

Teaching Bad Faith and Broken Promises: The Erosion of the Covenant between the Citizen and the State

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Abstract

With the ethics scandals in the U. S. government in recent years and the current administration's efforts to redefine governmental policies and procedures, the actions of the elected officials seem to be eroding the bond between the state and the citizen. This paper investigates the relationships between the citizen and the state and the citizen and the elected officials by distinguishing between state and government and between covenants and contracts. The bond between the citizen and the state is argued to be covenantal in nature, while that between the citizen and the government is argued to be contractual.

By directing attention to different types of moral wrong, simple and compound wrongdoing, I will show that the actions of the government in recent years have been changing and eroding the covenant between the citizens and the state. The result of this erosion is an increasing alienation of the citizens toward the state. My concluding remarks focus upon three approaches the government and citizens could utilize to attempt to reaffirm this important covenantal relationship.

Introduction

To begin this essay, I will present a working definition of both contracts and covenants as they are used to regulate human interaction between two parties. Covenants, I will assert, are special, more meaningful, relationships that hold great potential to impact the bound parties for better or worse. I will argue that citizen/ state relationships, just as some student/teacher relationships, are covenantal in nature and, as such, entail an increased moral burden on the part of the more powerful party.

By directing attention to different types of moral wrong, simple and compound wrongdoing, I will show that the actions of the government in recent years have been changing and eroding the covenant between the citizens and the state. The result of this erosion is an increasing alienation of the citizens toward the state. My concluding remarks focus upon three approaches the government and citizens could utilize to attempt to reaffirm this important covenantal relationship.

Contracts and Covenants

The philosopher Thomas Hobbes defined a contractual agreement as taking place whenever an individual transfers or renounces a right, either in exchange for a reciprocally transferred right, or for some other benefit he or she hopes to gain. Agreeing to a contract, Hobbes stressed, is a voluntary action, taken solely for the gain of some personal good (Hobbes, 1992. p. 625).

Most legal agreements are contractual in nature. When one borrows or loans large sums of money, buys or sells land, business, substantial property or rights, marries, adopts, or has a

Forum on Public Policy

medical procedure done, one most likely will have to read and sign papers that spell out specifically the rights and responsibilities of each involved party. Both parties have a certain amount of power and control within the bounds of the contract. The individual has avenues of recourse if the other party does not live up to his or her obligations.

A covenantal relationship, while also formed around an agreement, has a completely different sense to it. Hobbes defined a covenant as a contract which extends on into the future, in which the parties involved must trust each other to perform (and continue performing) the agreed upon actions. He further states that acting in accordance with the covenant is called “keeping of the promise or faith” and voluntarily failing in performance of agreed on tasks is called “violation of faith” (Hobbes, 1992, p.625).

The technical aspect of the covenant is captured by this definition, but the emotional aspect (unsurprisingly for Hobbes) is left unaddressed. Covenants are often invested with great emotional significance. Covenants are agreements that bind two parties, by trust, to life changing behaviors (Marquis, p.234, 2005). They are often understood to be “final agreements” that are *unconditionally* binding and not subject to renegotiation. Covenants, by their very nature, require the parties bound by them to take a “leap of faith.”

To draw the contrast between contracts and covenant more distinctly, it is helpful to realize that the type of agreement struck between individuals is often dependent on the degree of trust that they are willing to extend to each other. For example, if one were making a deal with the Devil, one would want to have a carefully spelled-out *contract*, in which all details are agreed upon and written down. This is because contracts give the bound parties specific legal rights if either party attempts to default on the agreement or change it peremptorily. Contracts are helpful when one does not entirely trust the other party to live up to his or her word and to act benevolently toward one.

On the other hand, individuals historically enter into *covenants* with their God. People entering into covenants do so with a much greater sense of trust toward their partner. The details and contingencies do not need to be so “hammered out” because there is a pervading assumption of the goodness of the other party. People believe that God is benevolent, will keep faith, and “not fudge the details.”

The covenantal relationship, in its powerful, informal sense, differs greatly from the contractual relationship. Two examples of this can be found in some student/teacher

relationships, and in the relationship between the citizen and the state. Both relationships are quite similar, in that they are between parties of unequal power, and that considerable moral responsibility *ought to* govern the behavior of the more powerful party. I begin with the relationship between teacher and student.

