NEITHER LIBERTY NOR SAFETY: THE IMPACT OF FEAR ON INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS, AND SOCIETIES, PART IV

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ABSTRACT The last in a series of four papers describing how individuals' minds and bodies are affected by severe stress. The purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of what happens to stressed individuals who come together to form stressed organizations and the impact of this stress on organizational leaders. The series also explores the parallel process that occurs when traumatized individuals and stressed organizations come together to form stressed societies. Part I focused on the basic human stress response. Part II explored the more extended impact of severe, chronic, and repetitive exposure to stress on the functioning of the emotional system and the ways in which human beings tend to adapt to adversity and thus come to normalize highly abnormal behavior. The focus of Part III was on the impact of chronic stress on memory, the ability to put words to feelings and the tendency to repeat the past automatically. Part IV reviews the way attachment schemas are disrupted by trauma and how the accumulative experience of stress leads to downward spirals of anxiety and, finally, alienation if the progress of this deterioration is not stopped. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: trauma; societal trauma; stress; attachment

DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT: ADDICTION, RELATIONSHIPS AND ABUSIVE AUTHORITY

As a species we survived largely because we developed as social animals that provided each other with mutual protection. The social nature of human beings is grounded in our need to attach to other human beings from cradle to grave. Emotions firmly secure us to other people but trauma profoundly disrupts our ability to manage emotional experience. We lose our capacity to respond to situations with the appropriate emotion in appropriate measure. We tend to overreact to events that should not provoke us, and under-react to events that we should react to more meaningfully. Any impairment in our ability to respond with the appropriate emotional signal impairs our capacity to create and maintain healthy relationships (Bloom, 2004).

Traumatic experience disrupts attachment to the extent that the social world has failed to serve its evolutionarily designed protective function for the individual. Disruption of attachment schemas, expressed through the medium of emotional modulation in one generation, are perpetuated through the ongoing parental and familial bonds into the next generation and do not automatically self-correct. What we learn about parenting is based on the way we were parented. We are particularly ill-suited to being violated by the people to whom we are attached.

It is certainly clear that the emotional numbing and the dysregulated emotional management so typical of trauma survivors are damaging to relationships. We need all of our emotions available to us if we are to create and sustain healthy relationships with other people. A compromised emotional system will result in disrupted attachment just as it is frequently caused by disrupted childhood attachments. In this way, via the attachment system, the impact of traumatic experience is transmitted through the generations. This is yet another example of how a coping skill that is useful for survival under conditions of traumatic stress can become a serious liability.

This process is further complicated by the impact of neurohormones known as endorphins and enkephalins. These substances are chemically related to heroin and morphine and have similar effects. They tend to increase when social support increases and decrease when social support is withdrawn since they mediate the experience of pleasure, relaxation, and calm. For a social animal, being with others is designed to evoke a lowering of anxiety. However, the endorphins also mediate our response to pain and are therefore released during times of stress. Exposure to chronic severe stress may dysregulate this system so that stress – instead of social support – is associated with

anxiety relief, an outcome known as *addiction to trauma*, further damaging the attachment system and creating an increased likelihood that people will turn to self-destructive behavior, addictive substances, violence and thrill-seeking as a way of regulating their internal environments (Van der Kolk et al., 1989).

Even more ominous for repeatedly traumatized people is their pronounced tendency to use highly abnormal and dangerous relationships as their normative idea of what relationships are supposed to be (Herman, 1992). *Trauma-bonding* describes a relationship based on terror and the twisting of normal attachment behavior into something perverse and cruel (James, 1994). Cognitively, the victim may want nothing more than to have a healthy relationship, but outside of conscious, cognitive awareness, what the victim has learned is how to relate to the perpetrator without being killed. This nonverbal awareness often determines who the person is chosen by or chooses to relate to, based on our primal need to repeat early childhood attachment behavior, even as adults. This often leads to profound difficulties in establishing a healthy relationship with authority figures and a tendency to abuse one's own authority in a variety of ways.

Human beings first learn about power relationships in the context of the family. If we experience fair, kind and consistent authority figures then we will internalize that relationship to authority both in the way we exert control over our own impulses and in the way we deal with other people. If we have been exposed to harsh, punitive, abusive, inconsistent authority then the style of authority that we adopt is likely to be similarly abusive. Additionally, the social nature of our species is guaranteed by an innate sense of reciprocity and it is this sense of 'fair play' that leads not only to the evolution of justice systems

but also to the need for revenge. It is forgiveness that needs to be taught to human beings, not retaliation. As a result, you cannot hurt anyone, in any way, without setting the stage for a fervent desire for revenge that will be exacted either upon themselves, upon others, or both if restitution does not occur. Through the mechanism of traumatic reenactment, the dynamics of helpless victim, vengeful perpetrator, and fantasized rescuer will be played out on the stage of life.

Our ability to form healthy attachments to other people allows us to transit successfully through the process of grieving after a loss. People who have disrupted attachment experiences have difficulties with grieving. New losses tend to open up old wounds that never heal. Arrested grief is extremely problematic because it is impossible to form healthy new attachments without first finishing with old attachments (Bloom, 2002). In this way, unresolved loss becomes another dynamic that keeps an individual stuck in time, unable to move ahead, unable to go back. Compounded and unresolved grief is frequently in the background of lives based on traumatic reenactment.

DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Organizations that have experienced repeated stress and traumatic loss can also experience disrupted attachment. In such a system there will be a devaluation of the importance of relationships. People are treated as widgets, replaceable parts that have no significant individual identity or value. There is a lack of concern with the wellbeing of others as the organizational norm, perhaps under the guise of 'don't take it personally – it's just business'. In organizations with disrupted attachment schemata there is a high frequency of acceptance of, or even active encouragement of, addictive behavior including substance abuse. There is also unwillingness and inability to work through loss so that people leaving the organization are dealt with summarily and never mentioned again. Other losses, such as loss of the ability to do the job as employees have been trained to do it, or loss of professional autonomy, are neither recognized nor mourned. The result is that the organization becomes more stagnant and disconnected from a meaningful environment, employee loyalty plummets and productivity declines.

Based on a set of assumptions that human misfortune and misbehavior is the result of willful disobedience, a contrary nature or just raw evil, the 'helpers' response is supported by institutional structure. As trauma piles upon trauma, as rejection and betrayal escalate, the person spirals down and the societal prophecy of continuing failure is self-fulfilled and reinforced by ever more punitive laws, sentencing, and social policy.

DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT IN A SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

> The past shapes the present and influences the future. To know our parents and grandparents is to know their history as immigrants.
>
> (Wakin, 1977)

Some nations have their origins in broken bonds of attachment. The US is a country of immigrants, former slaves, refugees, and some battered and betrayed natives. Few if any American families can claim a nontraumatic past. The only thing that separates our histories is whether the disrupted attachments and their attendant loss occurred 2 years ago, 10 years ago, 50 years ago, or a century or two ago.

Disrupted attachment in societies can be measured by a loss of civic engagement, by child abuse and abandonment, divorce,

'. . . slavery has remained the most glaring example of an unaddressed historical injustice in the United States. This is not because slavery in the United States was worse than in other countries. Rather slavery in the United States stands in direct contrast with the public culture that embraces the concept of attempting to redress its imperfect past . . . Supporters of reparation for slavery . . . believe that restitution will constitute compensation for the impact of past injustices upon present suffering and will provide a mechanism for healing present-day social and economic afflictions.' (Barkan, 2001, 284)

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family breakdown, institutional failure, corrupt leadership, the abusive use of power, an increasingly punitive justice system and acceptance of all this as the social norm. The breakdown of family life mirrors the breakdown of the entire social framework of attachment as manifested in increased violence, increased poverty, increased unemployment and joblessness, increased homelessness, increased economic inequality.

As disrupted attachment becomes an acceptable and expected social norm, cultural images emerge that serve to illustrate, romanticize and justify these norms. The self-made man, the lone cowboy, the rugged individualist are all examples of these images that allow people with disrupted attachment schemas to proudly identify with a changed and divergent social norm.
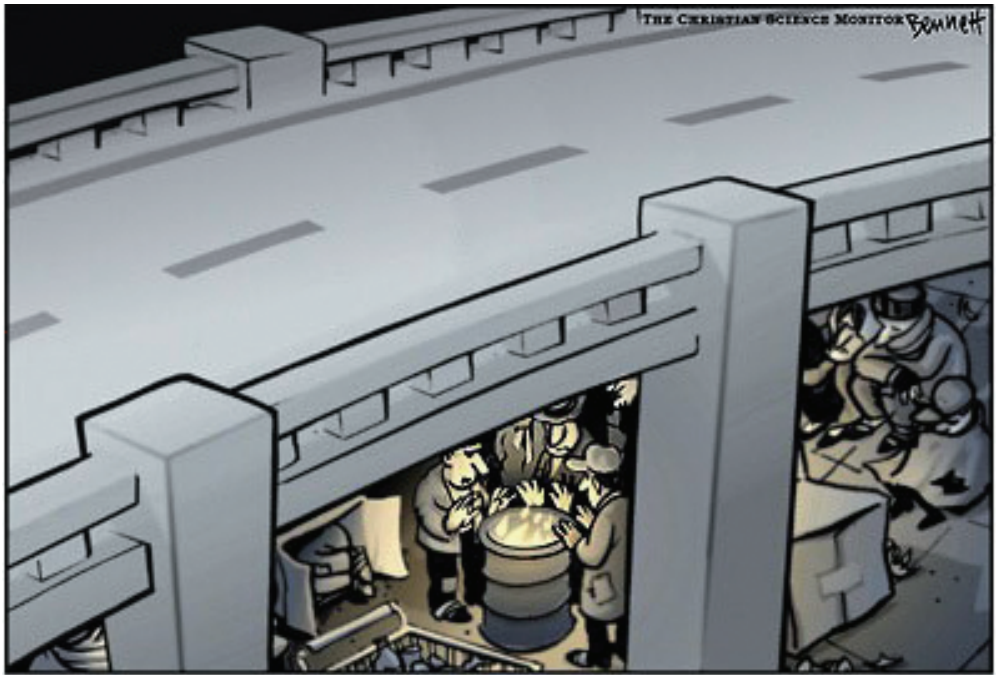
The Bridge to the 21st Century

'In the final years of the war, Americans entered into a collective numbness . . . Americans had seen their faith in a benevolent moral and political universe radically undermined. By the end of the war, large numbers of both combat veterans and American civilians had sensed the existence of a world not ordered by national myth or a concern for one's personal safety, a world of random horror for whose creation they could themselves be held, at least in part, responsible. In the years to come, both veterans and civilians would struggle to make sense of this new, alien world.' (Turner, 1996)

