

PAMPHLET 38

BROKEN PEOPLE

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@2000

The devoted father complained to the official of the rough play on the ice-hockey rink. The father's 10-year old son was a player. After exchanging words with the official, another devoted dad, the father kneeled on the official's chest and beat the man to death.

Throughout the country violent outbreaks, verbal and physical, are common at youth sporting events. Many things are blamed: a stressful society, competitive rivalries, increased participation, and parents who live through their kids. Governing groups come up with rules quickly in an attempt to control the violence: videos, brochures, stopping games, codes of conduct, mentors for referees, ordering parents to leave, "silent Sundays" (no one can make noise), and a senseless rule that parents can cheer for teams but not for their children.

Abuse and violence are fractal patterns in our society: road rage, airline rage, school shootings, and workplace violence. People are in fear of people. Some of my recent experience in the workplace:

A company hired me to investigate fears that an employee may be a physical danger to other employees. The investigation revealed that the employee they were concerned about was the healthiest in the group.

An employee called a co-worker's wife and told her that her husband was having an affair. The husband committed suicide.

A 45 year old man grabbed and pushed another employee. He wept as he told me about such unexpected behavior on his part. He felt deeply ashamed of himself. A month later he did it again. We learned that the anger that came from this man was the outcomes of repeated humiliations of him by his co-workers.

An enraged employee, body shaking, face red with anger, and

veins engorged with blood, stood in front of a group of employees and screamed at his boss, "I hate you. If you were on fire, no one in this department would piss on you to put you out."

An employee with physical symptoms went to the doctor. He hoped he had cancer so he wouldn't have to go to work. Another fainted as she left the house to go to her company. She didn't want to go to work.

An emotionless employee, with empty eyes, a flat voice, and a sagging body said to me, "I've learned to nod and agree." Another said, "I don't get paid enough to care." They are among the walking dead.

I stood before a large group, whose members abused one another constantly, and told them they were losing their humanity--their empathy and connection to other human beings.

An employee wrote:

Broken people
disjointed parts
on a run away machine

outsource imagination
quietly contented
with the lobotomy of commerce

every eye blank
every thought
properly constrained

motion replacing life
intellect subservient
to everyman's greed

we race frantically
into the hell
we've thoughtlessly created

how could we
disconnect our hands
from our souls?

And most in organizations ignore the pain that surrounds them.

Like the governing bodies of the youth sports programs, the management of companies rush to establish rules to contain the abuse and violence: codes of conduct, zero tolerance policies, and anger management classes. While strict enforcement of the rules may control the violent behavior, for a time, the rules and programs will be a waste of time ultimately for they address symptoms only. They are another set of quick-fixes in a society that craves quick-fixes: fast, reactive, painless, effortless, mechanical, and fragmented. They provide the appearance of something being done.

The above incidents, and thousands like them every day, are not about power, immaturity, or the specific incident itself. The incidents are triggering events. The abuse and violence are systemic results of the fear, pain, and stress felt when people rush faster and faster to keep up with the speed and overload of events that comes from a mechanistic worldview that is out of control.

Our violence emerges ultimately from a set of false beliefs about how to live. This philosophy of life cannot solve the problems it created. People are imprisoned by a worldview that encourages selfishness and is anti-human. Our ethical, emotional, and spiritual needs are among the strongest impulses we have. A machine has no feelings, no spirit, and no will. What is real cannot be denied forever, and our collective shadow is emerging in destructive ways.

In his book, *Sins of the Spirit; Blessings of the Flesh* Matthew Fox wrote of the sins that challenge us in the times in which we live:

1. The suffering we cause one another. No one has the right to harm the spirit of another. We are not separate and distinct as we were taught. We are interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent. When we understand that we are connected to one another spiritually and that what we do to another we do to ourselves, we will change our behavior dramatically.

2. Ignoring: we collude with the behavior we deplore through our silence and indifference. We change by having our moments of authenticity: those times when we speak up for our values regardless of the outcome.

3. Imbalance and injustice: Systems function best when we optimize the various elements rather than maximizing one aspect of the system. Imbalance is destructive to life. We will seek justice for

all when we understand that each person is a “soul” just like us.

4. Severing relations: Many treat relationships as insignificant and run from them with the first difficulty. We evolve when we do not give up on our relationships easily. We commit ourselves to the relationship and work through changes and transitions in our relationships with others.

5. Dualism: either/or thinking locks us into reactive and repetitive choices. Both/and thinking opens vast opportunities for creativity.

6. Lack of passion: A mechanical view of life contains energy. We find our passion when we discover our purpose for our lives and begin to live that purpose.

These are the sins of the mechanistic worldview that continues to drive most organizations and institutions. At least 75% of change efforts are deemed failures by those who lead them. Organizations have the lowest life expectancy compared to potential of any species on the planet. But the beliefs of this worldview--dualism, atomism, control, fragmentation, predictability, and objectivity--continue to dominate our system of thought. We are running out of quick-fix programs to distract us. One day soon leaders will be left with nothing to “fix” but themselves. Then they will be ready to do the hard work of transformation.

Tens of millions of people the world over are already doing this hard work. They are part of a movement to heal the sins of the mechanistic worldview. They are abandoning a failed system of thought. They understand that the major threats to nature and humanity are within our own human souls. Our excesses, our thinking, our hostility, our indifference, our disconnections, and our lack of passion threaten our survival. Instead of looking for someone to blame, these people are reflecting on how they contribute to the systems they are a part of. The cultural creatives understand cellist Pablo Casals:

When will we teach our children in school what they are?
We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all of the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed there has never been another child like you. You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who, like you is a marvel?

When we teach our children to love themselves, they will not grow up to be killers on hockey rinks.

Recommended Reading: *Courage: The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman* by Sandra Ford Walston.