The Student/Teacher Relationship

While some student/teacher relationships are contractual in nature, others are not. These relationships are deeper and more influential, to the student especially. It may be that one of the foremost determinants of whether a student/teacher relationship will be contractual or covenantal in nature is the subject matter taught. Certain subjects, especially those involving religion, philosophy, and metaphysics, (or what is ultimately real) are vitally important to the student. These subjects have the potential to change the worldview of the student and hence the learning relationship goes beyond a merely reciprocal contract to the deeper and more mysterious bond of a covenant.

The covenantal teaching relationship usually confers a mantle of authority and power upon the teacher which may well extend to cover all facets of the relationship between the two. By the possession of the role of teacher, that individual often becomes a symbol to the student, taking on a slightly “larger than life” aspect, lending greater resonance to all the teacher’s actions and opinions than would be attributed to the ordinary individual.

In those cases when a teacher becomes “more than human” to the student he or she must recognize that with this importance comes a great deal of moral responsibility. The wise teacher accepts this responsibility and shapes his/her words and actions accordingly. The vulnerability of the student in the covenantal bonding is not merely a product of the learning process or the fundamental inequality of the power balance in the relationship. It is also directly relational to the degree to which the student has changed his or her beliefs to accommodate the topic being taught.

The Citizen/State Relationship

The obvious parallels between the student/teacher covenantal relationship and that between the citizen and the state are derived from the inequality of power in both relationships and the similar vulnerability of the students and citizens to their partner in covenant. However, there are deeper similarities in the bonds as well. I suggest that the citizen/ state relationship contains as one of its major aspects that same student/teacher relationship.

Forum on Public Policy

Because the relationship between the state and the citizen is lifelong, unequal, and (virtually) inescapable, this relationship, all things considered, is a covenant. People make covenants with the state in the same manner as they do with their conception of a personal God. Whether God actually exists is less relevant than the individual's concept and expectations of God, and the way in which he or she relates his behavior and worldview accordingly.

This same principle can be applied to the relationship between the citizen and the state. The citizen holds certain idealized concepts of what the state is, what the goals of the state should be, and how the two, citizen and state, should interact. The citizen has certain expectations of the state, not only in prosaic matters as taxes, revenue spending, and safety legislation, but also idealistic expectations of the state as an upholder of moral values and human rights. With these expectations come the reciprocal feelings of loyalty, patriotism, and duty on the part of the citizen. The covenant between the citizen and the state can be just as powerful, deeply felt, and sacred as a covenant between the believer and his or her conception of God.

Besides our idealistic conceptions of the state as a benevolent distributor of equality, law, and justice, the state has taken on the role of teacher as well. The Federal and State governments of the United States of America have, over time, become perceived not only as having authority and power over the citizens, but also as teachers and sources of information. One need only consider the amount of governmental regulation and guidelines for almost every area of living to acquire an idea of the scope of governmental influence.

The role of the state as teacher becomes explicit when one considers the vast number of government-sponsored education projects. Formal education from early childhood initiatives, public schooling, higher education, and research are all carried out with government funding and regulation. As well as formal schooling, the government provides extensive amounts of data on virtually every topic from prenatal care to pandemic preparedness for its citizens.

The relationship between the citizen and the state is a covenant; and may be one of the most important covenants in the individual's life. This covenant is doubly binding as it encompasses the dual aspects of government and governed as well as teacher and student. The moral responsibility of the state to the citizen is therefore exponentially increased. Not only is there an inherent duty to use power justly, and in a democracy at the will of the citizens, but also there is the duty of the teacher to the student to be fair, honest, keep promises, and respect the dignity of the individual (Smith, 1996).

Types of Moral Wrong

Hobbes (1992, p. 624) would assert that we commit acts of bad faith when we break our covenants. I want to suggest that since covenants are so vitally important to the bound parties, actions which cause damage to them are more profoundly wrong than one might first imagine. If we limit ourselves to judging by consequences, an action that produces harm may be a *simple wrong*, while an action that produces harm *and* harms a person's self concept, ideals, or worldview would be a compound wrong. A simple wrong is more likely to be physical and observable. A compound wrong changes the way the individual perceives his or her world, and him or herself. Thus, it is more deeply damaging, and likely to cause ongoing harm.