The justification of disrupted attachment as a social norm can extend to the economic arguments typical of malignant capitalism that appear to explain and justify virtually any behavior in the name of market profitability. Since the 1980s there has been abundant evidence of a social and political ideal that places acquiring wealth on the part of the minority far above preservation and rehabilitation of the social infrastructure. In the US, starting with the Vietnam War and the social tumult of the 1960s, authority figures came under a harsh light. But since that time, authority figures have consistently failed to uphold social norms of accountability and responsibility, with one government scandal following another corporate scandal and the revelation of abuse on the part of virtually every major social institution, most recently the Catholic Church.
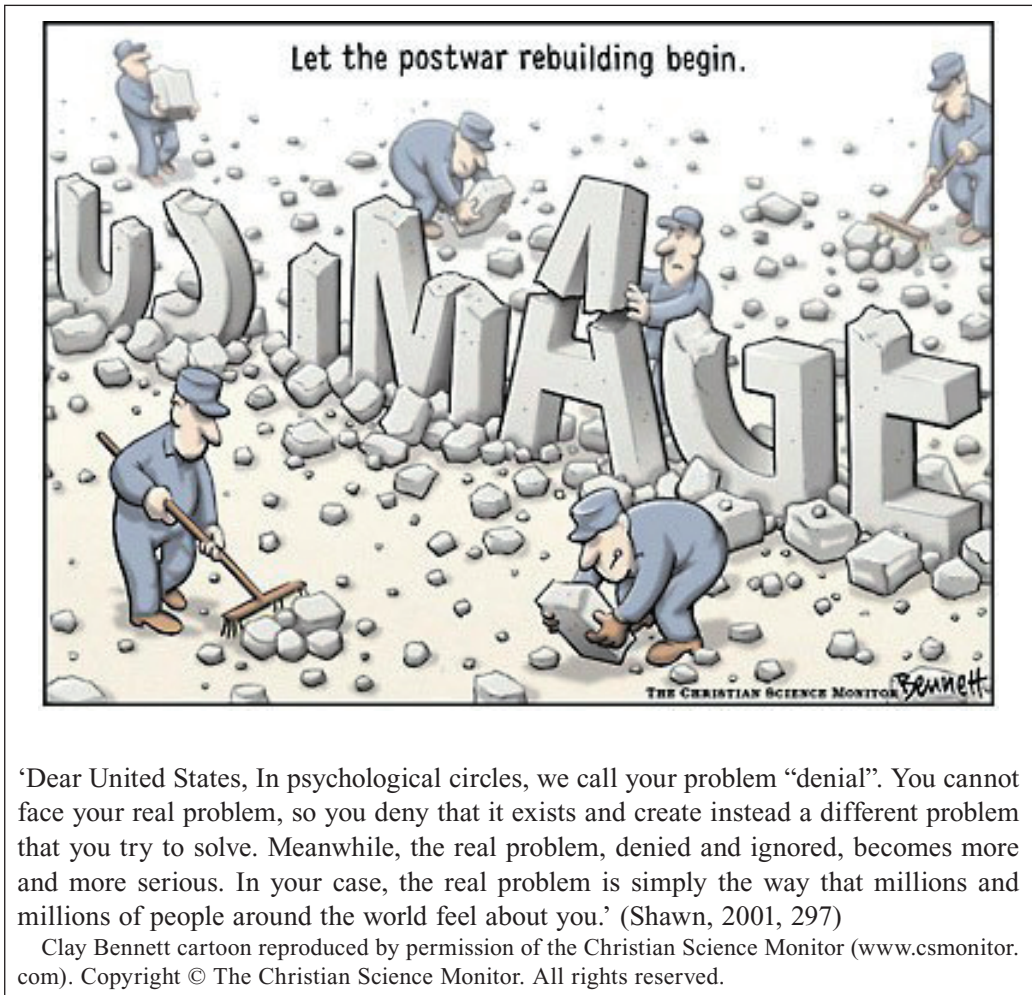
'Dear United States, In psychological circles, we call your problem "denial". You cannot face your real problem, so you deny that it exists and create instead a different problem that you try to solve. Meanwhile, the real problem, denied and ignored, becomes more and more serious. In your case, the real problem is simply the way that millions and millions of people around the world feel about you.' (Shawn, 2001, 297)

In his sociological examination of the causes of civic disengagement, Putnam (2000) describes four main causes: changes in the generational norm, television, pressures of time and money, and suburbanization. But he also identifies a category of 'other'. Post-traumatic narratives suggest that national unresolved wounds of past experiences such as Hiroshima, the Vietnam War, the assassinations of both John F. and Robert Kennedy as well as Martin Luther King, Watergate, CIA assassinations, and Iran-Contra are layered atop the deeper wounds of genocide and slavery in the American psyche, and may constitute the 'other' factors that help to explain the bonds of broken attachment and the breakdown in community that has become such a part of the American landscape. All are shaky foundations for a healthy society.

The most recent political regime in the US has most clearly illustrated disrupted attachment in a sociopolitical context in a failed social contract with the elderly, the sick, the poor, the underprivileged, the working class, the environment, our international neighbors and future generations, all justified in the resort to 'Homeland Security'. National

grieving for the tragedy of September 11, 2001, was not permitted to be fully resolved. Instead, almost immediately the nation was directed toward revenge and the outpouring of international support was quickly turned into international dismay at the imperialistic behavior of US foreign policy. As a result, even our attachment to the international community has been disrupted.

No evidence yet...

IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

SADDAM'S LINKS TO AL QAEDA

WHITE HOUSE CREDIBILITY

Bennett THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

'Americans today inhabit a post-traumatic world of fragmented, conflicting narratives, each true to a degree and each in part false . . . If we are to take effective action in the years ahead, we must allow the psychological wounds of the past to close . . . If we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, we must also continue to run our fingers along the scars.' (Turner, 1996)

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IMPLICATIONS FOR RESPONSE: DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT

The recognition of the importance of addiction to trauma implies that intervention strategies must focus on helping people to 'detoxify' from the behavioral form of addiction by providing environments that insist on the establishment and maintenance of safety and safety in relationships. People who have been traumatized need opportunities to learn how to create relationships that are not based on terror and the abuse of power, even though abusive power feels 'normal' and 'right'. In such cases, people often need direct relationship coach-

ing and the experience of engaging in relationships that are not abusive and do not permit or tolerate abusive and punitive behavior.

People who have been sexually assaulted or traumatized significantly in any way must face incomprehensible losses and to do so they must be able to grieve. United States' society largely rejects the notion of grief for anything but the most extreme losses. Rather than help grieving people to find ways to work through their suffering and loss we are more likely to advise them to 'get over it', 'put it out of your mind' or 'forget about it' – all injunctions to *not* resolve the loss. This is particularly true when the losses that people sustain are not about the actual death of a significant other. Trauma survivors must grieve and the consequences for not grieving are enormous. Unresolved grief prevents recovery from both the psychological and the physical problems that result from exposure to a traumatic experience (Bloom, 2002).

In an organizational context, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that home, school, workplace, and community environments that support growth, learning, creativity and team decision making are more productive, health promoting, and less violent. Focusing on building healthy relationships, teaching social skills, and accepting the inevitability of loss all benefit the workplace and the society as a whole. But a history of disrupted attachment experiences among diverse groups of people has to be worked through in order for healthier organizational structures to emerge.

Failing to restore social bonds and, worse yet, promoting the breaking of those bonds bodes ill for the health and wellbeing of an individual, a family, an organization and entire societies. It is worth remembering the example of the Ik, studied years ago by the anthropologist Colin Turnbull. He witnessed what rapidly happened to a previously stable, moral, family-oriented, ecologically fit hunter-gatherer tribe of people who were displaced from their ecological niche in such a way that their entire social structure was disrupted and destroyed. Under such conditions, the Ik became so cruel that their behavior could easily be described as 'evil' – children older than 3 years were abandoned to fend for themselves; the very old were abandoned and left to die, the dead were left unburied; the sick were not cared for; the level of cruelty and sadism was unsurpassed in their history. They had become, as Turnbull described them, 'the loveless people' witnessing the 'end of goodness' (Turnbull, 1972).

