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There You Are

My dear spouse downloaded a virus onto our computer this week. It's a nasty little thing that invaded my Word 7 program. Whenever I go to close out a file, instead of getting the usual request about whether to save changes or not to the document, I get the message: Joan Van Becelaere is a great big jerk! And then it refuses to save or close unless I acknowledge the insult with a click of "OK."

At first, I was really miffed. First, why would someone want to play such a stupid joke. Second, why should this happen to me? I've got enough hassle in my life, thank you, without computers giving me back-talk. And third, just what was my husband trying to do by downloading strange stuff off the Internet? Rats!

I thought about calling one of my computer guru friends and asking him to come and remove the offending beast. But then I thought about it again. Actually, it's not bad to have a little reminder that I need to do a small reality check now and again.

We all need a little something once and awhile to goad us to do a reality check. I think most people, myself included, get so wrapped up in "stuff"— jobs, classes, meetings, etc. and etc. — that we lose touch with what is really going on around us and what is really going on inside us. We live on autopilot much of the time, going through the motions. It's not because we are somehow deficient or that we don't care. It's just easier that way and we fall into habit.

There's nothing wrong with habit per se, but unthinking habits in lifestyle tend to support the worst of society's destructive status quo. It's habit that leads us to toss the aluminum can rather than recycle it. It's habit that makes us jump in the car and run to the store on a whim for ice cream. It's habit, pure and simple, that invites us to ignore the hundreds of ways that we can further social and ecological justice in our own cities and towns.

I was reading the Earth Healer newsletter this week. It's the newsletter of the Gaia Community UU congregation in Kansas City. A quote in the publication by Jane Holt, really caught my eye. She said "I truly believe the best thing we can do to manifest our spiritual path in our community is to live a conscious, intentional life." In other words, it's not by our clothing or our jewelry or the number of times that we call out "Blessed Be," that we are defined within society. Rather, others should know we are following an earth-centered path by the way we live our lives.

Our earth-centered, Pagan spiritual path calls us specifically to turn off the autopilot and to live with intentionality and responsibility. We celebrate the interdependence of all life in our rituals. This calls us to explore the deep ties between thea/ology, ecology and social justice. As Unitarian

Universalist Pagans, we are called to walk our talk and live in the knowledge that our smallest decisions can have global repercussions.

We all need a little reality check now and then. Maybe a little sign that pops up when ever we go on autopilot to remind us that a life lived without intentionality is the life of a "great big jerk." I've grown to appreciate my little computer virus. Sometimes the universe works in quirky ways.

Blessings!
Joan Van Becelaere
CUUPS President

CUUPS Projects in Queue!

As part of our development, CUUPS is planning a journal for publication in the year 2000. The journal will reflect in depth earth religious thinking of our time.

To apply for funding, grants, and to put out a call for papers, we need to create a name for the publication. So we are having a contest! We are inviting the members to enter their ideas. Some suggestions like "Full CUUPS" and "The CUUPS Journal" have already been discussed. Deadline for entries is February 28. 1999.

The prize for the winning titlist will be a one year membership in CUUPS. If you have ideas you can send them to David Pollard at the CUUPS e-mail address, or regular postal service at CUUPS Journal Contest, c/o 517 Valley Mills Drive, Arlington, TX 76018.

Blessings!
David Pollard
CUUPS Vice President

About Communications

The website has finally been updated with correct chapter information. Please check your chapter to make sure it aligns with the information our office has for you. If you are not public as someone following earth religious paths or have confidentiality issues, please take that into consideration when choosing the name you wish us to show as the chapter contact person. There are many ways that can be handled. Send any information to me at kishhilde@earthlink.net.

Press releases have been sent out announcing the sale of our concert recording from GA. We are preparing advertisements for UU and Pagan publications to market it. Anyone knowing of a great magazine or newsletter for advertising this in should contact me with the information. We are willing to do advertisement exchanges for ads in our publications too.

Thanks to all of you who supported our publications in 1998 here's to a great 1999!

