

CHAPTER EIGHT “C” HOW INDIFFERENCE IS THE GREATEST VIOLENCE

Having just examined the debilitating power of “hate” as it appears on our Power Chart, I find very instructive, for this chapter, the insight of the 1925 Nobel Laureate for Literature, Bernard Shaw (who knew his own share of bigotry and hate as an Irishman). He wrote in one of his plays: “The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them.” Indifference, he insisted, is “the essence of inhumanity.”¹ If indifference defines what is most inhuman, it follows that care will be the foundation for a new humanity. However, before we move in that direction on our Chart, we might do well to probe the devastating power of indifference, inspired by another quote from another Nobel Laureate: the 1986 Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel. Two days after winning the award, Wiesel spoke about indifference in ways that will preview many of the things I will discuss in this Chapter. He stated: “If there is one word that describes all the woes and threats that exist today, it’s *indifference*.” He explained: “You see a tragedy on television for 3 minutes and then comes something else and something else. How many tragedies have we had recently? The Challenger, Chernobyl, the earthquake in El Salvador . . . Because there are so many tragedies, a sense of helplessness sets in. people become numb. They become indifferent.” Then, in powerful prose he declared:

Indifference to me, is the epitome of evil.

The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.

The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference.

The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference.

And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.

Because of indifference, one dies before one actually dies.²

On April 16, 2007, at Virginia Tech, more people were killed by a single gunman than at any other place or time in U.S. history. While some people asked “Why?” their questions did not seem quite as loud or as plaintive as after the Columbine shootings almost eight years before-- or after subsequent gun murders at schools, post offices and malls. This made me wonder what Peggy Noonan might be writing in her *Wall Street Journal* column the following Saturday.

Noonan reflected on the fact that the outcry regarding the April 16, 2007 West Virginia college killings was much less than that which accompanied the April 20, 1999 high school killings in Colorado. Why, she wondered? She surmised that it was because of the sheer number of violent killings that have occurred in between. Indeed, she found herself telling a friend that her surprise was not that violence had happened again but that people were already becoming immune by it: “I felt people were stricken because they weren’t stricken. When Columbine happened, it was weird and terrible, and now there have been some incidents since, and now it’s not weird anymore. And that is what’s so terrible.”³ Upon reading her words, I wrote at the top of her column: “the numbers have numbed us.”

As a nation we have become immunized to violence. Why has this happened at this precise time? An article two days before in the *Journal*, “The Numbing Down of America” suggested that a reason could be that the nation has become so accustomed to stories of carnage in Iraq, especially suicide bombers, that the killing of his fellow

students at Virginia Tech by Cho Seung-Hui was just one more piece in the pattern of violence that has become part of our collective psyche. Its author, the conservative columnist, Daniel Henninger wrote: “This has had the expectable result of producing what one might call the numbing down of America. Setting aside support for or opposition to the war, the muting of the emotional pathways of the American people is a neutral event, a normal defense against the killings of the suicide bombers, or the crude murders of Cho Seung-Hui.”⁴

A week after her column about the Virginia Tech killings, Peggy Noonan’s ruminations had moved her to an even more devastating critique of our culture. She stated that our children are receiving “a soul-shaking sense that life is unsafe, incoherent, full of random dread” for three reasons. First politics is “much more important than the peace of a child.” Secondly, “there’s money in the sickness that is sold to us. Everyone who works at a TV network knew ratings would go up when the Cho tapes broke.” However, more devastating than sourcing our indifference as a people in our striving for power and money, she found its source in our own hardened hearts. She noted as hardened the hearts of those who have the political clout and material means who are able to immunize their own children from such violence in contrast to the “lacking, the poor, the working and middle class” who “have no protection.” She said: “Their kids are on their own. And they’re scared.” Her conclusion? in “this big sensitive country of ours,” she declared, it’s “too bad no one cares.”⁵

