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A RAPE OF THE LANGUAGE IS A RAPE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

A number of movies and other venues on TV make heavy use of an expletive for fornication these days. Sometimes, the characters seem to compete to see who can use it the most in a sentence. It is astounding to me that it is often used casually, not just when extreme anger needs to be conveyed. The effect on the listener, especially a person who uses it rarely or never, is almost equivalent to the overuse of shooting and other violence now so commonly portrayed.

It is not heard on MSNBC, but is heard on HBO, for example. Even when we hear it from a person of the same political persuasion, it is not acceptable. It is a gutteral Anglo-Saxon word, but those of us of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, do not want to own it. We are certainly not against all swearing, but against the specific connotations of this word.

As a lifelong wordsmith, I protest that, not only is this an impoverishment of the language, but also is an affront to well being. The persons speaking telegraph continuous fury and contemptuous disregard for those who prefer to have elevating, instead of degrading, thoughts. It has some shock value. It probably is an example of what psychiatrists who practiced psychodynamic psychiatry in the 1970s-90s labelled as the defense mechanism of "displacement". People are angry about a number of issues in their personal lives, but displace the anger onto people they are addressing.

Women use it, apparently, in an attempt to be "one of the boys": tough, unempathic, and verbally abusive. Men use it to be dominating and aggressive. This use also reminds people constantly that sex is a weapon, not for private and personal joy, and certainly not for love. It also subtly promotes a position of exploitation of the weak. It can be heard as a verb, an adjective, or a noun.

Desensitization of feelings contributes to callous sexual abuse of women and children. Coming of age is fraught with pitfalls enough in the modern world without adding to the ambiguity surrounding the most intimate of human attachments. For those of poor self esteem or low resilience, these conditions are magnified. Those who model their behavior on what they see in movies carry this profanity into real life. Consider the fact that a certain percentage of the population think only concretely and not abstractly, and are unable to distance themselves from the implications of the adversarial speech. Suicides and homicides are increasing in teenagers.

Social psychologists have written that people may be "other directed" or "inner directed". That is, a large number of people model their behavior on what others are doing, whereas a smaller number of people have their own inner set of standards, based on experience, education, and guidance by family or spirituality. The latter may be immune to external influence.

If there are no boundaries on speech, and no civil discourse, it is a short step to corruption of morals and disrespect for others. Using expletives is tantamount to "a gateway drug". Often, those swearing seem to be threatening and confrontational at best, racist and sexist at worst.

I note that few, or no, professionals talk to patients or clients with this particular expletive, an example of exactly the need to establish mutual respect and trust needed for society to function well.

To expedite the replacement of offensive language, I have ventured to offer some substitutes.

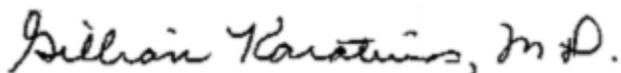
For the noun: misanthrope, misogynist, sociopath, scumbag, or a sentence from Shakespeare substituting for both the noun and the verb "Aroint thee, rump fed ronyon".

For the verb, "Stifle" as used by Carroll O'Conner in All in the Family, "Zip it", "Lose the attitude", "Control yourself", "Grow up", "Cease and desist".

For the adjective, "inane", "asinine", "pernicious", "vile", "atrocious". A contest to pick words with contextual meaning would be useful, as eloquence seems to be deserting me here.

Insofar as it is used as a coping mechanism, as in displacement, as mentioned, above, I recommend other coping/defense mechanisms, such as humor, affiliation (joining groups), altruism, intellectualization, and spirituality. Or just see a mental health worker in order to achieve some self knowledge.

Electronically Signed By:



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