This idea of compound wrong provides a satisfactory accounting of why some wrong actions are so reprehensible. Actions such as rape, child abuse, bullying, identity theft, and stalking are harmful well beyond the physical damage they incur because of the vast hurt that is done to the victim's mental constructs. Victims of such actions are made to perceive themselves as vulnerable, powerless, and diminished from what they had been. Victims' mental constructs of the world change as well. Their worlds may well become unstable, frightening places, peopled with untrustworthy individuals and threatening situations.

Compound wrongs are especially toxic to the individual and stem from such actions as broken promises, bad faith, and exploitation. Given the vulnerability of the least powerful partner in a covenant, compound wrongs within this relationship can be devastating.

Compound wrongs committed by teachers upon their students are especially injurious. Teachers, especially revered teachers, are, in a sense, arbiters of reality. In a covenantal teacher-student relationship, the teacher's words and example shape the student's worldview. To the degree that the student believes and accepts the teachings, *the world is as the teacher claims it is*.

The Citizen/State Covenant and Compound Wrongs

In recent years the covenant between the American citizens and the state has undergone significant erosion. This process of erosion is a product of compound wrongdoing on the part of current officeholders and government administrations. While the state, as a power structure and mental construct is "larger" and more enduring than the individual office holders and administrations, it is affected by them. The powers and goals of the state fluctuate with the actions and goals of the officeholders animating it. The perception of the state by the citizen also

is affected by the actions of those who hold office. This, in turn, affects the covenant between the citizen and the state.

Making promises with no intention of keeping them, or renegeing on promises made previously results in the breaking of the general social trust (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2007, p. 299). It is somewhat ironic that the George W. Bush Administration, which began its tenure by instituting the “faith based initiative,” has perpetrated the widest, recent erosion of the covenant between the citizen and the state through acts of bad faith and broken promises.

Compound Harm to Persons

The ideals of personal freedom and self sovereignty were incorporated in the very creation of the United States of America. These ideals are, in essence, part of the definiens of the identity of the American citizen and America itself. To dispense with or unduly limit these rights is to change the fundamentals of American citizenship. However, civil rights and human rights have been encroached upon, narrowed, or dispensed with altogether in many instances during the Bush Administration’s tenure. If we adopt the social contract theory of government, then citizens cede individual freedoms to the state with the understanding that they do so for the greater good of the many. If this is not so, if there is no clear benefit to society as a whole as a return for the loss of the individual rights and freedoms, then the spirit of the tacit agreement the citizen has entered into has been broken.

The philosopher John Locke, whose ideas were so influential in the crafting of the Declaration of Independence and construction of the resulting United States government, had this to say about the nature and scope of legislative power as it interacts with the rights of the citizens:

Their power in the utmost bounds of it is limited to the public good of the society. It is a power that has no other end but preservation and therefore can never have a right to destroy enslave or designedly impoverish the subjects. (p. 786)

With this concept as a lens, let us then focus on the concept of personal sovereignty. It is the common belief of citizens of the United States that one should have the right to behave as one will, and do as one pleases with regards to one’s body and possessions without outside interference, unless there is some compelling reason interference may be warranted. This right would cover one’s post-mortem distribution of property, medical decisions, choice of religious worship, sexual expression, and actions in general.

Forum on Public Policy

The state should therefore act very carefully when interceding in such personal areas, and then only in cases in which the general welfare is threatened. Under the Bush Administration, personal sovereignty *has* been eroded. There has been, for example, governmental interference with citizens' end-of-life decisions. In the case of Theresa Schiavo, the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, the Florida Legislature, and the United States Congress all attempted to override the court-ordered removal of Theresa's feeding tube.

Theresa Schiavo's situation was unique in that the much of the controversy lay in determining what her wishes would have been about whether to live or die in that situation. That is what the courts were trying to determine. The governmental interference did not benefit the populace in general and was specifically obstructive and harmful in deciding the case.

Similarly, in 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft directly challenged Oregon's Death with Dignity Act by claiming that he would prosecute Oregon doctors who wrote prescriptions for lethal doses of medication because such uses of medicine were not federally approved. It is questionable how federal involvement in this matter was warranted. The state of Oregon had carefully crafted the Act to avoid abuses. The citizens of Oregon had twice affirmed the Act in voting booths.

The case went to the Supreme Court, which sided with Oregon, stating that Ashcroft was overreaching his powers and that the matter was one within the jurisdiction of state's rights. In both these incidents, the court system struck down the Governmental attempts to interfere, but such is not always the case.

