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The Pomegranate

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Drawing by Tina Monodfield from *PROSERPINE* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1874

The Pomegranate is the combined effort of a group of senior Pagans in the United States and Canada. Its purpose is to provide a scholarly venue for the forthright and critical examination of Neopagan beliefs and practices. We intend this Journal to be a forum for the exchange and discussion of the philosophy, ethics, and spiritual potential inherent within the Craft. The consideration of new ideas, as well as the exploration of the roots of our current practices such as classical Paganism, western esoteric traditions and influences from other disciplines, will be included.
In the interests of promoting lively discussion, we encourage both our writers and our readers to keep an open mind, and to be ready to explore a wide variety of outlooks.

Notes from the Underground

It may be true, as one of our New Age acquaintances recently advised us, that 1999 is the first year of the rest of the Millennium, but it is certainly the last year we'll ever see with quite so many 9s in it. In any case, we minions of Persephone have chosen to celebrate this event by gracing *The Pomegranate* with a new format. By using a more delicate typeface we've been able to increase our content by 15% without adding extra pages. We all hope that our readers will find this new look easier to read and more esthetically pleasing.

Never being the sort to flinch from controversy, we begin this issue with an article by Jeffrey Kaplan, whose recent writings on the Neonazi influences within today's Odinist communities have caused such a stir. This article takes the form of a biographic sketch of Savitri Devi, a National Socialist theoretician who has been called 'Hitler's Priestess,' and explores her concept of Nazism as a 'Nature Religion.'

For those of you who sometimes wonder if we Neopagans are reclaiming anything from pagan antiquity other than the names of some deities, we present an article by Michael McNierney on the philosophical principles of Roman Stoicism and how these might prove useful to those of us who wish to broaden the spiritual aspects of our lives. This article was originally written for *Gnosis* magazine, which we enthusiastically recommend to our readers. How many noticed that the most recent issue of *Gnosis* (#50, Winter 1999) included an expanded version of Jenny Gibbons' "The Great Burning Times Quiz" which first appeared in our 5th issue?

Readers will find our third article quite a bit more philosophical and theological than anything we've offered so far. Gus diZerega is currently writing a book entitled *Pagans and Christians in the New Millennium* as his contribution to an intelligent and respectful interfaith dialogue, and this article is condensed from his chapter on Good and Evil. We're very impressed with what we've seen of this book so far, and encourage our readers to share their impressions with us.

Our first Book Review looks at an interesting new work about Hekate and the intercessional role she played in Late Antiquity among the ceremonialists of the day. The second is part of an ongoing debate among legal experts in the UK about protection of the rights of Neopagans. Although some may find this review a bit technical, most of our readers will hopefully be interested to know that our legal interests are being championed on a level other than the militant and confrontational.

To the delight of those of us who enjoy (at least observing) a good fight, we continue to be blessed with more dialogue about the theories of M Gimbutas and her followers. This issue's offerings also include several interesting suggestions about how these arguments might proceed. Once again, let us encourage our readers to contribute their own observations on this and (hopefully) other subjects.

Persephone's hard-working minions.

The Pomegranate Reader's Forum

Please contribute to our Readers' Forum so that we may continue to present this valuable venue for the exchange of ideas.
Letters may be edited to conserve space or to avoid repetition.
Writers of published letters will have their subscriptions extended by one or two issues.

Mara Keller writes:
Dear Pomegranate Readers,

I am grateful for the thoughtful responses to my article defending Marija Gimbutas' theory on the cultural origins of Europe, as I see some progress in the debate of issues around whether or not Europeans have ancestors who were goddess- and god-revering, relatively sex-egalitarian, without exploitative economic class hierarchies, matristic, and relatively peaceful. When I was in college in the 1960s, the very idea of this was dismissed as a joke beneath discussion. Now, while it is faddish in academia to dismiss Gimbutas with ridicule and vehemence, at least some of her opponents are coming forward with detailed criticism, which I welcome. I believe the on-going dialogue is very important. I want to respond to readers' interesting charges of gendered essentialism, incompatibility with postmodern criticism, manipulation of data to fit the theory, and "feel-good" epistemology.

