

XCVI – The Sociopathic Cult

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By Butler Shaffer

I can imagine no more absurd explanation for the outcome of the 2004 elections than the proposition that they were a victory for "spiritual values." In the face of the continual lying and butchery practiced by the Bush administration, one can only ponder the distorted meaning of "values" that were endorsed on election day. Shall we next hear of Nazi concentration camps and Soviet gulags being celebrated for "bringing people together"?

If "society" can be thought of, in dictionary terms, as "a voluntary association of individuals for common ends," these elections confirmed the total victory over society by well-organized coercive forces that I shall refer to as a "sociopathic cult." "Sociopaths" are antisocial persons who are "averse to the society of others or to social intercourse." This cult — which has always been the driving force behind political systems — is comprised of men and women of misanthropic dispositions, traits defined by one dictionary as "a hatred or contempt for mankind," or a "distrust of human nature."

Such people are at war with society itself. A creative, life-sustaining society is held together by peaceful, cooperative forms of behavior. Voluntariness, persuasion, and a respect for the inviolability of individuals, are the *modi operandi* of social beings. The sociopaths, however, will have none of this, which helps to explain their unending hostility to the marketplace, private ownership of property, and other expressions of individual liberty; and their attraction to political (i.e., coercive) forms of organization. To sociopaths, coercion is to be preferred over cooperation, conscription over contract. Because force must remain the paramount virtue of state systems, no human action can be regarded as immune from political direction. This is a primary reason we are witnessing an exponential increase in government regulation of even the most personal matters, whether it be smoking, obesity, child-rearing, treatment of pets, or the wearing of seat-belts. Such thinking produces a world in which every aspect of life becomes a political question.

Furthermore, whereas social individuals value truthfulness and peaceful behavior as the adhesive for a free and productive society, the sociopaths — in their ongoing war with society — insist upon contrary values. To worshipers of the sociopathic cult, lying and violence — as long as they are conducted on a grand scale — are not only to be tolerated, but rewarded. These antisocial qualities must not be misused for trifling purposes, however. Thus, Bill Clinton was impeached for lying about his sexual behavior, while George W. Bush was reelected for the blatant lies upon which his most visible policies were grounded! Likewise, a government official who murdered a young woman would properly be prosecuted, but a president who butchers innocent people in a war fashioned from falsehoods will be revered.

For true believers of this cult, lying and violence are reserved for those who practice them in a stately fashion. Isolated acts engaged in by wannabes are not to be tolerated, as they tend to not only trivialize the values underlying cultish behavior, but create the impression that such conduct is appropriate for ordinary people. Thus, you would not abide your spouse or business partner lying to you, but will venerate politicians for the adroitness of their lies. If your child behaved at school the way President Bush behaves in his world playground, you would likely have him on a psychiatrist's couch without hesitation.

Through the principal means of schools and the media, most Americans have become thoroughly conditioned in the sociopathic cult, and are able to recite its mantras without a break in meter or misstatement of phrase. They have learned to distrust social forces, and to regard violence as the only trustworthy means of bringing about change in the world. In my experiences with law school students, I find many expressing the idea that, with a law degree, they will be able to direct state power for the accomplishment of "good" ends.

Such is the mindset of members of the sociopathic cult: uncontrolled forces are not to be trusted; individual behavior is a danger that can only be overcome by the collective powers of the state; while truthfulness and lying are no more than fungible strategies to be used according to the necessities of the moment. At base, politically-minded people believe what every street-thug believes: that dishonesty and violence are the most efficacious means of promoting one's self-interests.

The re-election of George W. Bush was a confirmation of the depths to which the sociopathic cult has infected the minds of most Americans. Even the Democrats — who are also members of this cult — were afraid to confront the antisocial nature of the political system. I suspect that Democratic leaders are now in awe at just how far these cultish practices can be extended in modern society, and will endeavor to out-proselytize the GOP in their efforts to become the high-church expression of antisocial thinking and conduct.

President Bush tells the world that his second term will employ state power — presumably in the form of military action — to promote "freedom" throughout the world. He talks of "freedom" in much the same way that a streetwalker might speak of "love." Are mass killings, torture, and other forms of state violence to be considered tools of liberation? Minds that have been thoroughly inculcated in sociopathic dogmas will have no difficulty synthesizing such rhetoric into their confused and contradictory thinking. It will doubtless get shoe-horned in between the lies about Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" and his involvement in 9/11 that have already become an integral part of popular thinking.