Indifference Determined by Degree of Proximity

I don’t know if our national indifference is as broad or as base as Ms. Noonan makes it. I don’t think it can be said quite so universally that, in this “big sensitive country of ours,” that “no one cares.” Why? Because of the very fact that the news about the Virginia Tech killings was ubiquitous. If we did not care, we could not have created the very *market* for the show and its advertisers. While some elements of Ms. Noonan’s conclusion can be clearly demonstrated, I find that another item she did not mention is more revealing, more sobering: Virginia Tech happened “here,” not “there.” This addresses the notion of proximity discussed before by Nell Noddings. In other words, the closer the violence is to “home,” the less indifferent we will be. The further away the problem, the less it becomes our own. This creates a real issue, however, when we realize that “we are the world” and that violence is endemic throughout this planet, both to its people and to the planet itself. Given an understanding of our global connectedness, not to care about “the least” now creates a crisis—for ourselves.

Psychologists continually show that, while our individual, group and collective consciences are not moved by ongoing stories of genocide, wars and famines, we sometimes can become very caring when we are brought face-to-face with a concrete victim of such violence—even when the victim may be far-removed from us. Nicholas Kristoff, a *New York Times* columnist spoke about this phenomenon in a powerful piece, “Save the Darfur Puppy:”

Advocates for the poor often note that 30,000 children die daily of the consequences of poverty—presuming that this number will shock people into action. But the opposite is true: the more victims, the less compassion.

In one experiment, people in one group could donate to a \$300,000 fund for medical treatments that would save the life of one child—or, in another group,

the lives of eight children. People donated more than twice as much money to help save one child as to help save eight.

He concluded that, maybe what we need to address concerns about global violence, war, genocide and hunger are not better laws but more troubled consciences. These might possibly be pricked, he said, facetiously

by a Darfur puppy with big eyes and floppy ears. Once we find such a soulful dog in peril, we should call ABC News. ABC's news judgment can be assessed by the 11 minutes of evening news coverage it gave to Darfur's genocide during all of last year—compared with 23 minutes for the false confession in the JonBenet Ramsey case.⁶

Indifference Resulting from Entitlement

In the Milwaukee morning paper some time ago I read a letter to the editor that could be written any morning of the week. Its title was "The 'Me' Society Blamed for Crime." The writer made some pertinent points about the violence in our nation:

Violence. It's such a common occurrence that no one is fazed by it any more. We need to speak out against it and make it known how bad the world is today. Here are some shocking facts. Every 22 seconds there is one violent crime. One murder every 22 minutes, one rape every 5 minutes, one aggravated assault every 28 seconds.

Do these numbers make you angry? They should. How did they get to be so high? It is because of the low moral standards today. No one cares about anybody else. It's the "me" society. What happened to "Loving your neighbor as yourself?"

If everybody treated others as they wanted to be treated, we wouldn't have so much violence. People wouldn't be shot for having nice shoes. Little girls wouldn't be taken off their bikes and killed. Police officers wouldn't die because of a song.⁷

When we search for the ideological greenhouse that has nurtured such indifference, we need look no further than the ground-breaking book which Robert Bellah and his associates wrote in the mid-1980s: *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.⁸ It was an attempt to understand the psyche of the American culture. After many interviews with people across the United States the authors came to the conclusion that every person in this nation learns to speak two languages having nothing to do with English or Spanish words. Everyone, be they English-speaking or Spanish-speaking, soon learns that the "*lingua franca*" for their survival is individualism. This is our primary language. It defines our identity as unique persons and a collective people. Its religion is what they called "me-ism." This language has two main "dialects:" utilitarianism and emotive individualism. Utilitarian individualism considers others to be of value to the degree they serve our purposes; otherwise they don't "count" and we "don't care." Personal desires and individual success trump any other considerations. The second "dialect" gets spoken in the form of emotive individualism or the seeking of pleasure and indulgence: people are useful to the degree they "turn us on" or give us enjoyment.