To start, I want to dispel some misconceptions. Neither Gimbutas nor I claim there were matriarchies in Old Europe where women dominated men and artists produced art for art's sake; nor that because the cultures were relatively peaceful, there was no inter-human violence. Some critics extrapolate her views to the Near and Middle East and inappropriately challenge her theory with data from those other regions. Others grossly oversimplify the complexity of her theory as if they had never read it to begin with. The warfare, fortifications, mass graves, economic stratification and male dominance that coincided with the appearance of Proto-Indo-Europeans in Old Europe did not totally destroy but dominated and subsumed the more peaceful, egalitarian and primarily goddess-revering matrifocal cultures that preceded their arrival. European history can be read as the dynamic conflict and wary, wearying accommodations of these two cultures up until this day.

Gimbutas' interdisciplinary methodology of archaeomythology develops a cogent explanation of the internal coherence of symbols expressed in the material cultural database of Old Europe. While not brand new, her emphasis on combining archaeological science with the disciplines of mythology, history of religion, folklore, linguistics, and other disciplines is a very significant contribution. It came forward in 1974 at a time when the field of archaeology was dominated by the overly empiricist school of New Archaeology that emerged in reaction to what was seen as the overly speculative approach preceding it. The New Archaeology way haspaid theoretical lip service to understanding religious ideology, but in practice was far more interested in material culture. Gimbutas not only took the religious life of Old Europe seriously when it was unfashionable to do so, she also took seriously the flourishing expression of female imagery she thought was best characterized as representing ideas of divinity. Some of her critics seem especially disturbed by the idea of the sacredness of female imagery.

I see Gimbutas' interdisciplinary methodology as more subtle and multi-dimensional than that of the empiricist school, more engendered than that of the cognitive school, and more interested in the roles of women and goddesses as symbolic of sacred feminine energies of the universe than the emerging feminist school of archaeology, where the works of some of her younger feminist colleagues are fortunately taking up the slow and arduous task of engendering their male-dominated discipline. I laud current attempts toward an engendered archaeology that seriously considers the probable mental and spiritual beliefs of European prehistoric societies. However, I want to emphasize that this has only come to the fore in the 1990s. Gimbutas was already pioneering this approach in the 1970s and 1980s (albeit without a formal feminist theory). While her colleagues are revising the history of archaeology, why is Gimbutas not given the credit she deserves for bringing the issue of gender center stage and stimulating the renewed consideration of religion? It seems to me that the engendering of archaeology or the interpretation of religious symbolism is only accorded professional respect if it doesn't ruffle the feathers of putative male superiority.

If honoring "sacred feminine" and "sacred masculine" energies in the universe—as sometimes appear in experiences of sexual love and pleasure or sexual procreation—makes me a gender-essentialist, then I am happy to say I do not object to the label. I do see significant biological and hormonal differences between men and women, but I do not think they are absolutely dichotomous, eternal or unchanging. Gimbutas discusses the long tradition of bi-valent sculptures in Old Europe combining male and female sexual attributes, and interprets them as the artists' expression of human wholeness. I would like to shift the rather stagnant feminist debate of social constructionism *v.* essentialism to a more fruitful plane, and assert there is some truth in both views; moreover, the self-aware self plays an important role as a third actor. In addition to on-going debates about "masculine" *v.* "feminine," nature *v.* nurture, and biological determinism *v.* cultural constructionism, there are also the random-chance-darwinism *v.* absolute-male-god-ism, and scientism *v.* holy-warrior-mysticism debates. I hope these will become leavened with more nature-based, goddess- and god-balanced, animistic/pantheistic/pan-entheistic spiritual-religious perspectives, along with more scientific human self-consciousness involving intuitive insight and even mystical understanding—to liven up the conversations.

The implications of Gimbutas' theory of European origins are synergistic with reconstructive (not merely deconstructive) postmodern thought. My understanding of postmodern discourse is (to simplify) that on the one hand it wants to challenge, deconstruct, and unfound any and all assumptions or assertions as

continued on page 51

Savitri Devi and the National Socialist Religion of Nature

by Jeffrey Kaplan
University of Helsinki

Nature, in American nature religion, is a reference point with which to think history. Its sacrality masks — and often quite explicitly reveals — a passionate concern for place and mastery in society (Catherine Albanese).[1]

Thou shalt love God in all things, animals and plants (Alfred Rosenberg).[2]

The quote from Prof Albanese which opens this paper perfectly captures the dominion imperative of Genesis 1:26; a pervasive force in the history of American religion, and a significant element in the American religion of nature.[3] Yet American religion, like the American project itself, has ever been an optimistic enterprise, and the religion of nature as described in *Nature Religion in America* is remarkably benign.