Happy New Year!
Jerrie Hildebrand
Director of Communications

Note E-mail Address Change

Our organizational e-mail address has changed to CUUPS@uua.org. Our website address will remain the same www.cuups.org

Upcoming Newsletter Themes & Deadlines

The following are deadlines for the 1999 series of newsletters for CUUPS.

April/May 1999 - Deadline March 15/ Basic Theme: Book and Music Reviews

September 1999 - Deadline July 30/Basic Theme: Teaching Earth Religious Ways

December 1999 - Deadline October 30/Basic Theme: Rituals in Everyday Living

Please send articles via e-mail to kishhilde@earthlink.net or by postal mail on disk to me at First Universalist Society, 211 Bridge Street, Salem, MA 01970. If you cannot put them on a disk please type them double spaced so we can scan them more accurately.

I am looking to add to our editorial staff this next year. If you are interested let me know. I also would like to invite artists to send in your work. Black and white is best. a good copy of the piece is all I really need to scan in.

Often our publication receives requests from other Pagan magazines and periodicals to reprint something in their print media. Be sure to indicate your contact information when sending things so you can have the opportunity to show up in print elsewhere too!

Brightest blessings to you all!
Jerrie Hildebrand
The CUUPS Newsletter Editor

Concert CD Release Parties!!

With the new concert recording out we are looking for ways to promote it. One of the suggestions has been to invite chapters and church bookstores to have CD release parties. Details will be available soon. If your chapter or congregation is interested please contact the CUUPS office.

Convo Planning

The meeting schedule for Convocation in New England for the next few months are Feb 6, 1999 and March 9, 1999 from 1-5 pm at the First Universalist Society of Salem, MA in the Anna F. Hill Room. After March they will remain the first Saturday of the month except for July. The July meeting will be the second Saturday of the month.

These meetings are open to those interested in planning convocation in New England for the fall of 1999 for CUUPS. We are waiting for confirmation on our site now and will announce it in the next newsletter.

We need lots of folks to help on committees. Subcommittees have been formed with people accountable for them. Talk to your chapter members about coming and/or taking on a section of the gathering! Individual members not connected with a chapter are also very welcome!

Committees will share what they have been doing so we can all give input. Some committees have yet to be set up. We will set up time for committees to get some work done at the meeting too separately and together with the entire group.

Conversations have begun with possible presenters. So come join us as we prepare for a great Convo!

Jerrie Hildebrand
Convo 99 Chair

Access Committee Created

CUUPS has created an Access Committee with the tasks of interfacing with:

- the CUUPS committees that put on Convo and GA programs,
- the management of the sites hosting those programs,
- the membership in need of accommodation, and
- the membership willing and able to assist in that accommodation.

The goal is to bring everyone who wants to be involved in a CUUPS activity into that involvement. The immediate goals of the committee are to:

1. Ensure that Convo '99 is accessible
2. Ensure that GA programming is accessible
3. Educate the membership on accessibility issues
4. Ensure that Convo 2000 is accessible.

So what does "accessible" mean? It means that everyone can eat the food, travel to the site, get to the individual program events at the site. It means that everyone can participate in the program events, regardless of vision, hearing, or mobility impairments.

Notelrac Starchasm is the chair of this committee. If you want to reach him privately, the e-mail address is notelrac@notelrac.com. If you wish to contact the whole committee, the mailing list is cuuups-access@onelist.com. If you wish to join the committee in its discussions, you can subscribe via <http://www.onelist.com>. Membership is open to all, including the temporarily able-bodied. You will need to register, and then ask to join the cuuups-access mailing list. An archive of our discussions is available to list members. Be forewarned -- if you join, you will ask you to do something! Send Your Announcements for Late Spring... If your congregation or chapter is planning earth religious programming open to the public let us know by the next newsletter deadline March 15, 1999. We would love to publish them but need advance notice.

RE Projects Beginning

CUUPS has formed a committee to look at creating religious education curricula and materials. To fulfill this vision we are looking for committed volunteers who are interested in seeing this through. We are looking for those interested in RE for children and adults.

If you are interested please contact Joan Van Becelaere via e-mail at gaia-spirit@worldnet.att.net or via the CUUPS office.