According to Bellah, the "second language" we learn as infants revolves around community. However, given the overwhelming power of the primary language, the secondary language or way of interpreting life, continually gets eclipsed. When

individualism wields so much power, a sense of “entitlement” will not be far behind. When this defines our relationships, the “other[s]” owe me whatever I feel is my right. The community exists for my use and pleasure. As a result the ability to develop relationships of trust that will find the members growing in care gets sabotaged. Is it any wonder then, that roughly half of all married couples in the United States now keep separate checking accounts?⁹

Entitlement has many faces. It’s not just the Reebok ad depicting a black athlete shooting “buckets” (i.e., basketballs) and pictures to match the images conveyed, as the voice-over declared: “A jump shot can get you a shoe deal, a [white] super model, a big house, fancy cars, a bunch of ‘yes men,’ a Swiss bank account.” Then, returning to the athlete making a basket, it declares: “But none of these *things* can get you a jump shot.” Nor is it limited to Lindsay Lohan insisting: “I can’t get in trouble. I’m a celebrity. I can do whatever the *+*+ I want.” Neither can it be limited to the executive who picks his board of directors to ensure his perks and salaries remain at least 430 times that of the average worker in “his” corporation, nor need it be equated with the politician who cultivates lobbyists for trips or the pharmacist or doctor who justifies the give-aways of the drug companies; it can be teenagers who insist on their “right” to limousines and hotel rooms for their proms.¹⁰

When people accept themselves as commodities or market shares, along with their houses and bank accounts, they also become expendable. So pervasive is this de-energizing notion of “entitlement” that, more than 10 years ago, *BusinessWeek* itself would have a full-page editorial encouraging “The De-Entitling of America.”¹¹ A year later, in an op-ed piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, Herbert Stein of the American Enterprise Institute and a member of the *Journal’s* Board of Contributors would point to the deeper, cultural attitude justifying “entitlement” on the part of all the people in the nation by exposing its consequences. He said: “The American dream is the expectation of being enriched largely by the efforts of others.”¹² In other words, I can get what I want by doing violence to you—whoever the you may be. The ideal must become the real.

All these notions were brought together in a powerful way in a column I read by Cal Thomas. He said: “When wants and needs are confused, desires become entitlements and politicians are afraid to tell people what they need to hear. Instead, they tell them what they want to hear. Anger and envy result, as well as frustration with a political system that was not designed to indulge its citizens in their lusts or subsidize their greed.” The Fox News analyst continued by asking:

Who will tell us that unending and expanding prosperity with home values constantly rising and a citizenry always able to afford them is a fantasy that is bound to end in heartache for those who buy into it?

The economy isn’t bad. We are bad for believing that more is better and the most is best. We have an abundance of things but a deficit of character. The economy is a false god, a golden calf. When this false god doesn’t deliver, we complain to politicians who are happy to accept our faith in them to give us what we want—if we will only pledge to them our allegiance at election time.¹³

Whether indifference or entitlement, the results are basically the same: a deeper and more sinister form of violence in the form of relationships that result, consciously or unconsciously, in inflicting on others more injury, or at least, less care. Consequently, people fear to address violent behavior in sports or the drug scene or in the world of

music; they refuse to judge the disparity between the executive who makes decisions and the workers who enable them to be realized; they continue to pay prices for drugs exceeding the cost of living index for fear they might not get them as they've been warned by the pharmaceutical companies, while parents feel overwhelmed to challenge their teenagers, even when they worry sick about an accident or pregnancy taking place on Prom Weekend.

Biblical and Cultural Indifference: Anomie

In Chapter One I noted that, in the ways the authors have sculpted the stories of Jesus' life, we find conflict with his opponents constituting the underlying dynamic of all four gospel accounts. Because Jesus challenged the abuse of power exercised by his religious leaders, their resistance to his call of conversion gradually led them to the point where they conspired to kill him. His life and message had made no difference to them; they became indifferent to his message as well as his proclamation. They became "hard of heart;" they could kill him with impunity.