This paper argues however, that nature religiosity can have its dark side, for National Socialism too was a religion of nature which was built upon the rock of selected streams of nineteenth century German romantic and occult philosophy. Indeed, German National Socialism provides the master case for the proposition that the sacrality of a religion of nature "masks—and often quite explicitly reveals—a passionate concern for place and mastery in society." To illustrate this thesis, we will first look briefly at the philosophical roots of German National Socialism. The bulk of our discussion however, will be devoted to the work of Savitri Devi, a National Socialist true believer of the 1930s whose post-War writings laid the groundwork for the modern National Socialist nature religion—a religion in which the impulse to control the natural world is explicitly disavowed. Finally, this paper will suggest that Devi's work may act as a bridge for the convergence of the adherents of National Socialist beliefs with the strongly anti-racist world of deep ecology and animal liberation.[4]

Roots of the National Socialist Religion of Nature

By replacing the worship of God with the worship of nature, and by its combining the Darwinian model of natural selection with an organic conception of the 'volk' soul of the German nation, the 19th century school of German romantic philosophy made an enormous contribution to the creation of German National Socialism. In this process, the work of Johann Herder, Johann Fichte, and later, Ernst Haeckel was seminal in the creation of the National Socialist religion of nature.[5] The writings of Haeckel are of particular influence, for it was Haeckel's explicit rejection of the Christian conception of God, his concentration on the sacrality of German blood and his concomitant taxonomy of the races which would be of key importance in the creation of National Socialist philosophy. Indeed, Haeckel went further, creating an explicit nature religion, the German Monist League, which over time developed a set of rituals based on an imaginative revival of German pagan practices—including explicit sun worship—which anticipated the post-War revival of what Jung referred to as Wotanism.[6]

... nature religiosity can have its dark side, for National Socialism too was a religion of nature which was built upon the rock of selected streams of nineteenth century German romantic and occult philosophy.

According to Edvard Lind:

> Haeckel's writings were widely distributed and would have a great influence. Monism spread to the radical non-Christian, pagan and proto-Nazi groups that also shared the desire for a new Germanic faith for the German people. Important occultists such as Guido von List and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfelds were influenced by the concept of biological struggle and the need to purify the race to avoid the deterioration of the German race ...[7]

German National Socialism accepted Haeckel's views, but added an intense emphasis on anti-Semitism.[8] For the Nazis, National Socialism was the highest expression of natural law. Life was a struggle between races and peoples for survival, and the Jews were posited in starkly manichaean terms as the superhuman force which had to be crushed to assure the survival of the German people and the Aryan race.[9] To this philosophical base was added Hitler's own solicitude toward animals and his reported desire to eventually adopt for himself—and for the German nation–a vegetarian diet. In a diary entry dated 26 April 1942, Dr. Josef Goebbels wrote:

> An extended chapter of our talk was devoted by the Führer to the vegetarian question. He believes more than ever that meat eating is wrong. Of course, he knows that during the war we cannot completely upset our food system. After the war, however, he intends to tackle this problem also. Maybe he is right. Certainly the arguments that he adduces in favour of his standpoint are compelling.[10]

As National Socialism was held to be in accord with the law of nature, and as National Socialist actions and ideology were aimed at seizing control of German destiny, the National Socialist religion of nature constituted the ultimate expression of sacrality masking "a passionate concern for place and mastery in society."

Savitri Devi and the National Socialist Religion of Nature

Nicholas Goodrick-Clark has observed with some justification that Savitri Devi liked animals a good deal more than she liked people.[11] At the same time however, Savitri Devi's powerful vision of a National Socialist religion of nature serves not only as a plea for humanity to move beyond the conception of dominion over nature, but as a bridge between the worlds of deep ecology and animal liberation and the adherents of racialist neo-Nazi beliefs.