Many Faces of the Divine

Sermon delivered by
Sheri Morton Stanley

Unitarian Universalist Church, St. Petersburg, FL
 June 1998

The Classical writer Symmachus once said "Do the means by which a man seeks the truth really matter? There is no single road by which we may arrive at so great a Mystery."

We are all on that journey - raveling our own roads towards that great Mystery. Some choose paths worn smooth by countless feet, singing songs given utterance by ancient tongues. Some pick their way through dense forests never before entered, chanting their own private hymns of joy. Some wander between road and farmland, some climb the fences and walk between the rows. All raveling towards the Mountain.

Our names for this destination vary: God, Goddess, Jesus, Buddha, Ishtar, Nirvana, Creation, Creator, Trickster, Allah, Pele, Nature, Earth, Life. Sometimes, we confuse the name with the thing itself.

Sometimes, we confuse this glorious destination with our own egos - believing that our path is the only way, or the best way, or the fastest way to the top. We cannot forget that religion is only our way of formalizing the path, giving a constant and reassuring rhythm to our collective journeys. Intended to be helpful, religion can become a hindrance - substituting border checks where there should be bridges, confining where it should liberate. At its worst, it sets us against one another, and prevents any of us from reaching our goal. At its best, though, it provides support when we stumble, arms to catch us when we fall. It gives us comradeship and comfort, and boundaries which clarify the journey and give us a sense of accomplishment. It gives us a place to celebrate and people to share the journey.

And this journey is difficult, make no mistake. Coming closer to the Mystery which lies behind and within the world challenges the soul - it makes us change. Raveling this hero's pathway, according to the Katha Upanishad, is "the sharpened edge of a razor, hard to traverse". We need all the help we can get.

And our destination? The point at which all roads converge and all pathways meet. Perhaps visible to those with special wisdom, this meeting place is hidden from our sight. We can only guess what lies ahead, can only look and listen to the world around us to gather our clues. The names of this Center are innumerable - and very personal. Lao Tzu says that it cannot be named, yet even he must name it for himself. As he calls it "the way", others have called it "the source", "the all", "the infinite" or "the truth". The truth is that there can be no name which fully describes it. All our efforts are, at best, descriptions of only a portion - the reflection of the sun in a mirror, a pale imitation of that source of light.

As UUs, we are called to look beyond the rigid mask of dogma, which obscures the true face of the Divine, and to recognize that the names we give to this ineffable Truth are inadequate indeed to explain or encompass it's Nature.

It is the Center, the instant in which all things are possible. It is black Yemaya, swaying gently to the rhythms of the sea, It is clever Raven, bringing forth light It is gentle Jesus, and fierce Kali It dwells within us, and transcends us.

Listen carefully - beneath the hum of daily living you can hear the heartbeat of the world. Here is Divinity, beneath our feet, within our hearts. May we in every moment hear that heartbeat. May we in every moment recognize Divinity in our lives, in our companions, in ourselves. So mote it be.

Paganism - Fact or Fancy

John Holder

"I am confronted very often with trying to explain to people what I mean by Paganism. To some people, it seems like a contradiction to say that I have a certain subjective truth; I have experienced the Goddess, and this is my total reality. And yet I do not believe that I have the one true, right and only way. Many people cannot understand how I find Her a part of my reality and accept the fact that your reality might be something else. But for me, this in no way is a contradiction, because I am aware that my reality and my conclusions are a result of my unique genetic structure, my life experience and my subjective feelings; and you are a different person, whose same experience of whatever may or may not be out there will be translated in your nervous system into something different. And I can learn from that. I can extend my own reality by sharing that and grow. This recognition that everyone has different experiences is a fundamental

keystone to Paganism; it's the fundamental premise that whatever is going on out there is infinitely more complex than I can ever understand. And that makes me feel very good."

