

Dispelling Wetiko: Breaking the Curse of Evil

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We as a species are in the midst of a massive psychic epidemic that has been brewing in the cauldron of humanity from the beginning of time. This psychospiritual disease of the soul—which Native Americans have called *wetiko*—can be thought of as the bug in the system. It informs and animates the madness that is playing itself out in our lives, both individually and collectively, on the world stage.

Native American mythologies portray the mythical figure of *wetiko* as a cannibalistic spirit who embodies greed and excess and can possess human beings. The *wetiko* was once a human being, but its greed and selfishness have transformed it into a predatory monster. Thus in indigenous mythology, indulgent, self-destructive habits are thought to be inspired by *wetiko*. In the Native American view, those who have become *wetikos* are individuals who have "lost their wits," a phrase that connotes not only being out of one's right mind, but also not knowing what one is doing (acting "unwittingly"). Native Americans have often portrayed the *wetiko* as having a frigid, icy heart, devoid of mercy. Like cannibals, those taken over by *wetiko* consume the life force of others—human and nonhuman—for private purpose or profit, and do so without giving back anything of real value from their own lives.

The Ojibwa word for *wetiko*, *windigo* or *weendigo*, seems to have been derived from *ween dagoh*, which means "solely for self," or from *weenin igooh*, which means "excess." According to Native American lore, the *wetiko* monster can only prey on human beings who, like itself, have indulged in excess. Thus human beings' propensity for excess makes them vulnerable to possession by, and transformation into, a *wetiko*.

Like a werewolf, the *wetiko* is sometimes portrayed as a shape-shifter who can even appear disguised as a good spirit. In the indigenous legends, whenever the *wetiko* eats another person, it grows larger in proportion to the meal it has just eaten, so that it can never be full or satisfied. Buddhism portrays a similar figure, the hungry ghost, who, with its pinhole mouth, constricted neck, and huge, unfilled stomach, can never satisfy its insatiable cravings. At the collective level, this perverse inner process is mirrored by the insane consumer society in which we live, a culture that continually fans the flames of never-ending desires, conditioning us to always want *more*.

PAUL LEVY_DISPPELLING WETIKO

Just as viruses or malware infect a computer and program it to self-destruct, wetiko programs the human biocomputer to think and behave in self-destructive ways. Covertly operating through the unconscious blind spots in the human psyche, wetiko renders people oblivious to their own madness, compelling them to act against their own best interests. People under its thrall can, like someone in the throes of an addiction or in a state of trauma, unwittingly create the very problem they are trying to resolve, clinging desperately to the thing that is torturing and destroying them.

People taken over by wetiko are suffering from an autoimmune disease of the psyche. In autoimmune deficiency syndrome, the immune system of the organism perversely attacks the very life it is trying to protect. In trying to live, it destroys life, ultimately destroying even itself. In the same way, once wetiko has insinuated itself into a living entity, it acts like a perverted antibody, treating the wholesome parts of the system as cancerous tumors to be exterminated.

This problem is being collectively acted out on the world stage. Humans are destroying the biosphere of the planet upon which we all depend for our survival. Wetiko is at the bottom of the seemingly never-ending destruction we are wreaking on this biosphere. One example is the destruction of the Amazonian rainforest, the lungs of the planet. Another example is the terminator seeds that are genetically engineered not to reproduce a second generation, forcing farmers to buy new seeds and making life impossible for many poor farmers. If the planet were seen as an organism, and people seen as cells in this organism, it would be as if these cells had become cancerous or parasitic and had turned on the healthy cells, destroying the very organism of which they themselves were a part. Our species appears to be enacting a mass ritual suicide on a global scale.

By whatever name we call it, wetiko is undoubtedly one of the most important discoveries in human history. Indicating the supreme importance of developing knowledge about how this predator of the mind operates, don Juan from the Carlos Castaneda books refers to it as "the topic of topics." (He doesn't use the name "wetiko," however, but calls it "the flyer.")

This cancer of the soul manages our perceptions by stealth and subterfuge so as to act itself out through us while hiding itself from being seen. Wetiko bedazzles consciousness in such a way that we become blind to the underlying viewpoint through which we are giving meaning to our experience. Wetiko is a form of psychic blindness that fancies itself to be sighted.

