsored by the Falcon Lair sex cult, in the 1940s
- McCarthyism in the 50s
- The John Birch society in the 1960s, and the coalescing of actors like the Koch Brothers and other influences.
- Lewis Powell's letter in 1971, rallying the corporate community to take over every aspect of the American government ... and Powell's appointment to the Supreme Court.
- Reagan signing Executive Order 12333
- Newt Gingrich and Newsmax spewing hatred about the welfare state
- The publishing of *The Sovereign Individual*
- The "PayPal Mafia" ringing the bell at the Stock Exchange
- The founding of Palantir, and Peter Thiel's investment in Facebook.
- Ron Paul running as the Libertarian candidate in 2008
- The emergence of the Oath Keepers and the Tea Party, as a response to the country's first Black President.
- The rise of MAGA and Trump
- The rise of the Q Anon
- The Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville
- The 2020 plot to steal the election
- January 6<sup>th</sup>
- Javier Milei signing an emergency decree for economic shock therapy in Argentina
- The far-right race riots in the U.K. in August 2024, against the Muslim population and immigrants
- The far-right mobilization against Haitians in Springfield, OH
- Capture of U.S. government and officials by the Bitcoin lobby



- Blackrock buying up housing properties, and using algorithms for price fixing
- Uber and Doordash exploiting workers through the gig economy, and neo-feudalism
- AI displacing workers across industries
- Elon Musk suing the NLRB, attempting to eliminate unions and labor rights through the Supreme Court
- Lina Khan talking about going after corporate monopolies – before news reports of political donors from both parties, calling for the dismissal of Lina Khan
- A news report discussing how Peter Thiel personally got J.D. Vance selected as Trump's vice-president
- A news report discussing Vance's ties to Dark Enlightenment thinker Curtis Yarvin, who also has a direct line to Steve Bannon in Trump's administration
- Trump: "Vote once more, and you'll never have to vote again"
- Peter Thiel:

*At the end of the 1980s, you had this strange coalition in the Republican party. You had bankers and Wall Street. You had military generals and neo-conservatives. And you had the Church. Normally you would ask, what would a banker, a general, and a priest want anything to do with each other? Back then, they all hated communism. That was what kept them together.*

END MONTAGE

The Dark Enlightenment is right about one thing:

In the 50 years since the Lewis Powell Memo, in the decade since Citizens United – corporations and billionaires have absolutely taken over government.

The only question is – will that last forever? Or will we make something different?

OVER BLACK:

*After having heard so much about what used to divide men, it is our job to reconstruct, stone by stone, the institutions which used to unite them.*

– Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*

... FADE IN, and show the stories and possibilities, the inspirations and powerful examples, that people can take away from this and bring into life.

- Waffle House workers striking and organizing for pay and conditions.
- Tenant unions engaging in rent strikes in protest of hikes and neglectful conditions.
- Argentina workers amassing in street demonstrations, to reject Milei's plans – resisting violence from militarized police.
- People building mutual support institutions for food – healthcare – education – in the spirit of dual power.

^ But even this being co-opted, as far-right militias do their own mutual aid ... reminding us of a looming threat.

- Economic cooperatives and worker associations taking over factories and owning them in common. Communities of cooperatives in Mondragon, Spain, and in Italy.
- Communities organizing buying clubs to get food at affordable prices.
- Time-lapse of an Amish community building a house in days, working together in common like a swarm of ants – like an old medieval guild.
- The mutual aid stands at Palestinian campus occupations – food, warm meals, drinks, and medical supplies – offered to the public for free.

- The people engaged in sabotage of weapons factories and pollution companies, forcing them to stop production.
- The people sabotaging factory farms in solidarity with animals – and the orcas engaged in mutual defense against the yachts in their waters.
- The cooks of Gaza making community meals in large pots, and distributing family portions to those in the community.
- The coalition of conservatives, Indigenous tribes, and environmentalists uniting in Pennsylvania to push for a Rights of Nature protection to the Allegheny River.

[Maybe DIVE DEEPER in some of these examples, offering a PROFILE, to give a more hands-on example – give a more instructive example that we can take away, and do in common in our community.]

... What kind of world will we make?

## CLOSING

During the 1600s, there are legends of an Indigenous leader named Kondiaronk, of a tribe near so-called Ontario – who was well-versed in European and French customs, having spent time in France.

One day, Kondiaronk engaged in a debate with Louis-Hector de Callière, the governor of French Ontario. Kondiaronk said this:

### **Kondiaronk**

To imagine one can live in the country of money and preserve one's soul is like imagining one can preserve one's life at the bottom of a lake. Money is the father of luxury, lasciviousness, intrigues, trickery, lies, betrayal, insincerity—of all the world's worst behavior. Fathers sell their children, husbands their wives, wives betray their husbands, brothers kill each other, friends

are false—and all because of money. In light of all of this, tell me that we Wyandotte are not right in refusing to touch or so much as look at silver.

Do you seriously imagine that I would be happy to live like one of the inhabitants of Paris? To take two hours every morning just to put on my shirt and make up? To bow and scrape before every obnoxious galoot I meet on the street who happens to have been born with an inheritance? Do you actually imagine I could carry a purse full of coins and not immediately hand them over to people who are hungry? That I would carry a sword but not immediately draw it on the first band of thugs I see rounding up the destitute to press them into Naval service? If on the other hand, Europeans were to adopt an American way of life, it might take a while to adjust but in the end you will be far happier.

### **Callière**

Try, for once in your life to actually listen. Can't you see, my dear friend, that the nations of Europe could not survive without gold and silver or some similar precious symbol? Without it, nobles, priests, merchants and any number of others who lack the strength to work the soil would simply die of hunger. Our kings would not be kings. What soldiers would we have? Who would work for Kings or anyone else?

### **Kondiaronk**

You honestly think you're going to sway me by appealing to the needs of nobles, merchants, and priests? If you abandoned conceptions of mine and thine, yes, such distinctions between men would dissolve. A leveling equality would take place among you, as it now does among the Wyandotte and yes, for the first thirty years after the banishing of self-interest no doubt you would indeed see a certain desolation as those who are only qualified to eat, drink, sleep, and take pleasure would languish and die, but their progeny would be fit for our way of living. Over and over I have set forth the qualities that we Wyandotte believe ought to define humanity: wisdom, reason, equity, etc. and demonstrated that the existence of separate material interest knocks all these on the head. A man motivated by interest cannot be a man of reason.

END

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## Notes for later

- DARK ENLIGHTENMENT: "The Framers of the Constitution went to great lengths to ensure that the federal government was not based on the will of the majority and was not, therefore, democratic. If the Framers of the Constitution did not embrace democracy, what did they adhere to? To a man, the Framers agreed that the purpose of government was to secure citizens in John Locke's trilogy of the rights to life, liberty and property."
  - The framers of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were copying from the Iroquois Confederacy. So we should probably look to the Iroquois Confederacy Constitution, to see what they were trying to do first. (Probably not secure John Locke's conception of property rights.)
- Even their own Dark Enlightenment ideas, such as the distribution of shares in a gov-corp to people who make political favors happen – including to voters – seems just like ... our system today? The only difference would be, it would be 350 million people with one share, voting for CEO against 10,000 oligarchs with ten-thousand shares. Who would like that better?
- Corporations providing good services. This is all quite compelling, if we imagine the corporations running the state as Costco or Arizona Iced Tea – instead of Waffle House, Amazon, or a private prison company.