To thoughtful minds that have not succumbed to this political orthodoxy, and who still adhere to the sentiment that a society will only be as free and peaceful — or as unfree and violent — as are its individual members, Bush's proposition is mindless twaddle. How can

people be "free" if they are in conflict, engaging in violence against and the killing of one another, using lies as a substitute for truth? Of what is one "free" if his or her life is dominated by such behavior?

"Freedom" is an expression of an integrated state of mind, wherein people conduct their lives without conflict and contradiction. "Liberty" is a condition in which "free" men and women live in society; in which the integrity of that society is a reflection of the inner integrity of its members. The idea that state violence can foster individual integrity is an absurdity worthy of FoxNews, but not to be entertained by thoughtful men and women who take seriously their lives and the world in which they live. To characterize the Bush re-election as a victory for "spiritual values" is equally moronic, and illustrates the total bankruptcy of a society in entropic collapse.

Albert Jay Nock spoke of the "Saving Remnant," the minority of individuals whose awareness transcends fashionable illusory thinking and passes truth on to future generations. "You do not know and will never know who the Remnant are, or where they are, or how many of them there are, or what they are doing or will do," said Nock. "Two things you do know, and no more: first, that they exist; second, that they will find you."

This Remnant may remind our children and grandchildren of a truth known to our ancestors: individual "freedom" expresses itself as harmonious, integrated social behavior. If you refer to an etymological dictionary, you will discover — as I did many years ago — that the words "peace," "freedom," "love," and "friend" have interconnected origins. Our allegedly "primitive" predecessors understood what our college-indoctrinated minds have long since forgotten, namely, that a peaceful society is one in which free men and women live as friends with genuine love for one another.

But all of this is empty sentimentality to members of the sociopathic cult. Individual liberty, free markets, privately owned property, truthfulness, peace, and a love for life in all its expressions, are anathema to misanthropes who express "hatred or contempt for mankind," and who place their faith in lies and violence. Even many who oppose war are not friends of peaceful behavior, but only have other political agendas to force upon their neighbors. To the politically-minded, spontaneous social processes must be suppressed or co-opted.

Perhaps these cultists are, like the societies they have helped to destroy, going through the final stages of their entropic collapse. I strongly believe that this is, indeed, the case. Like other dark-side forces in human consciousness, sociopathic tendencies have always been present but, for many years, lay somewhat dormant. Such was largely the case in America until the mid-nineteenth century, when the war with Mexico and the slaughter of Indian tribes began to mobilize these shadow tendencies that were finally unleashed in the Civil War, an undertaking that James Street referred to as "a holiday for butchers."

Such forces have once again found expression in America, with their destructive tendencies carefully managed by officials and advisors in Washington. A nation was offended on 9/11, and few were willing to look for the source of those atrocities as a reaction to the foreign policies (i.e., military actions) of the corporate-state with which most Americans identify themselves. For people to look inward for the causes of their difficulties, and to consider political behavior as an explanation for the disordered nature of our world, would be heretical to the sociopathic cult. Others must be blamed and sought out for punishment. In the end, it doesn't even matter against whom and for what purported reason retaliation will be directed. To such a mindset, it is wholly irrelevant whether the Iraqi people had anything to do with 9/11. It is sufficient that they can be made convenient scapegoats to be slaughtered in furtherance of the collective catharsis that is essential to the health of a political weltanschauung. Whatever lies must be concocted in the performance of this ritual will be readily accepted. John Kerry understood this implicitly, as did the members of the Senate committee who sat on their hands listening to the current high priestess of this cult, Condoleezza Rice, express offense at the questioning of her honesty and integrity.

The common threads running through the Bush administration's first four years have included a calculated campaign to confuse "freedom" with extended state power; as well as a disregard for both truth and the consequences of its deceitful policies. The efforts of the Busheoisie to connect the dishonest and philosophically unprincipled ambitions of these cultists with "spiritual values" will, in time, be revealed as but another falsehood; one more contradiction in the state's continuing war against individuals in a free society.

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