Wetiko subversively turns our genius for reality creation against us so that we become bewitched by the projective tendencies of our own mind. People afflicted with wetiko react to their own projections in the world as if they objectively exist and are separate from themselves, delusionally thinking that they have nothing to do with creating that to which they are reacting. Over time this activity of endlessly reacting to and becoming conditioned by one's own energy tends to generate insane behavior, which can manifest internally or in the world at large. As if under a spell, we become entranced by our own intrinsic gifts and talents for dreaming up our world, unknowingly hypnotizing ourselves with our God-given power to creatively call forth reality so that it boomerangs against us, undermining our potential for evolution.

Though the origin of wetiko is within the psyche, at a certain point it develops enough momentum to become self-generating, attaining a seeming autonomy, like the Frankenstein monster. This pathological fragment can subsume the wholesome parts of the psyche into itself such that they become its slaves. As this process continues, wetiko gains sovereignty over the psyche, like the legendary tiger, which, when restored to life out of its bones, devours the magician who resurrected it. It then holds its creator in its thrall, and she is unable to escape from the hell of her own making. The person so afflicted has created her own sci-fi nightmare, with herself in the starring role.



To the extent
we are

Wetiko 2 by Liana Buszka, www.lianabuszka.com

unconsciously possessed by the spirit of wetiko, it is as if a psychic tapeworm or parasite has taken over our brains and tricked us, its host, into thinking we are feeding and empowering ourselves while we are actually nourishing the parasite. Noting our almost unlimited capacity for self-deception, psychiatrist R.D. Laing writes that we have "tricked ourselves out of our own mind" (Laing, 73). People are particularly susceptible to the spell of today's masters of deception when they are out of touch with the living and self-authenticating reality of their own experience. Not sufficiently knowing the nature of their own minds, they are overly susceptible to taking on others' perspectives, falling prey to the prevailing groupthink of the herd and to the wetiko parasite. When we are taken over by more powerful psychic forces, we don't know that we are possessed by something other than ourselves, which is precisely the way the wetiko bug wants it.

Wetiko can also subliminally insinuate thought-forms and beliefs into our minds which, when unconsciously enacted, feed the virus and ultimately kill its host. Wetiko covets the creative imagination that it lacks. As a result, if we don't use the divine gift of our creative imagination in the service of life, wetiko will use our imagination against us, with deadly consequences. The wetiko predator is in competition with us for a share of our own mind, wanting to sit in our seat. Instead of sovereign beings who consciously create *with* our thoughts, we will then be unconsciously created *by* them, as the wetiko pathogen literally thinks in our place.

If we are not aware of wetiko's covert operations within us, it is as if an alien, metaphysical "other" has colonized our minds and set up a seemingly autonomous regime, a "shadow government" within the psyche (outwardly reflected by the "shadow government" in the world), so that we become oppressed within the domain of our own being. The wetiko virus paralyzes the ego into an immobilized, powerless state, in which the life force and energetic potential are vampirically drained away. Zombielike, we are pushed around like figures on a chessboard, played and manipulated like marionettes on a string. We are held in check by these impersonal, intangible forces, which, unbeknownst to us, are gaming us from a hidden position within our own unilluminated psyches. As compared to existing "by virtue" of something, the wetiko bug can only exist by the "lack of virtue" of our own obscured and unexamined minds.

As this rogue, split-off part incorporates itself within the psyche, it "dictates" to the ego, tricking it into believing that it is directing itself. We are allowed our seeming freedom and the ability to live our "normal" lives, as long as these do not challenge or threaten the deeper agenda of these sinister forces

PAUL LEVY_DISPELLING WETIKO

to centralize power and control. This internal process is manifesting externally in the creeping tendency towards fascism in the global body politic.