In fact, Devi's work is undergoing a considerable revival in the contemporary National Socialist subculture. Her books have not only begun to reappear, as in the Noontide Press edition of the *Impeachment of Man,* but works which originally appeared in the early 1960s issues of the *National Socialist World* are being reprinted and redistributed by several National Socialist publishing houses. Indeed,

"The world that exalts Pasteur and Pavlov, and countless other tormentors of innocent creatures, in the name of the so-called 'interest of mankind,' while branding as 'war criminals' men who have not shrunk from acts of violence upon hostile human elements ... a civilization that makes such a ridiculous fuss about alleged 'war crimes'—acts of violence against the actual or potential enemies of one's cause—and tolerates slaug-terhouses and vivisection laboratories, and circuses and the fur industry ... does not deserve to live." (Savitri Devi)

the forthcoming issue of the British National Socialist publication *Column 88* will be dedicated to Devi and will reprint excerpts of several of her works.[12] It would seem only a matter of time before, in accord with Colin Campbell's cultic milieu theory, denizens of the National Socialist subculture begin to enter the more militant sectors of the ecology movement. There is some anecdotal evidence of precisely this scenario unfolding in the British and Swedish animal liberation subcultures.[13]

Savitri Devi, whose birth name was Maximiani Portas, was born on September 30, 1905, of Greek and British parents. A French citizen, Devi earned a masters' level degree in philosophy and, in 1931, a Ph.D. in chemistry. Science, however, held less allure to her than ancient religion and contemporary politics.

Even as a young girl, she was much attracted to the German philosophical and intellectual traditions. Appalled by the betrayal of Germany at Versailles following the First World War, as well at the treatment of Greek refugees in the same period, Devi determined to learn more of what she instinctively felt were the deeper realities which determined the seemingly chaotic course of world events. It was during this youthful quest for hidden and suppressed knowledge that Devi acquired her life-long aversion to Judaism.

Devi's anti-Semitism was fed by several currents. First, there was the Old Testament which she felt was rife with examples of Jewish perfidy. This feeling would be considerably reinforced by reports of Zionist actions in Palestine in the 1920s. In 1929—the year of Arab riots and the killing of a number of Jews in Hebron—she visited Palestine and confirmed for herself the truth of these reports. Back in France, her studies brought her into contact with the intellectual anti-Semitism of Ernst Renan. Of considerable importance too was what she perceived to be the malign role of the Jews in the defeat of Germany in the First World War. Devi, in fact, seems to have been one of the select few to actually read Alfred Rosenberg's verbose and turgid 1930 opus *The Myth of the Twentieth Century.* Even the Führer would confide that, although he displayed this book prominently on his bedside table, he found it unreadable.[14] Devi, however, was enchanted.

In the 1930s Devi moved to India, learned contemporary Hindi and ancient Sanskrit, and undertook what would prove to be a lifelong study of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads.* From these sources, and from their contemporary manifestations in the caste system, Devi felt that she had found the true sources of the once and future greatness of the Aryan race. In 1940, Devi married a pro-Nazi Indian nationalist named A.K. Mukherji.

Following the Nazi defeat, she returned to Europe in 1945, settling in England where her book on the religious heritage of Ancient Egypt, *A Son of God,* was published and well received in British intellectual and occult circles. It was the work that followed, however, the *Impeachment of Man,* which was finished in London and published in 1946, that stands as a classic in the current world of National Socialism. Radical environmentalism, amounting indeed to a religion of nature, has always been strong in National Socialist thought, and with the wartime defeat, became as much a trademark of the movement as anti-Semitism. The *Impeachment of Man* remains the strongest statement of the National Socialist nature religion available today.