Women's reproductive rights have been narrowed dramatically by the 2007 Supreme Court ruling which bans the so-called "partial birth abortion procedure." This decision is quite alarming because the majority ruling of the Justices left absolutely no allowance for exceptions in cases where this surgery would safeguard a woman's health. Even more troubling, according to an article by the National Women's Law Center (2007):

But the majority of the Court in this case disregarded the medical judgment of the American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologists, the testimony of a host of respected physicians, and all of the lower court findings that the banned procedure can be medically necessary for a woman,...In doing so, the Court allowed the federal government to substitute its opinion for the judgment of medical experts and to trump the medical decisions of individual women and their doctors,... Most troubling, the majority of the Court held that a woman's decision to follow her physician's advice can be overridden by the government based on a new principle never advanced or documented by either side in the case: protecting "the

Forum on Public Policy

bond of love the mother has for her child.” The Court determined that abortion has serious harmful effects on women, including severe psychological consequences. Even though the Court admitted that this determination was based on “no reliable data” it decided that criminalizing a medically approved abortion procedure was an acceptable way for the state to protect women from the “harmful” consequences of their own decisions that it decided to recognize. (pp. 1-2)

Unfortunately, this complete disregard on the part of the government of a female citizen’s right to bodily integrity and medical sovereignty is not without precedent. The past ten years have produced increasing numbers of cases involving pregnant women being forced to undergo medical procedures such as cesarean sections, blood transfusions, and drug testing against their wills, and sometimes against their physicians’ advice.

Prosecutions of pregnant women based on charges of “child endangerment” applied to the woman’s unborn child have increased greatly since the federal Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004 (UVVA) successfully categorized “everything from a zygote to a fetus” (Paltrow, 2004) as an “independent victim.” In both cases of forced cesarean sections and prosecution for drug and alcohol use, the women most likely to be targeted are low income women and women of color (ACLU, 1997).

Many states have laws similar to the UVVA, and increasingly these states have used the laws as a basis for prosecuting pregnant women for acts that would be perfectly legal should any other person perform them. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, “About 30 states in all have attempted prosecution of women for their conduct during pregnancies”(ACLU, 1997) A shocking example comes from South Carolina where a prosecutor is quoted as stating that,

Even if a legal substance is used, if we can determine you are medically responsible for a child's demise, we will file charges. The pregnant woman who "allows" herself to be battered, and the woman who misses prenatal care appointments are both now vulnerable to prosecution for murder should something go wrong in the pregnancy. (Paltrow, 2004, p. 1)

The governmental interference in the matter of women’s reproductive rights and choices has had overwhelmingly negative effects. Instead of promoting the welfare of the general populace, it has put the health of mothers and infants at further risk. This is partly because many women who have become pregnant and are addicted to or use drugs or alcohol are refusing prenatal treatment for fear of legal consequences. The dearth of prenatal care causes the health of both the mother and the child to suffer.

The Government as Teacher

Earlier, I made the case for identifying the state as a teacher to its citizens. One of the main functions of a teacher is to provide accurate information about the world to students and help them to develop the skills they need to apply this information effectively. That citizens look to the state for information, modeling of how to act and in goal-setting can be observed by the types of assumptions people generally make, and the types of information and instruction the government provides.

Health information and health goals may be crafted by consulting government-provided information and safety regulations about proper nutrition, hygiene, “ideal” weight, infant care, vaccination schedules, etc. Government safety standards are relied on when buying products such as food, medicine, toys and household goods for consumer use. The assumption is that if the state approves it, it must be safe.

One can see the dependence of citizens on the state to guide them into making wise choices, provide accurate information, and alert the citizens to threats to health or welfare, or actively work to remove these threats. The Bush Administration has a documented history of suppressing, misrepresenting, or distorting vital health and safety related information.

In 2004, an article by the Washington Post told the story of widespread falsification of drinking water test results in cities across the nation. Lead-level test results had been distorted, falsified, or skewed to give inaccurate, “acceptable” readings. These deceptive practices had been going on for a number of years, with the apparent complicity of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (Leonnig, Becker, & Nakamura, 2004).

Information that was once widely publicly disseminated, such as the results of water test assessments, automobile companies warranty claim data and field reports, and auto consumer complaints have recently been classified as secret on the grounds of national security and are withheld from the public. This “veil of secrecy” in the name of public safety has also obscured from public review airline records concerning enforcement actions against airlines, pilots, mechanics, and others (Montgomery, 2004).