True security cannot be firmly established with guns or money but only with trust between individuals, between individuals and their organizations, among organizations and between societies. Revaluing relationships and rebuilding trust between nations and their citizens is the necessary rehabilitation work of the twenty-first century.

ANXIETY AND ANGST : MULTIPLE DOWNWARD SPIRALS

As the post-traumatic process of prolonged hyperarousal, helplessness, emotional numbing, disrupted attachment and reenactment unfolds, our sense of who we are, how we fit into the world, how we relate to other people, and what the point of it all is can become significantly limited in scope. As this occurs we are likely to become increasingly depressed. These avoidance symptoms, along with the intrusive symptoms, like flashbacks and nightmares, comprise two of the interacting and escalating aspects of post-traumatic stress syndrome, set in the context of a more generalized physical hyperarousal. As these alternating symptoms come to dominate traumatized people's

'It is simply not possible to have a multi-billion-dollar, multi-year tax cut, a Pentagon budget that will top $500 billion by the end of this decade, a seemingly endless string of wars for "regime change" that are paid for through emergency appropriations over and above the Pentagon's massive annual spending, plus massive new expenditures for intelligence and homeland security, and still expect the government to meet its traditional responsibilities in the areas of education, income security, transportation, health care, housing, environmental protection, and energy development.' (Hartung, 2003, xxi)

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lives they feel more and more alienated from everything that gives life meaning – favorite activities, other people, a sense of direction and purpose, a sense of spirituality, a sense of community. It is not surprising, then, that slow self-destruction through addictions, or fast self-destruction through suicide, is often the final outcome of these syndromes. For other people, rage at others comes to dominate the picture and these are the ones who end up becoming significant threats to other people as well as themselves.

Children who are traumatized do not possess developed coping skills, a developed sense of self, or of self in relation to others. Their schemas for meaning, hope, faith, and purpose are not yet fully formed. They are in the process of developing a sense of right and wrong, of mercy balanced against justice. All of their cognitive processes – their ability to make decisions, their problem-solving capacities, and learning skills – are still being acquired. As a consequence, the responses to trauma are amplified because they interfere

with the processes of normal development. For many children, in fact, traumatic experience becomes the norm rather than the exception and they fail to develop a concept of what is normal or healthy. They do not learn how to think in a careful, quiet, and deliberate way. They do not learn how to have mutual, compassionate, and satisfying relationships. They fail to develop an ability to listen carefully to the messages of their bodies and their senses. Their sense of self becomes determined by the experiences they have had with care-taking adults and the trauma they have experienced teaches them that they are bad, worthless, a nuisance, or worse. They also do not have adequate role models for how to relate to the world. Living in a system of contradictory and hypocritical values impairs the development of conscience, of a faith in justice, of a belief in the pursuit of truth.

It should come as no surprise, then, that these children so often end up as the maladjusted troublemakers that pose so many problems for teachers, schools, other children, and ultimately all of us. They grow up to be the adults who pose problems for everyone. And the resources available to offer help frequently provide only band-aid treatment. They go to a doctor who, pressed for time, only offers a drug. They appear at a homeless shelter or a shelter for battered women and encounter another hostile and punitive environment. They go to the Department of Human Services and the worker threatens to take away their children. The mental health worker substitutes a diagnosis for a listening ear, the teacher sends the troubled and troubling student for disciplinary action, a delinquent is sent to a juvenile facility where he is raped. The drug addict is thrown in prison, arguably the most dangerous of environments. It is frequently at this point, 'near the bottom', when people seek help. By the time they reach out they have exhausted their own internal coping skills.

## PROLONGED ANXIETY AND ANGST IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Similar to a chronically stressed individual, a pattern of organizational failure begins to emerge as organizational stress persists. Communication networks break down and productivity declines. The organization looks, feels, and acts depressed and anxious, but helpless to effect any change. There is an increasing rate of illness and addiction among the individuals within the group. Burnout, personality distortions, and acting-out behaviors all increase. Conflicts arise repeatedly and are not resolved or even addressed. As this deterioration continues, everyone feels increasingly demoralized and hopeless, feeling like the organizational mission and values system have been betrayed in countless ways. In this way, an organization can distance itself from reality, ultimately powerless to correct this downward spiral.

PROLONGED ANXIETY AND ANGST IN SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

> The two enemies of the people are criminals and government, so let us tie the second down with the chains of the Constitution so the second will not become the legalized version of the first.
> (Thomas Jefferson)