Shape-shifting so as to cloak itself in our form, this mercurial predator gets under our skin and "puts us on" as a disguise, impersonating us as it fools us into buying into its false version of who we are. Falling prey to its artificial yet uncanny intelligence, we become unreal to ourselves. Bamboozled and hoodwinked by this imposter, we mime ourselves, becoming false duplicates of our original, true selves. When we are taken over by the wetiko spirit, we can subjectively experience ourselves as being most ourselves, while ironically being most estranged from ourselves. This is a simultaneous state of fusion and dissociation, as the parts of the psyche that have split off from consciousness overwhelm and take over the whole through its unconscious blind spots. No longer belonging to or possessing ourselves, we then identify with who we are *not* while forgetting who we actually *are*. In so doing, we have effectively lost our souls.

The psychiatrist C.G. Jung refers to wetiko by the name Antimimos, which he describes as "the imitator and evil principle" (Jung, 371). Antimimos refers to a type of deception that could be thought of as counter-mimicry. This *antimimon pneuma*—the "counterfeit spirit," as it is called in the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John* (Robinson, 120), imitates something (in this case, *ourselves*) but with the intention of making the copy serve a purpose counter to that of the original. Antimimos is a maleficent force which tries to seduce us so as to lead us astray; it effects an inversion of value, transforming truth to falsehood and falsehood to truth, leading us to forgetfulness. When we fall for the ruse of this snake oil salesman of the spirit, we become disoriented, losing our sense of spiritual vocation, our mission in life, even our very selves. Writer and poet Max Pulver has said that "the *antimimon pneuma* is the origin and cause of all the evils besetting the human soul." The revered Gnostic text *Pistis Sophia* says that the *antimimon pneuma* has affixed itself to humanity like an illness (Campbell, 254; cf. Mead, 247ff.).

The Gnostics ("the ones who know") also call this subversive parasite of the mind the "archons." Every wisdom tradition has its own way of symbolizing wetiko; indeed illuminating wetiko is what makes a wisdom tradition worthy of the name. Such traditions include Buddhism, Kabbalah, Hawaiian huna, mystical Islam, shamanism, and alchemy. It is helpful to find other lineages and traditions that illumine the wetiko disease in their own fashion. In this way our multiperspectival vision can enable us to see what no one particular map or model by itself can reveal.

Viruses like wetiko are all about copying themselves. But a virus can't replicate itself; it has to use some other vehicle as its means of reproduction. Just like a vampire, the wetiko virus has a thirst for the very thing it lacks—the mystical essence of life—the "blood" of our soul, our very life force. The "undead" vampiric wetiko virus is fundamentally "dead" matter taking on apparently living form; it is only in and through a living being that it acquires a kind of life. These psychic vampires are compelled to replicate themselves through us so that we can then pass on to others. In wetiko there is a code or logic which infects awareness much as the DNA in a virus passes into and infects a cell. Wetiko psychosis is highly contagious, spreading through the channel of our shared unconsciousness. But its vectors of infection do not travel like physical pathogens. This bug both reinforces and feeds off our unconscious blind spots, which is how it nonlocally propagates itself. The greatest danger that threatens humanity today is the possibility that millions of us can fall into the unconscious together, reinforcing one another's madness in such a way that we become unwittingly complicit in our own self-destruction.

The most horrifying part of falling under the wetiko virus is that it ultimately involves the assent of our own free will, as we willingly, though unknowingly, subscribe to our enslaved condition. This is to say that no one other than ourselves is ultimately responsible for our situation. Though "relatively" real, and definitely needing to be dealt with at this level, from the ultimate, absolute point of view, the wetiko virus has no objective existence separate from our own minds. There is no entity outside ourselves who can steal our souls; the dreamed-up phenomenon of wetiko, which arises entirely within the sphere of the mind, tricks us into giving it away ourselves.

PAUL LEVY_DISPELLING WETIKO

With wetiko disease, we are not being infected by a physical, objectively existing virus outside of ourselves, which is why there is in *reality* nothing outside of ourselves to be afraid of. The origin of the wetiko psychosis lies entirely within the human psyche. The fact that wetiko is the expression of something inside of us means that the cure for it is likewise within us as well. Though not objectively existing, the wetiko pathogen has a virtual reality such that it can potentially destroy our species. The fact that something that only exists as a function of ourselves can destroy us points us to the incredibly vast, invisible, yet mostly untapped creative power that is our birthright.