- Alison Harlow, systems analyst / priestess

You really can't begin to talk about what contemporary Paganism is until you've talked about what it isn't. The disinformation campaign against Pagans and Paganism really is one of the most concerted, and successful, in history. Some within the Pagan ranks perceive this as a deliberate campaign and a conspiracy; while not a conspiracy theorist by nature, I tend to go along with that to a degree. But whether deliberate or accidental, the fact is that in our age of computers, mass media, and high science, most people have a view of what I'm calling Paganism which comes straight out of the Middle Ages. Paganism, in this light, is associated with the devil-worship, demonic possession, evil spells, and an embrace of evil itself in the context of an unholy war against Christianity.

The definition of witch in a contemporary dictionary is "one that is credited with usually malignant supernatural powers, especially a woman practicing black witchcraft often with the aid of a devil or familiar: sorceress" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981). That picture is, in fact, a product of Christianity and was developed centuries after the real foundations of Paganism were laid in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Here in the UU Fellowship, I think that most of us would rightly claim to have a perspective that transcends Middle-Ages prejudice and distortions. But when I stand here and tell you that I am a witch, you may still feel a twinge of that cultural hangover. The word still carries a certain charge, doesn't it?

What I'd like to do for a few minutes here is try to counter these misapprehensions with some facts about the people and practices involved in alternative earth-centered religion, as it was originally practiced and as it exists - quietly - in our society today. The word "Pagan" means, most simply, "country dweller."

When Christianity began to spread in Europe after Rome embraced it, it caught on and was encouraged in the cities first. Country people were not touched by the new religion as quickly, and clung to older beliefs which emphasized the sacredness of nature, the seasonal cycles, and the idea of different deities being associated with different natural forces. These country dwellers, rustics, hicks, bumpkins - Pagans - were seen as the still unsaved. (Another word for "unsaved" which persists down to the present day is "heathen" - dwellers in the heath). When attempts were made to Christianize those who clung to these old ways, they were no doubt accompanied by the condescension of the urbanite for the rural resident. In time, of course, they were accompanied by things a lot more violent. But the biggest days of the "witch-burnings", in the late Middle Ages, were probably more motivated by the desire to repress individualistic or independent people - largely women - than by real Christian piety. And they were less directed at Pagans or Paganism than they were at those who defied social conventions in general. The burnings are a whole subject in themselves, and we don't really have time to get into that now.

In any case, that was then, and that was the beginning of the disinformation campaign which persists down to our own time. But what is Paganism today? My definition of Paganism goes a bit beyond what some would choose. It includes such European traditions as Wicca, Druidism, and Asatru, but also incorporates Native American belief systems, various cosmologies from Africa and Latin America, and hybrid systems that have developed in recent centuries, such as Vodun and Santeria. What do all these religions have in common? Actually, quite a bit, despite many differences .

- an openness toward a polytheistic sensibility, which allows for the presentation of the divine in a number of different aspects, and with this, a reverence for the natural world as both creation and creator
- an openness toward magick
- the conscious manipulation of unseen, yet still natural, forces, in pursuit of a specific goal, through training in a specific system of knowledge

- the tendency to approach reality and experience in cyclical, as opposed to linear, terms, and the use of cycle symbols, such as the seasonal Wheel of the Year, to express and celebrate this approach and what follows from it, which is the idea of eternal renewing and a balance between light and dark, life and death, male and female, and other polarities
- a disinclination to insist on hard-and-fast doctrine, which in many religions involves interpretation by a special priestly class. In most types of Paganism, everyone is a priest or priestess, an initiate.
- and, of course, a history of repression by dominant world religions like Christianity and Islam.

I know I just used a lot of five-dollar words there, and I think I need to define some terms. When I say "different aspects of the divine," I mean that Pagans are by and large open to the idea that God/Goddess/Deity can be encountered in a number of different guises. Sometimes these correspond to natural forces, such as rain, fire, wind. Sometimes they are associated with different expressions of the psyche, such as love, anger, envy, generosity. Usually, these aspects are derived from very everyday, familiar things in people's lives. Divinity is everywhere to most Pagans.