Substitution of inaccurate, misleading, and scientifically unsound information in place of proven facts and programs has been occurring in many government or government-funded, education programs. Under the Bush Administration, the Centers for Disease Control has altered the information offered on its website to the public and to educators, removing vital information

about using condoms properly to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The “updated” website has replaced this information with a discussion on abstinence and condom failure rates.

If we return to our conception of the state as a teacher, we can see that the government’s actions are changing the nature of the state. Instead of being an honest, impartial, and benevolent teacher, the state has become paternalistic, distrustful, secretive, and deceitful. Worse yet, this teacher is communicating to the students that they are not to be trusted to make sound decisions, they are not respectable enough to be told the truth, and they are not important enough to keep promises which have been made to them.

Compound Wrongs, the Constitution, and the State’s Image

The Constitution of the United States, and the Amendments to the Constitution, are the foundation documents of the United States government and its relationship to the citizens. I would argue, though, that the chief importance of these documents (which I will loosely term the Constitution) to the citizen, beyond their practical functions, is that they are deeply meaningful as a symbol of the covenant between the citizens and the state.

Therefore, governmental actions that erode the Constitution of the United States are compound wrongs, harmful in both practical and symbolic terms. These actions not only have the potential to upset the check and balance system of government, but also directly attack this “living symbol” of the covenant between citizen and state. The Constitution is the only *real* assurance the citizen has that his or her rights are guaranteed and will be upheld. It is the foundation upon which the identity of what it is to be an *American* citizen is built upon. Without the Constitution anchoring the roles of both parties, the relationship is set adrift.

The Iraq War has been a topic of deep division among the American people. One’s stance on the war speaks to the very image one has of both the government and the state. While some people claim the state is living up to its role in Iraq as a liberator of oppressed people, bringing democracy and freedom to those who suffer under tyranny, others, view governmental actions as less idealistic.

The method by which the government initiated the invasion was unprecedented. With the single exception of the Spanish-American War, the United States has never preemptively attacked another nation except in direct retaliation of a first strike against the United States, its citizens, or interests. In the 2002 Senate debate about adopting Senate Joint Resolution 46 (a

resolution authorizing the President to use whatever force deemed necessary in Iraq) Senator Robert Byrd from West Virginia is quoted as stating:

The resolution before us today is not only a product of haste; it is also a product of presidential hubris. This resolution is breathtaking in its scope. It redefines the nature of defense, and reinterprets the Constitution to suit the will of the Executive Branch. It would give the President blanket authority to launch a unilateral preemptive attack on a sovereign nation that is *perceived* to be a threat to the United States. This is an unprecedented and unfounded interpretation of the President's authority under the Constitution, not to mention that it stands the charter of the United Nations on its head. (Gutman and Thompson, 2006, p.51)

A similar resolution passed, the war in Iraq became reality, but the Executive branch's efforts to change the balance of power within the government and bypass or selectively enforce laws passed by Congress were only beginning.

Because of a reclassification of the status of persons apprehended by the government as "unlawful combatants" in the "War on Terror," these individuals were suddenly stripped of the normal U.S. legal protections for prisoners, as well as those accorded by the Geneva Convention rules. At the same time that the government was claiming publicly that prisoners captured by the United States would be treated "humanely," they were sent to military prisons and held without recourse to legal counsel, without being charged with a crime, or any guaranteed legal rights at all.

In fact, in the *Gherabi v. Bush* court case of 2003, the government asserted the "power to do with [them] as it will, when it pleases, without any compliance with any rule of the law of any kind, without permitting [them] to consult counsel, and without acknowledging any judicial forum in which its actions may be challenged" (HRW, 2004, p. 3). The reclassification of prisoner status was against international law. Again we note the pattern of changing the laws, the balance of the government system, or re-interpretation of the Constitution itself, merely as a means to achieve short-term goals.

Just as the government had publicly claimed that prisoners were being treated humanely, and was privately working towards civil rights violations, President Bush has been engaging in similar acts with regard to laws passed by Congress. This has been done through the extensive use of "signing statements," which are "official documents in which a president lays out his legal interpretation of the bill for the federal bureaucracy to follow when implementing the new law. The statements are recorded in the federal register" (Savage, 2006).