As the struggle between knowing and not-knowing is engaged there are tensions within a society as old unresolved conflicts keep bubbling to the surface, providing an opportunity to surface and begin the process of healing old wounds. Allowing this to happen, however, requires forestalling action and being able to sit with and tolerate the anxiety and angst associated with uncertainty, discomfort and distress. Whether referring to an individual, an organization, or an entire society, healing requires engaging in the
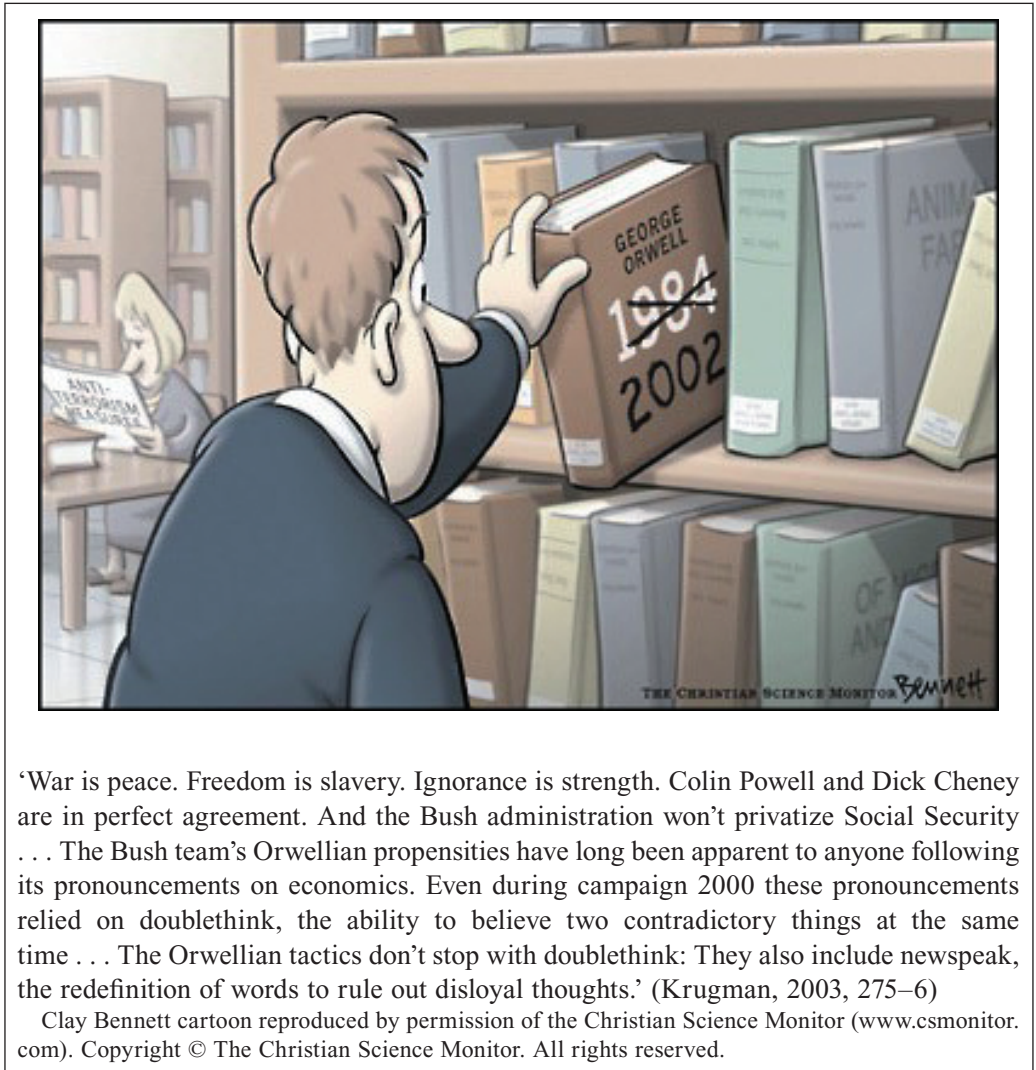
'War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. Colin Powell and Dick Cheney are in perfect agreement. And the Bush administration won't privatize Social Security . . . The Bush team's Orwellian propensities have long been apparent to anyone following its pronouncements on economics. Even during campaign 2000 these pronouncements relied on doublethink, the ability to believe two contradictory things at the same time . . . The Orwellian tactics don't stop with doublethink: They also include newspeak, the redefinition of words to rule out disloyal thoughts.' (Krugman, 2003, 275–6)

painful struggle against forgetting. It requires a willingness to tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, confusion, shame, guilt and loss. An unfettered press can play a significant role in educating the public, allowing the conflict to surface, illuminating the different points of view, and providing options for various pathways leading to conflict resolution. Unfortunately, to a great extent we no longer have an unfettered press. After September 11, 2001, profound limits were set formally and informally, on what the press could report. And even before that, the takeover of the media by major corporate conglomerates had already stifled mainstream television, radio, and print media.

Working through profound societal conflicts is a difficult process for which there is relatively little precedent. So instead of working through the past there is frequently an increase in tension that is temporarily released in a society by some form of destruc-

'Gosh, I sure hope nobody ever liberates us!'

'In the greater part of the news media, however, analysis was confined within certain conspicuous boundaries. One was support for almost any extension of the war on terrorism that the Bush administration might launch. A second was observance of a virtual prohibition against drawing connections between what America had suffered on September 11 and anything America might have done before that date, in the Middle East or elsewhere. The idea that any evils performed by the United States might have something to do with the evil endured by the United States was pretty much ruled out of order.' (Jonathan Schell, introduction to *A Just Response*, Heuvel, 2003)

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tive behavior – enactment of increasingly punitive laws, destroying the environment, enforcing policies that endanger the most vulnerable members of the population – impoverished women and children, the mentally ill – and wars. Meanwhile, opportunities to heal old wounds continue to emerge and provide an opportunity for resolution if only they could be acted upon. The Iraq War has revealed much about the old wounds of Vietnam; arguments in the US about the Confederate flag open up unhealed wounds from as far back as the Civil War; lawsuits over affirmative action reveal the profound wounding of slavery. If a society can tolerate the anxiety associated with revisiting the past the opportunity for healing is presented through revisiting these old wounds. If not, the society is likely to continue to reenact the wounding without any real healing taking place.

'Unfortunately, protecting our way of life has now become our way of life.'

'We must define ourselves not by the lives we led until September 11 but by the lives we will lead from now on. If we seize the opportunity to build a stronger country, we too will ultimately prevail in the challenges ahead, at home and abroad. But we cannot win this new struggle by military might alone. We will prevail only if we lead by example, as a democracy committed to the rule of law and the spirit of fairness, whose corporate and political elites recognize that it isn't only firefighters, police and families grieving their missing kin who are called upon to sacrifice.' (Moyers, 2003)

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESPONSE: ANXIETY AND ANGST

The process of recovery from trauma is painful. Symptoms often get worse before they get better because in order to heal survivors must open up the old wounds, remember and reconstruct the past, resolve the accompanying painful emotions, integrate thoughts, feeling and memories, and reconnect to their internal world and the world around them. To do so requires a vision of possibilities. It requires a clear recognition that recovery is possible, that there is a new life to be found after trauma, and that people are free to change and grow regardless of how trapped, imprisoned, or violated they were in the past. For the demoralized and depleted trauma survivor, other people must advance this vision of freedom, at least at first.