Wetiko is nonlocal in that it is an inner disease of the soul that expresses itself on the canvas of the outside world. Thus it is not constrained by the spurious subject/object dichotomy or the conventional laws of three-dimensional space and time. In fact one of wetiko's unique ploys is to take advantage of the fact that there is no actual boundary between the inner and the outer. Wetiko nonlocally informs and configures events in the world so as to synchronistically express itself, which is to say that just like in a dream, events in the outer world are symbolically reflecting a condition deep within the psyche of each of us. If we don't understand that our current world crisis has its roots within and is an expression of the human psyche, we are doomed to unconsciously repeat and recreate endless suffering and destruction in more and more amplified form, as if we are having a recurring nightmare.

To the extent we are unaware of this virus of the mind, we are complicit in its propagation. Since it pervades the underlying field of consciousness, potentially all of us have wetiko. Every one of us subjectively experiences the wetiko virus in his or her own unique way, regardless of what concepts or words we use to describe the experience, or whether we believe in such things or not. If we see someone who seems to be taken over by wetiko, leading us to think they have the disease and we don't, we have fallen under the spell of the virus, because wetiko feeds on separation, polarization, and the fear of the *other*.

We start to become immune to wetiko when we develop the humility to realize that any one of us, at any moment, can potentially fall into our unconscious and unwittingly become an instrument for this virus to act itself out through us. Like a vampire, wetiko can't stand to be illumined, for in seeing how it covertly operates through our own consciousness, we take away its seeming autonomy and power over us while at the same time empowering ourselves.

The wetiko psychosis is a dreamed-up phenomenon, which is to say that we are all potentially participating in and actively cocreating the wetiko epidemic in each and every moment. Wetiko feeds on our policy of turning a blind eye to its operations; the less the wetiko virus is recognized, the more seemingly powerful and dangerous it becomes. Since the origin of wetiko is the human psyche, recognizing how this virus of the mind operates through our unawareness is the beginning of the cure. We normally think of illumination as seeing the light, but seeing the darkness is a form of illumination too. Wetiko is forcing us to pay attention to the fundamental role that the psyche plays in creating our experience of ourselves and of the world. Our shared future will be decided primarily by the changes that take place in the psyche of humanity, which is truly the world's pivot.

Wetiko can only be seen when we begin to realize the dreamlike nature of our universe, step out of the viewpoint of the separate self, and recognize the deeper underlying field of which we are all expressions, in which we are all contained, and through which we are all interconnected. The energetic expression of this realization, and the dissolver of wetiko par excellence, is compassion.

Similarly, the greatest protection against becoming affected or possessed by wetiko is to be in touch with our intrinsic wholeness, which is to be "self-possessed"—in possession of the part of ourselves that is not possessable, which is the Self, the wholeness of our being. Being in touch with our true nature acts as a sacred amulet or talisman, shielding and protecting us from wetiko's pernicious effects. We defeat evil not by fighting against it (in which case, by playing its game, we've already lost) but by getting in touch with the part of us that is invulnerable to its effects. Grasping the multifaceted ways that the wetiko virus distorts the psyche enables us to discover and experience the part of ourselves that is incorruptible, which is the place from which we can bring real and lasting change to

PAUL LEVY_DISPPELLING WETIKO

our world. It is as though the evil of the wetiko virus is itself the instrument of a higher intelligence designed to connect us to a sacred, creative source within ourselves. Testers of humanity, these nonlocal vampiric forces are guardians of the threshold of our conscious evolution.

Thus, although it is the source of humanity's inhumanity to itself, wetiko is at the same time the greatest catalytic force of evolution ever known (as well as not known) to humanity, as it is the impetus for us to awaken to the dreamlike nature of the universe. While a typical virus mutates so as to become resistant to our attempts to heal from it, the mercurial wetiko virus forces us to mutate—and evolve—relative to it. In a paradoxical sense, we don't cure wetiko; wetiko cures us. How amazing—the very thing that is potentially destroying us is at the same time waking us up! Wetiko is a true conjunction of opposites: it is at the same time the deadliest poison and the most healing medicine. Will wetiko kill us? Or will it awaken us? Everything depends upon our recognizing what it is revealing to us. The prognosis for the wetiko epidemic depends upon how we dream it.

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