The only passage from the Old Testament found in all four gospels relates to the indifference that represented the stories about the religious leaders of Jesus' day. So threatened and fearful were they about Jesus' ascending power among the people and so preoccupied were they in keeping their control over the people that they became incapable of conversion. This led to their decision to kill him. Aware of this, Matthew's Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, declaring of these religious leaders and their blind followers:

You will indeed listen, but never understand,
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.
For this people's heart has grown dull (*pachúnesthai*),
and their ears are hard of hearing and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them (Mt. 13:14-15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Jn. 12:40).

Matthew is the only one of the four evangelists that quotes the whole text from Isaiah. This gospel is the only one using the image of the people's heart becoming dull. Indeed, this is the only place in all four gospels where the word *pachúnesthai* is used. Furthermore, in the very form that is used, *pachúnesthai* becomes *epachúnthē*. Like epoxy glue, even the hearts of religious leaders supposedly dedicated to God can become epoxified or hardened (thus *epachúnthē*).

What makes our hearts grow hardened or epoxified in a way that gets manifest in indifference? Again, Matthew's gospel offers a unique insight by the author's singular use of another word: *anomia* (Mt. 7:23; 13:41; 23:28). In the last time the author uses the word, the link between *pachúnesthai* and *anomia* becomes clear: "because of the increase of *anomia* the *agápē* of most will grow cold (Mt. 24:12). Too much *anomia* brings about a hardness in our hearts; too much hardness in our hearts brings about indifference.

The meaning of *anomia* in Matthew involves the breakdown of the moral codes of care that should characterize a community's behavior. Due to the lack of care, evil-doing results; this is *anomia* (Mt. 7:23; 13:41). As such *anomia* stands directly opposed to the reign of God's care or concern for others; those who are the "evildoers" are outside the revelation of God. Their evil-doing puts them outside the revelation of God's reign or power. Unconcerned about bringing about right relationships on earth, they have created a kind of hell for themselves (Mt. 13:41). Even when they may look very good on the

outside in terms of externals, especially related to religion, because, if they are not in right relationships and working to bring about justice, they are rejected as hypocrites and doers of evil (Mt. 23:28).

Emile Durkheim, the French Sociologist, reinterpreted the biblical notion of *anomia* as involving the breakdown of moral codes and normlessness. He articulated this ultimate breakdown in rightly-ordered relationships in his sociological image of “anomie.” He used anomie to describe how the once-accepted codes and rules regarding right relationships among people, outlining how they ought to behave with each other were breaking down and thus people did not know what to expect from one another. Anomie, simply defined, represents that state wherein norms (expectations regarding behaviors) are confused, unclear or not present. Normlessness, Durkheim declared, leads to deviant behavior.¹⁴

Little-known about Durkheim’s understanding of “anomic relationships” is how they reveal the dynamics on the top of our “Power Chart.” Such anomic relationships occur among people(s) because of the abuse of power, from unequal social relationships that break down solidarity and cohesion within an organism. These get expressed in dynamics of control and abuse by those who dominate, coerce or manipulate others.

The ultimate result of such a life of control, abuse, conflict, violence and hate is not just de-meaning on the part of perpetrators. It often results in a lack of meaning or anomie on the part of the victim as well. When society breaks down into unequal power relationships, Durkheim discovered, anomic relationships result; when people are broken down by demeaning dynamics, *anomie* results as well. The result: they don’t care—either about themselves nor anyone else. Thus, as we shall see below, another word for “anomie” is apathy, the lack of care. Whether it be *anomia*, anomie or apathy, all represent the antithesis of care. Such is the ultimate “sin of the world;” such is original violence.

