

The Corporation Revisited

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, January 06, 2007

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-Ameena Mayer

“A man who is in love declares that ‘I’ and ‘you’ are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact” (Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents).

As I watched The Corporation for the third time, the key to humankind’s destructive path toward complete annihilation became apparent to me, bright as steel gleaming beneath the rays of our overly smouldering sun. Essentially, we are facing an identity crisis involving a heinous misunderstanding of what being human means. Embracing the illusory notion that we are all self-contained units for whom the world is a mining field for our adolescent desires, and that we are not a species that thrives on community, love-bonds and communion with nature, we have grown to abhor and shun our true essence. In other words, we are in a sick condition of self-hatred, leading to hatred for our fellow human and to infantile schemes for self-aggrandizement that stem from plain old low self-esteem.

The Corporation very enticingly defines corporate person hoods as psychotics. In today’s era of global militarism, the corporation has become the dominant ‘personality’ to which we look for succor. Our every transient desire is fulfilled by it, and it has catalyzed our quest to replace warm, soft human bonds and true emotional fulfillment with the obtrusive hardness of objects. The film provides much evidence in favor of corporations’ psychotic tendencies: the inability to sustain lasting relationships, lack of guilt or concern for others’ suffering, and the inability to look beyond their own inflated interests.

In essence, however, the corporation is a fiction, our own Frankenstein-like mirage, a mere manifestation of our subconscious negative impulses. Just as we can read our sicknesses and psychoses from dream analysis, so we can by regarding the corporation. As Theodore Roszak states, “the planet has become like that blank psychiatric screen on which the neurotic unconscious projects its fantasies” (Ecopsychology, 1995, p. 5). But at the same time that we watch this villain on the screen, munching Monsanto popcorn, slurping on Coca-cola and donning Nike running shoes in glee, the monster reinforces and legitimizes these negative impulses that should have remained slumbering within the fat tissues of our sloping brains, so that our society is becoming more and more psychotic. One only has to regard the disassociation between driving a car and the little boy’s amputated leg to observe this, or at the way we use and discard each other in interpersonal relationships.

The destruction of our natural environment was perhaps the pioneering activity leading to our demise. By boxing ourselves off from the trees and grasses and bears in concrete wastelands, we have pushed away an integral part of ourselves. To say we are separate from nature and its inhabitants is to deny our true identity. And if we can clear-cut an ancient forest without wincing, we can just as easily eat Nestle chocolate while the African boy suffers, and, perhaps most easily, we can kill our own selves. Indeed, if

we were to truly love ourselves, the corporation would disintegrate, leaving behind nothing but the wild wind and a thin silver glimmer of hope that we would find a path back to who we truly are.