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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Like something has been broken'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 It might not be depression. That sadness and dread might
3 be moral injury, a new way to understand the sadness and dread
4 in our times.

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 THE VERY FIRST TIME I attempted to see a therapist for my
7 feelings of sadness and dread, about 30 or 40 years ago, I was
8 focused on the environmental destruction — the extinctions,
9 poisoning the land, single-use garbage, and so much more —
10 being wreaked upon the Earth by unfettered industrial capitalism.

11 I still can see the face of this very smart woman, who
12 told me that she was similarly distressed about the future, as she
13 was living in the same world as I was. She had no real
14 suggestions except to do what I already was doing: focusing on
15 my family, my activism, and my fulfilling work at the bookstore,
16 and getting outdoors.

17 I have attempted therapy two other times, and the results
18 were similar.

19 From my perspective, it appears that therapists are
20 looking for pathology in how we relate to others, how we see
21 ourselves, how to face a personal crisis, or how we act — these
22 are areas where they can offer needed help.

23 I was told by a new young therapist as recently as six
24 months ago that she really had nothing to offer me, even in the
25 face of my anger and rage at the sadistic madman and his
26 minions at the helm of the government.

27 And I have felt the sword of depression hanging over my
28 head, as have so many, during the past 15 months of the
29 deranged reign of the Mad King.

30 * * *

31 IT CAME AS A weird relief to find a term for what has been
32 plaguing me for these many years, and it is possible that
33 somehow I am the only person who had missed hearing about
34 *moral injury*, a condition that can often be confused with
35 depression.

36 As Jo Livingstone [describes it](#) in *The Guardian*, where
37 she interviewed psychologist Michael Valdovinos, who coined the
38 term, “to experience moral injury is to be forced to act in ways or
39 to witness actions that contradict your most deeply held
40 convictions.”

41 This term has been most commonly used to help soldiers
42 who must live with their actions that often go against deeply held
43 beliefs. It can also describe the emotional turmoil in people like
44 slaughterhouse workers and social workers who are forced to
45 make decisions that will cause someone pain.

46 But the term is now being applied to those of us who are
47 “forced to [...] witness actions that contradict your most deeply
48 held convictions,” just as we see one sociopath after another
49 appointed by the grand poobah of narcissistic sociopaths. So
50 many of us are witnessing actions and words that violate our
51 deep and abiding sense of right and wrong is a daily occurrence.

52 Moral injury explains why I, and millions of others, even
53 some Trump acolytes, have been so horrified by his latest threat,
54 vomited out with no irony on Easter, a Christian holiday that has
55 connotations of a celebration of fertility and rebirth:

56 “Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all
57 wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! Open
58 the F—in’ Strait, you crazy bastards, or you’ll be living in Hell
59 – JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah.”

60 Between the threat to destroy a civilian population and
61 the vile language (unredacted in Trump’s original), most of our
62 moral codes are affronted. It takes a special kind of cruel to
63 watch a sick man living in the lap of luxury, using our tax dollars
64 to fund his golf-fueled lifestyle, threatening to take everything
65 away from everyone, adults and children alike, in Iran left
66 standing. And meaning it.

67 “What I’m noticing, and I think a lot of clinical
68 colleagues have, is that overwhelmingly their practices are getting
69 filled with older folks coming to treatment for moral distress,”
70 Valdovinos, the author of a new book, *Moral Injuries: When*
71 *Good Conscience Suffers in a World of Hurt*, told *The Guardian*.

72 “They have a longer memory of how things used to
73 work,” he continued. “Many grew up believing in certain norms
74 about institutions, leadership, and basic behavior. When those
75 expectations are repeatedly violated, it can feel deeply
76 destabilizing.

77 “Not just frustrating, but like something fundamental has
78 broken. It feels like a betrayal, and that is a pathway to moral
79 injury.”

80 * * *

81 FOR SOME OF US, our hopes, dreams, and morals have
82 always been challenged by the American empire and the harsh
83 economic system — even before Trump and the Heritage
84 Foundation began pushing to eliminate any remnants of a
85 socially and environmentally responsible government.

86 We must understand that our sadness and rage is not
87 depression, nor is it a personal failing or weakness. It is a healthy
88 response to a very toxic situation.

89 May that insight give us the strength to work collectively
90 to fix what is broken, to right the moral compass so that
91 compassion and peace are honored, and to ensure that war,
92 concentration camps, and cruelty are forever where they belong
93 — morally, unforgivably, and permanently banished from
94 acceptable norms.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

95 **NANCY BRAUS**, a retired independent bookseller, is a
96 longtime activist.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

97 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

98

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

###END VIDEO###

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

###END LOGLINE###