The *Impeachment of Man* is a passionate treatise on the rights of animals and of plants, as contrasted with man's egocentric consumption and destruction of the natural world. The argument is couched in religious terms and the proof texts are drawn from wildly eclectic sources in both the Eastern and Western religious traditions. In this book, ostensibly a plea for animal rights, Devi presents in full flower her religion of nature. That religion is composed of a bricolage of elements: National Socialism and its nineteenth century German philosophical precursors, the Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaton whom she sees as the first to create a "life-centered" religion, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads,* the Buddhism of the historical Buddha and of the Indian Buddhist king Asoka and, remarkably, elements of Jewish eschatology in her positing of Adolf Hitler as the messiah ben Joseph whose fall was simply the necessary precondition for the future National Socialist avatar who will carry Hitler's work to completion. In Devi's words:

> [a life-centered philosophy] implies no fundamental difference in the treatment of men and of animals. To superior individuals, such as Asoka and Harshavardhana, or Lord Buddha himself, it inspires loving kindness toward both.[15]

Yet despite this assertion of evenhandedness, for Devi kindness to humanity was never as pressing as kindness toward animals. Thus, although she had no doubts as to the veracity of the reports of the Holocaust which were emerging as the *Impeachment of Man* was being written, she remains unmoved:

> The one thing this propaganda did—instead of stirring in me the slightest indignation against the supposed-to-be "war criminals"—was to rouse my hatred against the hypocrisy and cowardice underlying the man-centered attitude; to harden me in my bitter contempt for "man" in general; and to prompt me to write this book: the answer to it, a spirit which could be summed up in a few lines: a civilization that makes such a ridiculous fuss about alleged "war crimes"—acts of violence against the actual or potential enemies of one's cause—and tolerates slaughterhouses and vivisection laboratories, and circuses and the fur industry (infliction of pain on crea-

tures who can never be for or against any cause), does not deserve to live. Out with it! Blessed the day it will destroy itself, so that a healthy, hard, frank and brave, nature-loving and truth-loving élite of supermen with a life centered faith, a natural human aristocracy, as beautiful, on its own higher level, as the four legged kings of the jungle—might again rise and rule upon its ruins for ever![16]

Devi in fact goes on in this vein for much of the book, and the contradictions in her philosophy multiply. But it is to this central theme of cruelty to animals as the greater sin than the barbarities of war to which she always returns:

> We flatly refuse to condemn war, be it a thousand times a war "of aggression"—as long as mankind at large persists in its callous attitude towards animal (and tree) life. And as long as torture is inflicted by man on a single living creature, in the name of scientific research, of luxury, or of gluttony, we systematically refuse our support to any campaign exploiting public sympathy for tortured human beings—unless the latter be, of course, such ones as we look upon as our brothers in race and faith, or perhaps near and dear to these. The world that exalts Pasteur and Pavlov, and countless other tormentors of innocent creatures, in the name of the so-called "interest of mankind," while branding as "war criminals" men who have not shrunk from acts of violence upon hostile human elements, when such was their duty in the service of higher mankind and in the interest of all life, does not deserve to live.[17]

In 1946, Devi moved from England to Iceland. There, the ancient Norse pantheon joined the ancient Indian gods as sources for Aryan religiosity. Here too Devi anticipated by decades Odinism's popularization of the Norse/Germanic pantheon as a fitting Aryan racial religion in the post-War movement.

Two years later, Devi undertook a more open pro-Nazi course of activism, traveling to occupied Germany and distributing propaganda leaflets. This resulted in her incarceration in 1949. While in jail, Devi expanded one of her leaflets into the book which she considered her magnum opus, *Gold in the Furnace. Gold in the Furnace* is at once an auto-biography and a dreamy meditation on what could have been. The autobiographical *Defiance* appeared in 1950. Devi's example served as an inspiration to a new generation of National Socialists when a portion of the book was published in the Winter 1968 edition of the American Nazi Party's intellectual journal, the *National Socialist World,* edited by the American Nazi Party's sole intellectual, William Pierce. *Gold in the Furnace* came out in 1952, followed by another memoir, *Pilgrimage* in 1958 (although some sources place the publication date as early as 1953).

Her most important work, *The Lightening and the Sun,* appeared in 1956 and a condensed version was published in the premier edition (Spring 1966) of the *National Socialist World. The Lightening and the Sun* is a remarkable exposition of occult National Socialism which explicitly deifies Hitler as the savior of the Aryan people. The first words of the book read:

> To the godlike individual of our times; the Man against time; the greatest European of all times; both Sun and Lightening: ADOLF HITLER.[18]

The Lightening and the Sun ranges through the ages, suggesting a religious and political history in which the Third Reich is the apex and the natural culmination of Aryan development. The book ends with at once a cry of despair and an affirmation of hope:

> Kalki will lead them through the flames of the great end, and into the sunshine of the new Golden Age.