Which brings me to Immanence. When I first started looking into Paganism, this gave me the most trouble conceptually. It's actually a pretty well-worn idea, very similar to pantheism. God / Goddess / Deity is literally everywhere, in everything. In people, in animals and plants, in the elements (air, water, fire, earth). The Hindi greeting "Namaste" says this quite precisely, by the way. That word, used in greeting, means "The Divine in me salutes the Divine in you." For most Pagans, the word "supernatural" is a null word. What is natural is holy; there's no separation between the spiritual and material worlds. Understanding that lack of separation is important to understanding magick as the word is used by Pagans. It's very different from the illusionist "magic" referred to by "magicians" who put on a show. That's one reason why a lot of Pagans put a "k" on the end of the word - to make that distinction. Magick, in the Pagan sense, involves using material and mental/psychic means to manipulate or shape some aspect of the world around us. Some common uses of magick are divination (seeking insight as to choices and the outcomes of individual action), healing, and of course, contact and communication with deity. The latter can be as simple - and powerful - as individual prayer, or may involve creating sacred space with other people. In Wicca and similar traditions, for example, a frequent ritual involves "casting a circle" - a physical space in a room or outside which is set apart for magickal workings and contact with the God and Goddess.

What most Pagans do NOT use magick for is to harm other people. The reason for this is that the principle of "do unto others" is as much a part of Paganism as it is of Christianity. The wording is often given as "An it harm none, do what you will." The idea is very similar, though - what you do to others, good OR bad, comes back to you. Casting evil spells or otherwise attempting to inflict harm by magick is both immoral, in Pagan terms, and self-defeating. Most Pagans would agree that it's a good way to make bad trouble for yourself - and Pagans are not any more likely to be masochists than anybody else. The act of damaging someone else also damages yourself, just as the act of helping someone else helps you. Either way, when you perform any kind of magickal working, you are "bound up" in it yourself.

Many Pagans embrace a cyclical view of reality. There are a lot of implications to that - some take the idea of cyclical renewal as far as reincarnation, in fact. The emphasis on cycles is one of the things I personally find most appealing about Paganism. It can relieve a lot of spiritual and even psychological stress - if everything is coming around again, then mistakes, miscues, wrong turns will be made right - over time. Maybe not this time around, but the next time. And life will follow death as surely as death follows life. The cyclical view implies not just second chances, but an eternal number of chances.

It's for this reason that many Pagans, including myself, often do rituals or observances which call attention to some aspect of a cycle, such as seasonal celebrations or full-moon observances. Right now we have just passed one of the commonly-observed Pagan holidays, Beltane (May Day). The Maypole, the bunny rabbits, the flower garlands of Beltane (and later, the Easter season) all highlight the idea of the earth - and for many, the Deity - becoming fertile, blossoming, Springing forth. At the other end of the year is Falling back, becoming fallow, dying - Samhain, or what contemporary culture understands as Hallowe'en.

In all, there are often either four or eight holidays for many Pagans, corresponding to different points in the yearly life of the Earth - and, for many, to different points in the life of the God. Wiccans, and those of many similar traditions, embrace the idea of an eternal, ageless Goddess and a God who she bears as a son (at Yule - sound familiar?), raises as a child, takes as a mate, and cares for in his aging and death - every year. At each stage of life is a season. The Earth expresses the life cycle of the God.

Whether you literally worship the moon or Mother Earth (and many do), it's the symbology that is powerful. Paganism is, in many ways, a religion of symbols. Someone I read once said that it's a religion of poetry, as opposed to prose. What is evocative, to Pagans, is more important than what is descriptive or explanatory.

Which leads me to the fourth point I mentioned at the beginning - Paganism's relative lack of doctrine or canon. The joke runs that at a gathering of four Pagans, there are probably at least five religions represented. This is one thing that Pagans really share with a lot of us as Unitarian Universalists. Like UUs, there's an attitude of respect for people's spiritual search as opposed to their conclusions, their journey as opposed to their destination. Oh, we certainly do have our sectarians, our fundamentalists, like any religious group does. That's a psychological phenomenon, in my opinion, that's pretty universal. But for the most part, Paganism's emphasis on symbol and ritual over doctrine means real acceptance of diversity. Occasionally, this can be amusing - there are some Pagan groups which seem to exist for their joke value, like the Discordians, who say things like "We'll let others determine the story behind the Universe - we go straight to the punch line."