Individualism, Indifference and Societal Breakdown

In another of her weekly op-ed pieces in *The Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 2005, Peggy Noonan raised an alarm that also speaks to the notion of anomie: “American is in trouble—and our elites are merely resigned.” She opined that she considers a “subtext to our society” as a kind of “amorphous sense that things are broken and tough history is coming.” However, unlike her discussion of the “culture of death” wherein she never defined its source in violence per se, here she does ask if dynamics or forces in our culture may have brought the nation and its elites to this point. She concludes that the effort of competing power groups to ensure their collective self-interest not only has occurred in an environment that can no longer sustain such abuse; the result of such a style of life has led to the breakdown of governance or power in this nation itself.

Whereas, in her Columbine-inspired op-ed of 1997, in speaking of how our children are immersed in the culture of violence, Ms. Noonan used the image of them as fish swimming in polluted waters, in her 2005 piece she invokes another image: of a train not only being off the track but whose “wheels are coming off the trolley.” She writes, especially of the elites in the nation, especially its “power people” and “power brokers,” that they have divided into two groups. One has “made a separate peace” which will lead them further down the destructive path. The other group represents “a lot of people—I know them and so do you—trying to do work that helps, that will turn it around, that can make it better, that can save lives.” Of these she writes: “They’re trying to . . . get the

trolley back on the tracks.”¹⁵ In her concluding paragraphs she speaks to her readers, wondering which “side” (of the “Power Chart,” I believe) we will align with. We will either continue on the trolley of control that brings us to the individual, group and national point of indifference--with its consequent self-destruction--or we will do what we can to make a difference.

Ms. Noonan’s insights might have been strengthened as to why our nation—as well as other “developed” nations—have come to this national crisis had she been more familiar with the writings of Moisés Naím, Editor of *Foreign Policy*. He describes our national malaise as the consequence of power structures becoming controlled by uncaring individualistic power centers. Echoing Noonan’s image of the trolley, he points to the way we have become “derailed.” We have become ungovernable, he argues, not only because of past power abuses but because of the rise of new, unrecognized and illicit power players that have immobilized their bigger counterparts and paralyzed peoples’ imagination. He writes: “Everywhere you look in this age of diffusion, you see these veto centers emerging, which can derail, contain or stop any initiative. That is why so few governments today are able to generate a strong unifying mandate.” Positively commenting on Naím’s thesis, Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* op-ed columnist concluded: “Add it all up and you can see that we have put ourselves in a position where only a *total blow-out crisis* in our system will generate enough authority for a democratic government to do the rights things.”¹⁶

In addition theory, there will never be change until there is a total blow-out crisis or breakdown before one will acknowledge the need to change; “I realized I was powerless over _____ and my life had become unmanageable.”

What holds for individuals, I believe, applies to organizations and systems, even as complex as this nation.¹⁷ Ms. Noonan’s spoke about the structural breakdown of the matter-based, monadic structuring of social life which people like Albert Einstein, other physicists and cosmologists (as well as mystics) have rejected for years. They no longer could believe in a world defined by matter and scarcity; rather they found faith in one defined by energy and sustained by connectedness. One of these was the physicist David Bohm. He wrote 25 years ago about the generic “man” who still things atomistically rather than wholistically and holographically:

If he thinks of the totality as constituted of independent fragments, then that is how his mind will tend to operate, but if he can include everything coherently and harmoniously in a overall whole that is undivided, unbroken, and without a border (for every border is a division or break) then his mind will tend to move in a similar way, and from this will flow an orderly action within the whole.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the realization of the need for such a total bureaucratic change based on such “givens” from science will only be possible when we also acknowledge the “exact nature of our wrong” and turn ourselves over to another power that is greater than ours. This involves turning over our overpowering ways that have made our lives unmanageable. We start reflecting the “care of God’ as we understand God can only be.

Other Causes of Indifference: Abuse and Violence

In the early 1980s I lived with other Capuchins in a rented house in a poverty area of Milwaukee. Across the street lived Charles, a five-year old African American. When his Mother would catch him around the neighborhood doing something she didn’t like, she would yell: “Charles! Get your Black Ass over here.” Such violent language is more

about who one is than what one does. There's something wrong with a person; not just one's behavior.