Forum on Public Policy

Among the more than 750 laws that President Bush has amended with signing statements are laws about affirmative action, safeguards against political interference in federally-funded research, requirements to tell Congress about immigration services problems, whistle-blower protections for nuclear regulatory officials, military rules and regulations, and laws requiring him to tell Congress before diverting money from an authorized program in order to start a secret operation (Savage, 2006). In his signing statements, President Bush claims that such laws infringe on his power as the head of Executive Branch or the Commander in Chief of the military and therefore he may disregard or disobey them at will.

That he has done so already is reflected in the government's ignoring of laws requiring warrants in order to tap citizen's telephones, laws against torturing military prisoners, and laws requiring the Justice Department to report certain activities to Congress. By engaging in such duplicitous acts, Mr. Bush seems to be seeking to expand Executive power by encroaching on Congress's authority to pass laws for *all* to follow. The President seems, by his actions to be setting himself up as being "above the law."

We have seen a pattern of deception and duplicitous actions; policies that seem designed to seize increasing power for the Executive branch of the government, disregard for the law and the practice of democratic government. It should be no surprise that there has also been a pattern of governmental actions that have violated the guarantees of the Bill of Rights. Governmental power has been turned against individuals, who are not "cooperative" with, or who question, governmental policies. An increasing amount of intimidation, interference, and censorship on the part of the government has been brought to bear on scientists and academics who attempt to bring forth data that contradicts governmental policies.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists:

When scientific knowledge has been found to be in conflict with its political goals the [Bush] administration has often manipulated the process through which science enters into its decisions. This has been done by placing people who are professionally unqualified or who have clear conflicts of interest in official posts and on scientific advisory committees; by disbanding existing advisory committees; by censoring and suppressing reports by the government's own scientist; and by simply not seeking independent advice. Other administrations have, on occasion, engaged in such practices, but not so systematically nor on so wide a front." (UCS, 2004, p. 1)

The censorship and silencing of scientific dissent to government policies is not the only type of action that the government has taken against its detractors or individuals within government who would not “toe the line.” Congressional investigation into the mass firings of eight United States attorneys in the Justice Department in the winter of 2006-2007 strongly suggests that the motivation for the firings was political gain. Specifically, one attorney may have been fired due to her role in uncovering the large public corruption case around former Republican Congressman Randy Cunningham. Another was fired after his refusal to bring voter fraud charges in a gubernatorial election in which a Democratic candidate won by a narrow margin. A third cites his refusal to aggressively investigate Democratic candidates in an election year (Grier and Chaddock, 2007). The firings suggest that the government may be using the Justice Department as a tool for increasing power, rather than enforcing the laws impartially.

The examples I have set out are all cases of actions or policies instituted by the government in recent years that directly attack the Constitution and tarnish the image of the state in the eyes of both the citizens and the world. There were many other examples I could have brought to light, but the end result of all these examples is the same: the harm and disillusionment of the citizens.

Within even simple agreements, such as childhood games, there is a clear understanding of one central concept: It is unfair to change the rules of the game to favor one side over the other once the game has begun. This applies equally in the citizen/ state relationship. Once the covenant has been entered into, the rules cannot be changed unless the changes are ratified by both parties. For the government to make these changes unilaterally, without even any pretense of consulting the citizens is a grievous abuse of power. It also is a statement of arrogance. The rules can be changed, the Constitution disregarded or “reinterpreted,” and new powers seized, because the ordinary citizen is helpless to stop such practices.

Resolution

Casey Sheehan became a soldier in the United States’ Army and died in 2004 during an ambush attack in the Iraq War. His family deeply mourned his loss. After some time in the iron grip of grief, Cindy Sheehan, Casey’s mother, began questioning United States involvement in Iraq. Her efforts to find answers, and the responses of those questioned eventually brought her into protesting the war and America’s role in it. Cindy Sheehan became the nucleus around which a war protest group formed. On Memorial Day of 2007, she decided to end her protesting.

Forum on Public Policy

Her open letter of resignation shows that Cindy has suffered a second loss in the wake of her son's death. She lost her belief in the effectiveness of the system of government, and her image of how the state ought to function. One can hear the echoes of this loss in her statements to the Associated Press and her diary (Brown, 2007). "Goodbye America... you are not the country that I love and I finally realized no matter how much I sacrifice, I can't make you be that country unless you want it. It's up to you now" (p. 1).