Of course, that attitude has brought opposition and mistrust from established religious organizations. The Pagan embrace of many paths, one destination, and our fairly lighthearted approach toward spirituality, has earned us censure and condemnation for centuries as heretics, devil-worshippers, you-name-it. And, of course, the embrace of an at least symbolically female aspect of Deity has put us afoul of many in major religions who see God as male, and who have organized societies patriarchy with the help of that imagery. The censure and lack of acceptance I've just described is, in fact, a big reason why I am so grateful for the existence of this Fellowship: Here I don't have to worry about dealing with that kind of thing. But the UU churches are a huge exception to the rule. As a matter of fact, Unitarian Universalism, as I hope I've shown, has a very large amount in common with what is generally defined as Paganism. Acceptance of other's beliefs, a reverent and protective attitude toward the natural world, and an emphasis on the individual spiritual journey, are all things which I've found to be true of our UU community, the UU organization generally and my Pagan friends and family.

The bottom line for me, regarding being a Pagan, is: It's something I have always been - but like many others say, for a long time I didn't know that what I believed had a name. It's a religion that works for me because it doesn't require me to put my brain on hold; it's open-ended, again like Unitarian Universalism. And it's as close as the Earth beneath my feet.

"Mother Goddess is reawakening, and we can begin to recover our primal birthright, the sheer, intoxicating joy of being alive. We can open new eyes and see that there is nothing to be saved from, no struggle of life against the universe, no God outside the world to be feared and obeyed; only the Goddess, the Mother, the turning spiral that whirls us in and out of existence, whose winking eye is the pulse of being - birth, death, rebirth - whose laughter bubbles and courses through all things and who is found only through love: love of trees, of stones, of sky and clouds, of scented blossoms and thundering waves; of all that runs and flies

and swims and crawls on her face; through love of ourselves; life-dissolving world-creating orgasmic love of each other; each of us unique and natural as a snowflake, each of us our own star, her Child, her lover, her beloved, her Self."

Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*

EarthMan: Earth-Centered UUs in Asia

Dave Burwasser

Gwen Foss and Mike McPhee/Guest Columnists

Reprinted with permission from THE STIRRER Journal of the Universalist Association of New South Wales (Australia)

In the Philippines, a Universalist church (now UU) was founded 30 years ago by Bishop Toribio Quimada, who converted from Catholicism after reading about Universalism. Many of the UUs are ex-Catholics and farmers. One of the features of the church that appeals to former Catholics is the equality of the minister and the people.

Church buildings are made out of coconut wood and bamboo, and one uses an empty bombshell as a bell. Many of the ministers do faith-healing using charms, oil and prayers; the UU association in the Philippines has a faith-healing department. Services sometimes include mass healings where people come from miles around, and one village has six male and six female mediums. In India, the Khasi Hills Unitarians live in matrilineal hill tribes in the eastern part of the country. The founder of the Khasi Hills Unitarians combined Unitarian Christianity with tribal religion about 100 years ago. There were 7000 KUs in 1993, and in 1996 there are 9000. They have 33 churches, most or all of which are used as schools during the week. (All other schools in the region are run by Christian missionaries and are objectionable to the Unitarians.) One of the churches can hold 3000 people and has a flaming chalice on the roof. Some churches have five services on a Sunday.

About 20 years ago the Khasi Hills Unitarians mutually discovered an even older Unitarian tradition in India, the Unitarian Christian Church in Madras, which celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1995. The Madras church, with 125 adults and many children in Religious Education, is the second oldest Old World Unitarian movement, after Poland.

Sex and Human Values: A Book Review

Review by

Daniel S. Levine

Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body by Riane Eisler

San Francisco: Harper, 1995.

495 pp. ISBN 0-06-250283-2.

\$15 paper. 0-06-250293-X. \$25 cloth.