As a child, when I was corrected, I was challenged about what I did, not who I was. When Charles' Mother corrected him, there was something wrong about *him*. Not only did he do something wrong; there was something wrong with him. Consequently he might not just be guilty (i.e., having done something wrong); he was made to feel ashamed (i.e., there was something wrong with him). This approach to Charles by his Mother perpetrated violence on him, on his very being. It became violent by definition insofar as her action toward him became a "force that inflicts injury." With such ongoing abuse, combined with negative stereotypes perpetrated in parts of the poverty culture of black communities, it's little wonder then, that those who experience poverty and racism in society (from within their own people as well as from others, including the systems around them) can more easily become abusers, violent and even cold-hearted killers. The violence done them can immunize such people not just continuing that violence toward others.

I believe such a way of correction, far from being grounded in care, actually diminishes, if not extinguishes the possibility of Charles developing care for himself. If he is put down early enough in his development and often enough or violently enough in his future years, the result of such violence and/or abuse can often lead to such indifference that he "will not care" if he lives or dies and, indeed, have little care whether anyone else does as well, even if that death should come from his own hands.

"Too long a suffering," the Irish poet Yeats wrote, "a stone of the heart makes." As an Irishman used to the abuse of power in his country by its overlords, the British, Yeats saw first-hand how the continued demeaning and diminishment of his people could undermine the inherent goodness of their collective soul. He saw how the consequence of this could be cold-hearted murder and other forms of violence—not just returned on their British perpetrators but also within their own family systems.

Given what I've said above, I think we can paraphrase Yeats to say as well: "Too *severe* a suffering, a stone of the heart makes." Overwhelming violence experienced in a sustained way, can easily make one overwhelmed in such a way that s/he "shuts down." When the United States government under Harry Truman dropped nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the result of such carnage was a kind of "psychic numbing." It kept the survivors from responding to the cries of victims around them. In his study of such survivors, Robert Jay Lifton wrote: "They said such things as 'I simply became insensitive to human death,' or referred to a 'paralysis of the mind.' I came to call this general process psychic numbing and, in its most acute form, psychic closing-off."¹⁹

Other ways people psychically close-off, shut down or insulate themselves from others, especially the needs of the poor and marginalized around them—and justify their uninvolved and lack of effort to right such wrongs—revolve around appeals to "compassion fatigue," cynical arguments connected to the notion that "nothing will change" or just lack of interest: out of sight, out of mind.

Whether it's apathy, psychic numbing or compassion fatigue, indifference not only results as a common response to prior dynamics of abuse and violence experienced personally or observed over a period of time, it can add to their power and control among peoples to their detriment and the detriment of the planet itself. As Nel Noddings notes,

the “violence done by people who have not been cared for themselves” can lead them to inflict miseries “on intimate others because they have not learned how to care.”²⁰

“I Don’t Care:” The Ultimate Source and Consequence of Indifference

If we look at the “Power Chart” it becomes clear that, just as dynamics of control keep us from compassion, so the lack of care can lead to dynamics around indifference. Indeed the lack of care is a synonym of indifference. The other ceases to make any difference in my life and decision-making.

Increasingly, I am discovering, the stock phrase “I don’t care” is one of the most uncaring and possibly violent three words that individuals, groups and institutions can say. Often this gets expressed in such forms of communication (verbal or nonverbal) that say: “I don’t care what you think . . . ; you must . . .” “I don’t care whether or not this hurts you, it’s for your own good.” “I don’t care whether or not this harms people or the planet; I/we have the right to it.’

I once was connected to a group of people who shared their lives on a regular basis. Invariably, whenever our discussion moved from our immediate and direct spheres of influence, one of the members would often say: “I don’t care about it.” I often wondered why such a statement would seem so harsh to me. Now I know from further development of the Power Chart: something in us cringes when we come face to face with uncaring people. Why? Because we experience their uncaring as a form of violence and something in us makes us react negatively if we have an ounce of care in us that might be open to their plight.