ALIENATION: POST-TRAUMATIC STAGNATION

Finally, we are physiologically designed to function best as an integrated whole. Out of

that sense of wholeness and integrity emerges meaning, purpose, values, belief, identity and integrity and wisdom. The fragmentation that accompanies traumatic experience degrades this integration and impedes maximum performance in a variety of ways. Human brains function best when they are adequately stimulated but simultaneously protected from overwhelming stress. This explains our need for order, for safety, for adequate protection. Without this balance between stimulation and soothing we cannot reason properly and we cannot make sense out of what has happened to us. We are meaning-making animals. We must be able to make sense of our experience, to order chaos and structure our reality. Traumatic experience robs us of our sense of meaning and therefore purpose. Close contact with traumatic death or threats to our own mor-
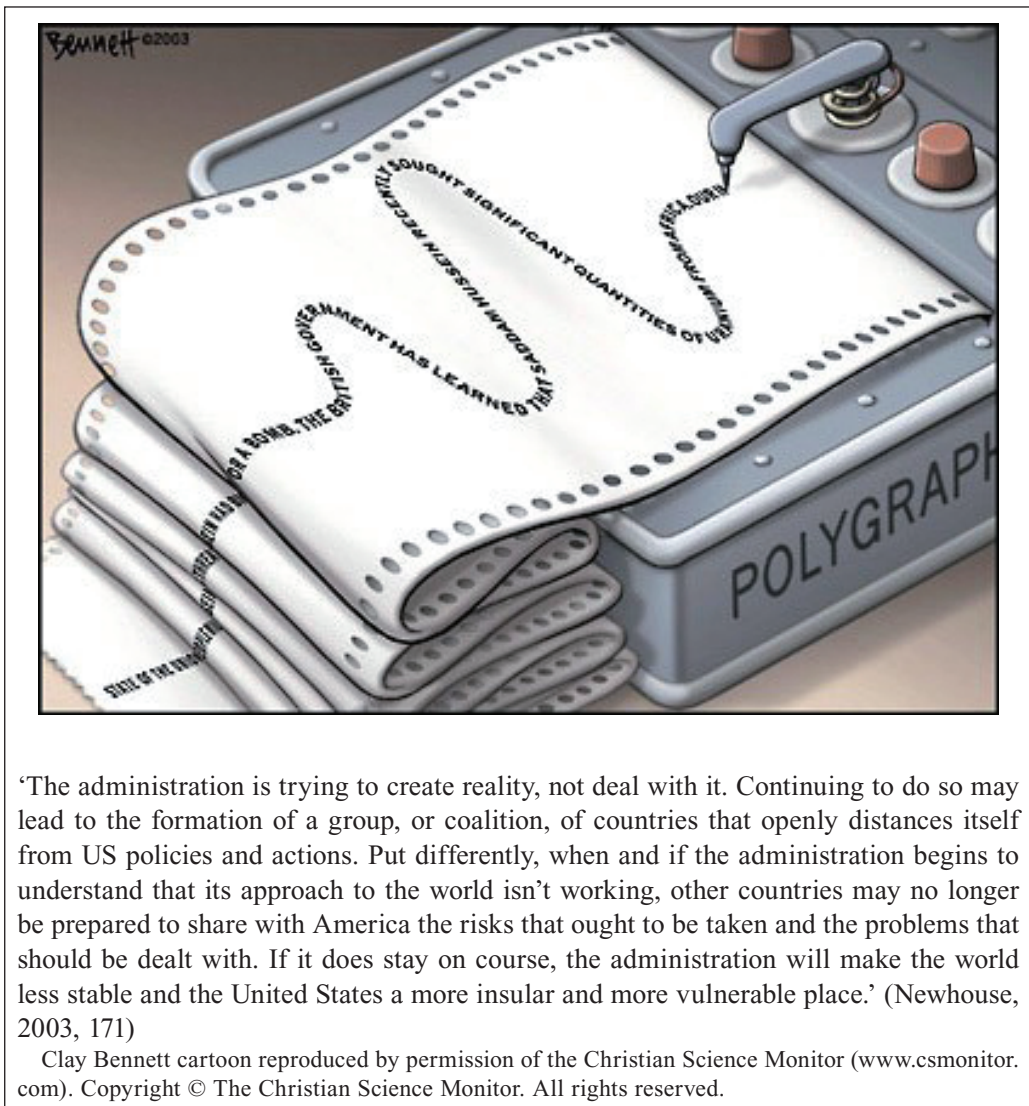
'The administration is trying to create reality, not deal with it. Continuing to do so may lead to the formation of a group, or coalition, of countries that openly distances itself from US policies and actions. Put differently, when and if the administration begins to understand that its approach to the world isn't working, other countries may no longer be prepared to share with America the risks that ought to be taken and the problems that should be dealt with. If it does stay on course, the administration will make the world less stable and the United States a more insular and more vulnerable place.' (Newhouse, 2003, 171)

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tality cannot be accepted but can only be transcended; trauma dramatically interferes with our capacity to grow, to change and to move on. Losing the capacity for psychic movement, we deteriorate into a repetitive cycle of reenactment, isolation, stagnation and despair – and even paranoia.

If unchecked, the result of this complex sequence of post-traumatic events is repetition, stagnation, rigidity and a fear of change all in the context of a deteriorating life. As emotional, physical and social symptoms of distress pile upon each other, victims try desperately to extricate themselves by using the same protective devices that they used to cope with threat in the first place – dissociation, avoidance, aggression, destructive attachments, damaging behaviors, and addictive substances. The response to threat has become so ingrained and automatic that victims experience control as beyond them and, as their lives deteriorate, their responses become increasingly stereotyped and rigid. To other people, they appear increasingly illogical, their behavior extreme and often self-destructive, yet they try to justify this behavior in ways that may come to sound psychotic. Post-traumatic reactions are a failure of imagination. Compulsive repetition forecloses on a different and possible future and predetermines outcome. Living systems must change throughout the life cycle. Failing to change, we atrophy, engaging far too rapidly in the process of dying.

By the time survivors enter treatment they are usually at very low ebb, despairing that anything will change, helpless in the face of the challenges life presents them with, hanging on to only thin shreds of hope that anyone will be able or willing to understand, support and assist them. Millions of survivors do not enter treatment as such, and are not identified as suffering from trauma-related problems, but they do appear in other social service settings – employment offices, welfare offices, health clinics, child-protection agencies, domestic violence settings, courtrooms, police stations. The intensive relationship that can exist between therapist and client can help provide a bridge away from a permanent state of alienation and back to connection with the world for the individuals who actually enter and stay with treatment. Without considerable social change, however, it is unlikely that the others will receive the response from helping agents that could bring about the kinds of commitment necessary to bring about change. And it is change that in the end bounces people out of a state of alienation. Trauma produces stagnation and resistance to change and helping responses are those that simultaneously provide support, education, and an insistence on change.

