

"THE DARK SIDE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY".

F. Emery, March 95.

In pursuing democratization of the workplace, participative design and search conferencing I have constantly encountered the charge of being naive. The naivety is seen to come from an inability to accept the darker side of human nature. What is the darker side? It is supposedly manifested in many different ways e.g. "hatred of learning", "fear of freedom' and that complex of inferior qualities that McGregor described as "theory X". Deeper than these particular manifestations is the suggestion that it is in human nature to destroy what it has created; this implies a very deep human antipathy to civilization and its products.

I think that this charge of ignoring, of giving too little weight, to the darker side of human nature ought to be investigated ; not only because it has arisen from close colleagues of my European days but it taps deep roots in Western culture. The further we get with remaking industry and society to accord to 'design principle 2', redundancy of functions, the more we can expect resistance to come from ever deeper roots of the old culture. All previous civilizations were built on the first design principle of redundancy of parts (individual people) and justified this with the claim that the mass of people were too immature to ever civilize, control or govern themselves*.

In Western civilization the concept of original sin is probably the starting point. It states that humans start from the darker side and are only brought to doing good by the ethics imposed by the disciplinary actions of the family and the community. To that we could add the doctrine of Apostle Paul that our material body embodies this sinfulness:

"For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present in me; but how to perform that which is good I find not... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans, chapter seven).

If one's understanding of the social world is built on these premises then self-flagellation is an heroic way of saving oneself from eternal damnation: flagellation of one's children is a duty you owe them as a parent, or must do if you are, as teacher, acting as the parent. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was, and remains for many in Western civilization, a practical guide to parents and teachers.

At the turn of the century, as science was encroaching on the traditional role of religion, the dark side of humans was newly defined.

**Note from ME. When referring to previous 'civilizations', FE was obviously confining his analysis to those preceding today's Western cultures. There is evidence from all over the planet that the ancient cultures preceding the golden eras of Greece and Rome were predominantly organized on the second principle, redundancy of function. As such they corroborate today's empirical evidence that people living and working within DP2 structures show a predominance of cooperative rather than competitive behaviour.*

Indeed, even in those Greek, Roman and English cultures (before the industrial revolution), the higher echelons were organized on the first principle but the rest of the populations left to their own devices followed the second.