

The Century Of The Self: Controlling The ‘Dangerous Crowd’ In An Age Of Mass Democracy

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

“This series is about how those in power have used Freud’s theories to try and control the dangerous crowd in an age of mass democracy,” begins Adam Curtis, as he describes the propaganda that Western governments and corporations have utilized stemming from Freud’s theories (and his nephew Bernays).

The business and political world uses psychological techniques to read, create and fulfill the desires of the public, to make their products or speeches as pleasing as possible to consumers and citizens. Curtis raises the question of the intentions and roots of this fact. Where once the political process was about engaging people’s rational, conscious minds, as well as facilitating their needs as a society, the documentary shows how by employing the tactics of psychoanalysis, politicians appeal to irrational, primitive impulses that have little apparent bearing on issues outside of the narrow self-interest of a consumer population.

The words of Paul Mazur, perhaps ironically working for Lehman Brothers at the time, sum it all up: *“We must shift America from a ‘needs’ to a ‘desires’ culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed... Man’s desires must overshadow his needs.”*

Episode 1: Happiness Machines (17 March 2002)

Episode 2: The Engineering of Consent (24 March 2002)

Episode 3: There is a Policeman Inside All Our Heads: He Must Be Destroyed (31 March 2002)

Episode 4: Eight People Sipping Wine in Kettering (7 April 2002)

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