ALIENATION IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Alienation can come to characterize the social milieu and evidence for it can be seen in increased internal splitting and dissension, rampant hypocrisy, a loss of mutual respect and tolerance, apathy, cynicism, hopelessness, helplessness, loss of social cohesiveness and purpose, loss of a sense of shared social responsibility for the less fortunate members of any population, and the loss of a shared moral compass. Alienation is the end result of an unwillingness or inability to work through the fragmentation, dissociation, and disrupted attachment attendant upon repetitive traumatic experience.
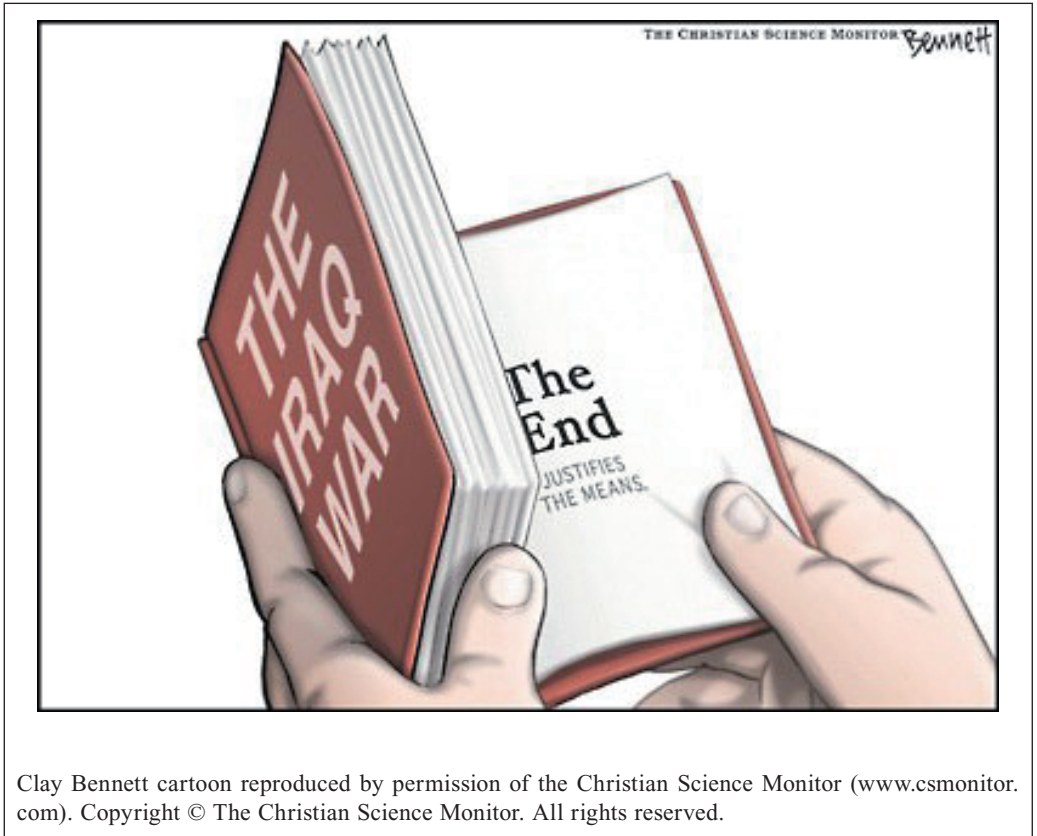
Regardless of whether it is in an individual, an organization, or an entire society, increasing feelings of alienation are symptoms of severe degradation and stagnation and signal that the time for systemic change is at hand if the organism is to survive. System-wide corruption, systematic deceit, empathic failures, abusive laws, increasingly punitive

'It is into this world that September 11, 2001, came. Deeply repugnant though the attack was, should it have so surprised us? Do we really have to ask, Why do they hate us? At this late date in our history to relapse into the dream of innocence and imagine that evil is the sole possession of our enemies invites disaster. Covering ourselves in American flags and vowing to "smoke out" Bin Laden and "get him dead or alive" or engaging in a far-flung and open-ended war against terrorism, addresses none of the realities in the midst of which we live.' (Bellah, 2003, 21)

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laws, hypermoralism, hypocrisy and a preoccupation and glorification of violence are all symptomatic of impending organizational bankruptcy or system failure.

The old 'saw' in substance-abuse circles is that people have to hit bottom before they begin the real work of recovery. We have to hope that the same holds true for organizations, institutions, and societies. The re-election of the present administration in 2004 should not be viewed as an approval of current policy but more as an act of desperation for a population terrified to confront who or what lies behind the curtain in the Oz-like America of 2005. Now, finally, the mainstream press has at least begun to expose some of the malfeasance of the last 5 years and the wheels of democratic blowback are beginning to be felt as Democrats scored some victories in the off-year elections and, at least in Pennsylvania, the radical elements promoting 'Intelligent Design' as a competitor to Darwin in the small town of Dover were voted out of office. Maybe we will yet, as Ferlinghetti pleads, 'survive our own rulers'. (Ferlinghetti, 2003)

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CONCLUSION

> No provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the enterprises of the civil authority
>
> (Jefferson, 1809)

The new paradigm of 'trauma theory' has begun to provide answers for many of the perplexing questions that have presented themselves to students of human behavior for centuries. Many of the answers are not new but are deeply embedded in established practice. What is new is a growth in understanding of multicausality, the pressing need for an integrated conceptual framework that informs individual, family, and group treatment as well as political and social policy and the ways in which systems are organized. In essence, trauma theory is to the study of human behavior what chaos theory and complexity theory are to the basic sciences – a new way of understanding complex adaptive systems, how they function through time and space, and what happens when they interact with each other.

Expanding our understanding is vitally important. The rapid rate of change, the growth of technology, and the widespread changes associated with globalization, population growth, and the spread of information all contribute to creating stressed social structures around the world. A significant part of the stress that we all face arises from the complexity involved in virtually every situation that confronts us from raising children to global peacemaking. In a globally interconnected world, with diminishing resources, burgeoning populations, and weapons of mass destruction poised on

'Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetrated by human beings on human beings. No man can begin to think, feel or act now except from the starting point of his or her own alienation.' (Laing, 1983)

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every side, species survival is contingent upon our ability to evolve socially more rapidly than can be accommodated by our biological evolution. Faced with the capacity of total species annihilation the only long-term solution possible is a radical shift in paradigm if we are to survive as a species. This will require a leap in social evolution since our physical evolution has left us with one foot in the twenty-first century and the other solidly planted in the Stone Age. To survive, we must deliberately and systematically come to understand the inherent dangers in responding to our present-day enemies as we once did to saber-tooth tigers. War is no longer a viable option because in an interconnected world it is an act of savage self-mutilation. The only solutions are non-violent resistance to violence and an increase in democratic processes, which are better able to deal with complex problems than any other political system.

