The origin of the story, The Frog and the Scorpion, might go back to the ancient Sanskrit traditions collected in the Panchatantra, but I first heard the tale while watching a bootleg copy of the 1955 Orson Welles film, Mr. Arkadin forty years ago.

A frog and a scorpion meet on the bank of a stream and the scorpion asks the frog to carry him across on its back. The frog asks, “How do I know you won’t sting me?” And the scorpion says, “Because if I do, I will drown too.”

The frog is satisfied, and they set out. Half way across, the frog felt a terrible pain - the scorpion had stung him.

“Why did you sting me?” gasps the frog. “Now we’ll both die”

“I know,” replied the scorpion, “but I cannot help myself - it is my nature.”

A scorpion’s job, other than to make baby scorpions, is to sting, kill, and eat its prey. If there had been another frog down by the stream bank it might have asked the well intentioned, trusting frog, “What part of sting, kill, and eat didn’t you understand?” But it was just the two of them … the frog and the scorpion down by the stream. And the frog agreed with the scorpion’s irrefutable logic. Why would it cause its own demise? Believing the words of a scorpion, but ignoring the nature of a scorpion, they set off to their mutual doom.

Unlike the fables attributed to Aesop, there is no moral for the listener to “get.” It is a very simple story illustrating one of the many facets of the human condition that we, for the most part, have disregarded, repressed, or forgotten, for centuries.

Never negotiate with scorpions. Regardless of what they may say … their agenda has nothing to do with your best interests.

Oh did I say scorpions? I meant to say Republicans. But then I reflect on all the damage the Democrats have done since The Bush/Cheney regime blasted its way into the Oval Office. For eight years they either caved in, or collaborated with, those murderous thugs. And then when a Democrat achieved the highest office in the land … the ‘hope we could believe in’ turned into the Bush/Cheney regime 2.0.

So yeah … instead of scorpions … substitute almost anybody who holds an elected office and meets in our nation’s capitol to decide how to screw the rest of us into the ground.

What’s the age old question? Nature or Nurture? The innate corrupt nature of most of our current crop of politicians is carefully nurtured by the lobbyists … excuse me … bag men of the Corporatocracy, so the corruption can then bloom. Very similar to the way an algae bloom will choke off all the existing life in a pond or lake. An excellent deal for the algae but not so much

for the fish.

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Sydney Schanberg once said, "We Americans are the ultimate innocents. We are forever desperate to believe that this time the government is telling us the truth." Which sounds sooooo much better than starting off, “We Americans are the ultimate innocent frogs …” And the truth is … we’re not so innocent.

The frog in the story was just performing a good deed. There wasn’t going to be any sort of payoff when he and the scorpion reached the other side of the stream. We, on the other hand, are lured into the water because we can see the glittering array of treasures on the other shore we can buy with our labor. We are cooperating with scorpions. The sweet seductive voices in our heads are coming straight from the scorpion elite of the Dominant Culture.

We’ve known since Rachel Carson published Silent Spring in 1962 that the use of pesticides by agribusiness was killing not only animals and birds, but humans. Using the publication date of Silent Spring as an historical marker, we’ve known for over 50 years that the way we grew our food was … lethal. The influence of Silent Spring led to the banning of DDT in 1972. It took 10 years to finally stop using a verifiably toxic chemical that poisoned our environment.

So what’s happened over the last 40 years? Did agribusiness learn to grow our food without poisoning the air, water, or land?

Genetically engineered crops were supposed to require less pesticides and herbicides. Charles Benbrook, Ph.D, Chief Scientist for The Organic Center, in his study, Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use: The First Thirteen Years, found farmers applied 318 million more pounds of pesticides over the last 13 years as a result of planting genetically engineered seeds. Genetically engineered crop acres required over 26% more pounds of pesticides per acre than acres planted to non GE crops. I’m not an expert in the field but off the top of my head … that doesn’t sound good.

The Dominant Culture’s primary approach to agriculture is to make money … not food. The Dominant Culture’s approach to anything is to make money … and whatever the hell happens next is irrelevant. We are cooperating with our worst enemy when we buy corporate food from our local mega-mart and with every bite of a Big Mac.

Not only do we have to eat their garbage but the Dominant Culture entices us with toys to buy with our wage-slave money. Whether it’s a toxic television or a poisonous PC, we just gotta have the newest iPod, iTouch, iMac, iPad, or iPhone. But do we have the faintest i-Dea they’re made with toxic chemicals and metals? Third-world countries have become our digital dumping grounds. Hundreds of millions of tons of it each year pollute the land and water of impoverished people living amidst our electronic garbage.

Do we even notice the scorpion on our back as we frog kick across the water towards PlayLand? And when we eventually feel the fatal sting we’ll turn and see the Dominant Culture sinking with us. We could ask, “Why? Everything you have done is killing us all.” And the scorpion (who in my movie looks a lot like Dick Cheney) replies, “I couldn’t help it. It’s my

nature. What part of Capitalism didn't you understand?"

Wanna know what dissonance is? Our 6 year old BigAssTV is starting to wheeze its way towards darkness. It can't be repaired. It can only be replaced. So we've been looking at new TV's. There's a 60 inch LED model that's within our price range and looks absolutely fantastic. I can't wait to get it home and watch the Blu-ray edition of Mr. Arkadin.

Y'see there's this frog and a scorpion down by a riverbank

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