This volume is a sequel to the same author's widely read *The Chalice and the Blade*, and like its predecessor, boldly advances the thesis that much of what is regarded in contemporary folk psychology as "*immutable human nature*" actually arose from ecological and social circumstances in the remote past. Specifically, Riane Eisler argues in both books, with many compelling and accessible examples, that social systems based on dominator-subordinate rankings, strict gender role divisions, and institutionalized war are not the only possible systems. Rather, she evinces archaeological proof that societies based on partnership, cooperation, and equality in fact flourished during Paleolithic and Neolithic times. Moreover, there was a cataclysmic change in most societies in Europe and Asia, spurred in Europe between about 4300 and 2800 BC by invasions from groups based in the harsh Asian steppes and variously called Kurgan or Indo-European. This moved each society away from a partnership toward a dominator orientation, which caused a fundamental shift in many common categorizations and beliefs.

Sacred Pleasure deals especially with the historical shifts in categorizations relating to sex and love, and how they still affect us all in ways both the author and I consider harmful. The title refers to the ancient blending of sex and spirituality, particularly related to goddess worship, and the efforts of some modern visionaries to recapture this connection.

Eisler's is not a standard psychology book, but it is recommended for different groups of psychologists for many reasons. Behavioral psychologists will be particularly interested in the arguments it advances against sociobiology and related paradigms such as social Darwinism. Against the animal studies that sociobiologists rely on to justify dominance hierarchies and sexual double standards, Eisler cites studies of bonobos, African pygmy chimpanzees who have a much more peaceful society. Bonobos use sex (between all combinations, male-female, male-male, and female-female) both for social bonding and to relieve potential tensions. Cognitive psychologists will be interested in what Eisler hints about the wide capacity of humans for categorizations and associations that differ from standard ones; for example, the fact that modern societies often associate sexuality with violence or sin, whereas earlier societies associated sexuality with the sacred. Social psychologists will be interested in her debunking of some cultural clichés about relationships, such as the belief that love requires pain and is enhanced by jealousy.

Eisler defines her goal as one of advocacy as well as research: "... *my aim has not been to accumulate knowledge for its own sake. I was strongly motivated by the increasingly critical need for transformative knowledge: for the new tools for personal and social transformation that our time of mounting ecological, political, and economic crises requires if we are to have a better future, perhaps a future at all.*" (p. 2)

After examining the interpersonal roots of our many social crises, she concluded that attitudes about sex have critical implications for attitudes about many other things: peace and war, dominance and submission, gender roles, pleasure, and love, for example. In particular, she argues that violent or loveless interpersonal and institutional relations feed on cultural notions such as "*pain and pleasure are two sides of the same coin,*" "*spirituality and sexuality are at opposite poles,*" and "*the war of the sexes is inevitable*" (p. 3).

Eisler broadly discusses two competing frameworks for social cohesion. One is the dominator model, based on superior-inferior rankings between males and females as well as between social groups, and enforced by the fear of pain or death. The other is the partnership model, based on cooperation, equality, and mutuality between the sexes and between individuals, and held together by the rewards of pleasure and affection. The very existence of a partnership model has only been accepted in mainstream psychology since about the 1970s. Sigmund Freud, as Eisler pointed out, believed in the need for "man" to control nature, including his own inner nature, and for men to dominate women. The neurobiologist Antonio Damasio (1994) asserted the primacy of emotion in human decision making, but concluded that only negative emotions and not positive ones can effectively motivate people. Yet Damasio's pessimism is refuted by recent data of psychologists such as Edward Deci, Richard Ryan, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, indicating that intrinsic motivation based on enjoyment is effective in many work and personal situations. This basic premise is also supported, for example, by Alice Isen's results showing that positive affect enhances creativity and cognitive flexibility. Eisler's historical studies of partnership societies further strengthen the broad implications of such findings.

Eisler attacks the popular notion, supported by many religious institutions, that human sexuality is related to the "animal" side of our nature and inferior to our "highest" human capabilities. Rather, citing work of the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, she argues that human sexuality is advanced over that of other animals in many ways that encourage elaborate social bonding. These include the capacity of human females for multiple orgasms (based in the clitoris, which separates sex from reproduction) and for sex all year long, not just in estrous periods, and of partners to face each other during intercourse.