> A civilization generally refuses to accept a cultural innovation that calls in question one of its own structural elements. Such refusals or unspoken enmities are relatively rare; but they always point to the heart of a civilization.
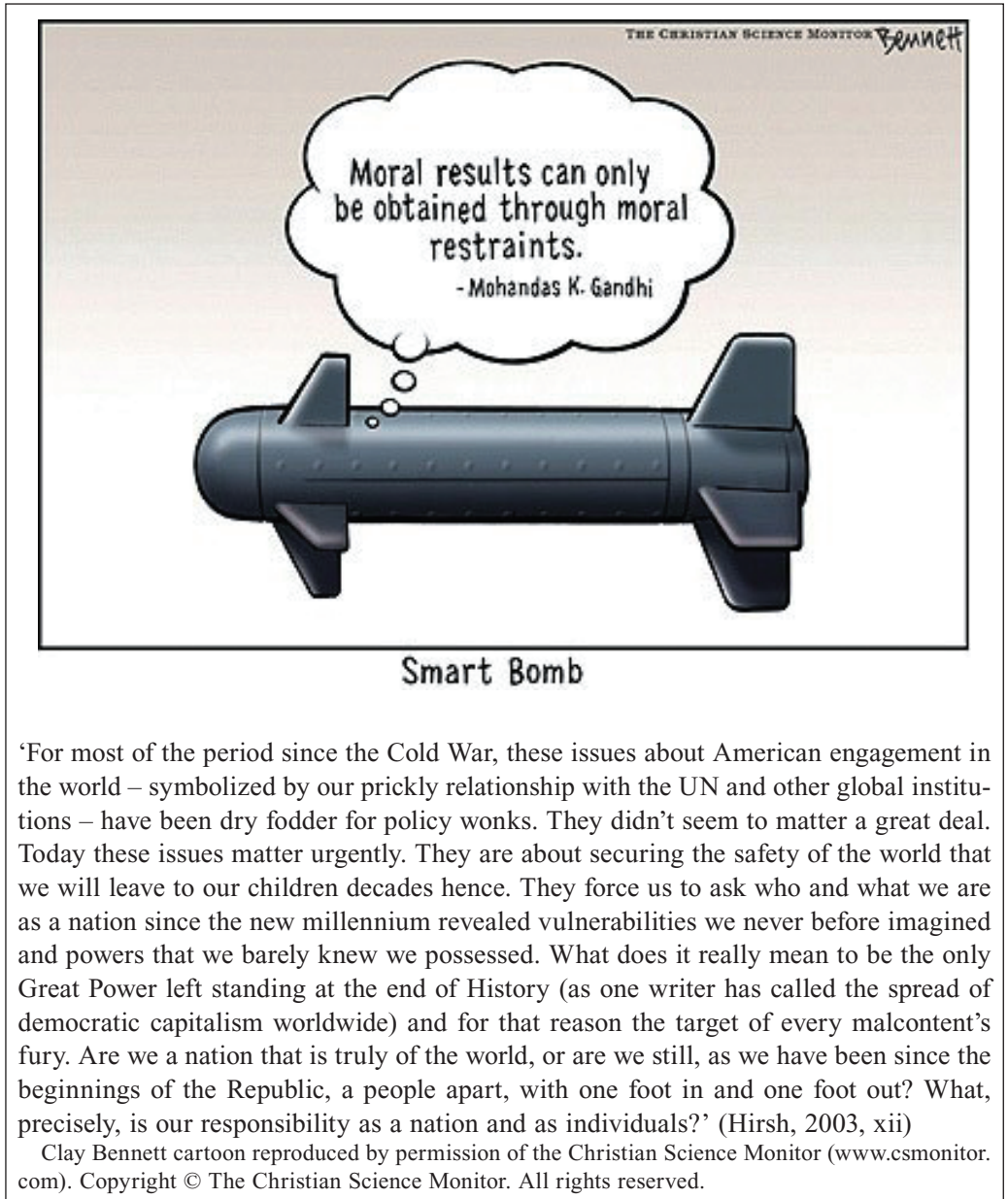>
> (Braudel, 1994).

The information that the study of traumatic experience reveals about the nature of human nature challenges the existing paradigmatic structures that support many of our present social structures. This series of papers suggest that we have a great deal to learn

from both the post-traumatic development of individual pathology and recovery from trauma-related syndromes.

The implications of healing from traumatic events can help guide organizational and social policy efforts to accelerate this process of social evolution and transformation. It is my premise that parallel processes are at work in all human systems and they can stand in as metaphors, if not actual representations, for each other. The result of the parallel process nature of human systems is that our organizations and society as a whole frequently recapitulate for individuals the

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Moral results can only be obtained through moral restraints.
– Mohandas K. Gandhi

Smart Bomb

'For most of the period since the Cold War, these issues about American engagement in the world – symbolized by our prickly relationship with the UN and other global institutions – have been dry fodder for policy wonks. They didn't seem to matter a great deal. Today these issues matter urgently. They are about securing the safety of the world that we will leave to our children decades hence. They force us to ask who and what we are as a nation since the new millennium revealed vulnerabilities we never before imagined and powers that we barely knew we possessed. What does it really mean to be the only Great Power left standing at the end of History (as one writer has called the spread of democratic capitalism worldwide) and for that reason the target of every malcontent's fury. Are we a nation that is truly of the world, or are we still, as we have been since the beginnings of the Republic, a people apart, with one foot in and one foot out? What, precisely, is our responsibility as a nation and as individuals?' (Hirsh, 2003, xii)

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very experiences that have proven so toxic for them, while individual reenactment tends to shape the structure and function of those institutions. This complex, multigenerational interaction can produce ever worsening dysfunction in individuals and systems. Similarly, however, it is possible that simultaneous individual and institutional change could redirect the course of social evolution in a less destructive direction. In order to promote social evolution rather than devolution we require a different framework within which to think about the problems that confront us, a framework that enables us to strategize alternative forms of action that control the biological drives that if not checked may lead us over the precipice to destruction. You cannot begin to solve a problem unless you have correctly identified exactly what the problem is.

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