Let us turn to psychologist Daniel Stokols's theory of alienation. Stokols claimed that alienation was most likely to occur in cases in which an individual had been thwarted in his or her relationship with another. The degree of alienation and the anger generated by relationship breakdown is dependant on how personally directed the thwarting of the individual is perceived to be. The actions of the government that have been specifically directed toward particular populations of people or that weaken or attack specific rights and freedoms of individuals may well be perceived as a personal thwarting or attack on the citizen by the government. In that case, Stokols claims:

Under conditions of personal thwarting, however, the jeopardization of [the individual's] safety or self-concept would provide clear-cut evidence of [the other's] potential unreliability. Such evidence should ultimately provoke [the individual's] decision that the psychological distance between himself and [the other] is insurmountable. Once this decision has been reached, [the individual's] commitment to [the other] should be withdrawn, his perceptions of [the other] altered and in some cases, his self concept modified ... These cognitive changes in [the individual] are likely to be accompanied by some form of angry retaliation against [the other] for his original insult of [the individual]. (1975, p. 37)

We have witnessed the increasing anger and bitterness of the citizens toward the state. We have seen growing political polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties as the "culture wars" continue to escalate. Unfortunately, the individuals who are the most victimized by political wrangling are those who can least afford to be, the citizens who depend on help and funding from the government just to meet their basic needs. These are the people whose very lives are in the balance as they realize that their state and teacher does not care for them. These are the people who will become the most deeply alienated as they absorb the impact of this bitter "lesson."

Stokols suggests two solutions to help lessen the devastating effects of alienation. One can either change the individual's initial high expectations of the relationship so the shock of

disillusionment will be diminished, or one can adjust the quality of the relationship so that the individual's expectations are being met. Let us begin with the first suggestion.

It can be observed that there is a large gap between the idealized process of government as taught in schools and the actual process of government as practiced in the world. Individuals who are not aware of this gap, and who do not have realistic expectations of “the way things really work” are at risk for disillusionment when they observe its actual mechanism. The discrepancy between expectation and reality could be adjusted by better educating citizens to the true situation. It may also be helpful to involve citizens in the process of government, not only to enable them to learn the functioning of it, but also to imbue them with a greater investment in the governing process.

While the covenantal relationship between the citizen and the state is unequal in power, the citizens are not completely without resources. Perhaps the key is that the state is run by elected officials; thus, changes that have been made for the worse can be remade for the better. A helpful path toward this goal is to turn increasing public scrutiny toward the government and its actions. Like a bully who must either retreat or reform under the light of watchful eyes, the government, being composed of elected officials must ultimately bow to the will of the people—if they are united in purpose.

This solution suggests the second solution as well. That is to attempt to bring the functioning of government up to the level that the citizens have been taught to expect. How can this be done? This would require considerable investment in undoing the harmful actions that have occurred, largely since the September 11th attacks and their aftermath.

The government would have to take steps to show a change in character in order to restore the faith of the citizens and the soiled image of the state. Taking accountability for actions, reinstating “transparent” government, carrying out the functions of government impartially, ceasing attempts to regulate women's bodies and reproductive rights, giving true and accurate information when asked, allowing science to inform governmental decisions appropriately, and restoring the balance of the three branches of government to equilibrium, would go far toward addressing the wrongs that have been done.

It would seem likely that such changes in government, if they come at all, will take some time to bring about. Therefore, I would also suggest a third solution toward helping to counter the harm caused by the compound wrongs of the Government.

Forum on Public Policy

By obscuring true information about health, safety, and consumer issues, the government has taken away the citizens' ability to make informed choices, and adequately safeguard themselves. By restricting or removing civil rights, self-sovereignty, and medical choices, the government has eroded the covenant between the citizens and the state. The citizens have lost some of the powers and freedoms to the state; though there has been no clear corresponding good gained for the general welfare. How can this be remedied?

The citizens can take back what has been lost. Offering the citizens alternate access to information restores power which has been denied them. Fighting injustices done to them through the court system and by making the injustices known restores the citizens' dignity and worth. People in the media, educators, scientists, and health professionals can all take on the role of advocate and supporter for those who have been harmed by shifts in governmental policies and actions. It may be that some causes will be futile. But sometimes the ultimate outcome of a battle is not as important as the fact that people cared enough to take up arms and fight.

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