All these changes, combined with the long period of childhood in humans, foster emotional bonding between sexual partners and active involvement of males in child-rearing. Hence, she argues convincingly, far from being "animalistic," our capacity for sexual pleasure is intimately bound up with our highest mental, social, and spiritual capacities.

Moreover, Eisler states that religious authorities (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or any other) who advocate rigid sexual morality really only condemn sexual pleasure. They have been curiously silent, she says, about sexually-related pain, including wife-beating, abusive relationships, and marital or other rape. In this age of AIDS, she shows that the disease is spread not so much by sex per se as by uncaring or impersonal "dominator" sex, and many religious leaders have been silent about this as well. All this suggests to Eisler and myself that the agendas of these religious authorities are really based in preserving patriarchal rankings between the sexes, rather than moral sexual behavior as such.

Eisler gives excellent examples of trends over three thousand years of history: the decline or perversion of partnership sexual customs such as the sacred marriage, and the growth of other sexual institutions and customs that support a dominator society. She describes the ancient shift from partnership to dominator orientation as a shift of a large nonlinear dynamical system from one attractor to another, and discerns a growing worldwide movement (much of it invisible in the mainstream media) toward return to the earlier partnership attractor. This is based on many factors including the greater spread of democracy and the rise of feminism. Yet another influence is the rise of psychology in the last century:

But a major factor in these vast changes has been the continuing awakening of masses of people from their dominator trance -- an awakening further accelerated by the emergence of the social sciences, particularly by the gradual acceptance of modern psychology as both a new scientific discipline and a new therapy. For what this particular change brought us is an insight we today take for granted: that we need to understand painful events in our childhoods, particularly within the psychodynamics of our families, if we are to understand, and successfully change, the way we think, feel, and act. (p. 191)

The book's later chapters describe many current efforts in different parts of the world at enhancing partnership in economic and political spheres, noting that political movements are increasingly integrated with movements to improve personal life (e.g., reproductive rights and empowerment of women). Eisler also describes the increasingly strident resistance to change on the part of threatened dominator elites, but expresses a hope, based on the evolution of her own consciousness, that the partnership movements stand a fair chance of success. In the process she calls for creativity on the part of all men and women, and decries the conventional, dominator-based perception of creativity as something that is only possessed by a few and above "ordinary" people and "ordinary" life. Also, she calls for a conceptual distinction between being "creative" in devising weapons of mass extermination versus devising means of enhancing the quality of life. These are issues worthy of serious research by the growing number of psychologists studying creative processes.

Eisler reminds us that a return to partnership is not inevitable but depends on human efforts. What remains unsaid is whether such a change would actually be going back to ancient versions of the partnership society, or instead moving toward a type of society not quite like any from the past. Eisler leans toward the latter: she hints, without developing the point, that the ancient Kurgan invasions actually interrupted the further evolution of the partnership society and that it is our responsibility, with the help of modern technology, to resume this evolution. One might take issue with any glorification of the past based on psychological interpretations of incomplete findings. Yet her conclusion is not that violence was totally absent in Neolithic times, just that it was not institutionally entrenched as it is now. This conclusion is solidly based on the findings of widely respected archaeologists, such as Marija Gimbutas, James Mellaart, and Jacquesetta Hawkes.

Also, the notion that centrality of a goddess in ancient religions promoted equality of the sexes, and never female dominance, will probably be controversial. Yet for psychologists, the interpretation of what actually happened in past societies is not the most central part of Eisler's message. What is more central is her conviction that many unpleasant aspects of modern society (not just in the West but all over the globe) that we often take for granted are not human universals, but are the product of historical factors and can be changed without destroying social stability. These include, for example, fear-based dominance hierarchies, male oppression of women, eroticization of violence, repression of sexual pleasure, overpopulation due to restrictions on contraception, religious glorification of self-induced pain, and cultural glorification of war.

Eisler's book is recommended reading for both specialists and nonspecialists interested in the roots of human motivation and the extent of human potential. It provides hopeful visions in place of widespread folk psychological notions that have imposed limits on human potential. Hence, both academic and clinical psychologists interested in applying their discipline to the benefit of society will derive inspiration from the many insights and stories in this groundbreaking book.

References:

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