When we say the equivalent of “I don’t care” about people experiencing violence far removed from us--oftentimes because of the various “isms” making them victims which are perpetrated by our own lifestyle and uncaring--if *we* care, we should find ourselves rebelling—at least within our hearts--against such lack of care. When anyone in a position of authority says to others: “I don’t care what you think,” those others will experience such as abusive and violent. When someone in a relationship of significance says to another that s/he doesn’t care how the other feels about something, these words will be experienced as rejection and likely result in anger, the source of more violence.

Because “I don’t care” represents one of the most violent phrases in our English language, when we utter such a vulgarity, we undermine the possibility of care; we enter the reign of negative power or control. (Un)consciously we also mirror the dominant cultural pattern of exaggerated individualism as well as entitlement. The pain of the other makes no impression on us. The cry of the poor finds no echo in our hearts. The plight of those who are marginated makes little or no impact in my life. Our hearts have become dull. In effect, as William Vollmann concludes in his six volume study of violence, violence will have effectively destroyed our conscience as persons and peoples. To this effect, he writes, the real aim of violence “is to conquer, direct, instruct, mark, warn, punish, injure, suppress, reduce, destroy or obliterate the consciousness within the body.”²¹ In effect, the effect of violence is soul suffocation or psychic numbing that makes us indifferent to any reality apart from our own cares and our own needs.

Notes

¹ Bernard Shaw, *The Devil’s Disciples* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 35.

² Elie Wiesel, Interview with Alvin P. Sanoff, “One Must Not Forget,” *U.S. News & World Report*, October 27, 1986, 68.

³ Peggy Noonan, “Cold Standard: Virginia Tech and the Heartlessness of Our Media and Therapy Culture,”

The Wall Street Journal, April 21-22, 2007.

⁴ Daniel Henninger, "The Numbing Down of America," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 2007.

⁵ Peggy Noonan, "We're Scaring Our Children to Death," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 28-29, 2007.

⁶ Nicholas D. Kristoff, "Save the Darfur Puppy," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

⁷ Veronica Verk, "The 'Me' Society Blamed for Crime," Letters to the Editor, *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 31, 1994.

⁸ Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California University Press, 1985).

⁹ David Brooks, citing data from the Raddon Financial Group: "To Have and to Hold, for Richer and for Poorer," *The New York Times*, March 1, 2005.

¹⁰ In my earlier efforts at writing this book, the press carried the story of Brother Kenneth Hoagland, Principal of Kellenberg Memorial High School in Uniondale, New York. Fed up with the excesses associated with past proms, they cancelled the 2006 prom. Excerpts from a letter sent by Brother Kenneth to a protesting parent can be found in "Too Much of a Good Thing: The Party's Over," *The Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 2005.

¹¹ "The De-Entitling of America," Editorial, *BusinessWeek*, November 20, 1995.

¹² Herbert Stein, "The American Dream," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 24, 1996.

¹³ Cal Thomas, "When Big Isn't Better," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 27, 2008, 11A.

¹⁴ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1933), 353ff.

¹⁵ Peggy Noonan, "A Separate Peace," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 2005.

¹⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, "Thou Shalt Not Destroy the Center: Tough Problems, Wimpy Solutions," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2005.

¹⁷ Anne Wilson Schaef showed how this happens and its characteristics in *When Society Becomes an Addict* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). I tried to show the same phenomenon in institutional Catholicism. See Michael H. Crosby, *The Dysfunctional Church: Addiction and Codependency in the Family of Catholicism* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1991).

¹⁸ David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 214.

¹⁹ Robert Jay Lifton, in Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case against Nuclearism* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 101.

²⁰ Nel Noddings, *Starting at Home*, 33.

²¹ William T. Vollmann, *Rising Up and Rising Down*, II (San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2003), 15.