[Devi's book] Impeachment of Man is a passionate treatise on the rights of animals and of plants, as contrasted with man's egocentric consumption and destruction of the natural world. The argument is couched in religious terms and the proof texts are drawn from wildly eclectic sources in both the Eastern and Western religious traditions.

> We like to hope that the memory of the one-before-the-last and most heroic of all our men against time—Adolf Hitler—will survive at least in songs and symbols. We like to hope that the lords of the age, men of his own blood and faith, will render him divine honors, through rites full of meaning and full of potency, in the cool shade of the endless regrown forests, on the beaches, or upon inviolate mountain peaks, facing the rising sun.[19]

As if to belie the heroic tones of her National Socialist dream, the 1950s was an empty time for Devi. While she could escape into the world of her literary dreams, and while she traveled intensively in these years, there remained a terrible void in her life. The man against time and his iron heroes were gone—many were dead, others living in hiding, still others brought to the bar of Allied justice. It was not until the 1960s that Devi could, for a moment, allow her hopes of a National Socialist revival to again flicker to life.

The vehicle for these hopes was the World Union of National Socialists which she helped to found in 1962. But the group was a fiasco, and Devi's remaining years were bleak. Much of this time was spent back in mother India with her husband, writing, corresponding and marking the days. She was an early convert to the field of holocaust denial, and it was under her influence that such well-known holocaust revisionists of the present day as Ernst Zundel were introduced to the faith.[20] Indeed, in the 1970s, Devi's chief contributions to the movement to which she had dedicated her life was through her tireless correspondence with true believers throughout the world. Her personal circumstances did not fare well, however, and she died in poverty in 1982.

In the course of her life, Devi's achievements, if measured on the scale of her dream of a National Socialist revival and the institution of her Aryan religion of nature, were meager. At her death, the world of explicit National Socialism was, if anything, more fragmented and powerless than ever. But her writings, and the powerful dream of the National Socialist religion of nature which they convey, are having a powerful impact on the movement. While overly pessimistic in his analysis of biocentrism and pagan spirituality, Nicholas Goodrick-Clark's warning of the existence of a darker side to nature spirituality should not be ignored:

> Deep ecology, biocentrism, nature worship and New Age paganism reflect a hostility toward Christianity, rationalism and liberalism in

modern society. Although these radical movements have their roots in left-wing dissent, their increasing tendency towards myth and despair indicate their susceptibility to millenarian and mystical ideas on the far right. Neo-Nazi and fascist activists now actively seek to infiltrate the ecological and esoteric scene. The cybernetic encirclement of man and his complete divorce from nature could well foster a more fundamental alienation. In a congested and automated world, Savitri Devi's sentimental love of animals and hatred of the masses may find new followers. The pessimism of the Kali Yuga [Hindu period of degeneration] and her vision of a pristine new Aryan order possess a perennial appeal in times of uncertainty and change.[21]

Notes:

1. Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 8
2. Quoted in Savitri Devi, *Impeachment of Man* (Costa Mesa, CA: Noontide Press, 1991), frontpiece. Devi attributes the quote to: Alfred Rosenberg, Instructions discussed at the Nuremberg trial, 1945-1946, as quoted in Maurice Bardèche, *Nurembeerg II ou les Faux Monnayeurs,* p. 88.
3. Gen 1:26 KJV states: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."
4. This argument follows Colin Campbell's cultic milieu theory. See Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972), 119-36. For applications of the theory, see Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw, eds., *Cult, Anti-Cult and the Cultic Milieu: A Re-Examination* (Swedish National Council of Crime Prevention [BRÅ], forthcoming 1998).
5. This section is based on the research of Edvard Lind of Stockholm University. See Edvard Lind, "Religion of Nature," in Jeffrey Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, forthcoming).
6. C.G. Jung, "Wotan," in C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works,* v10, Bollingen Series XX (New York: Pantheon, 1964). Cf. Nicholas Goodrick-Clark, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (NY: New York University Press, 1985).
7. Edvard Lind, "Religion of Nature."
8. This argument follows that of Robert A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). Cf. Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Roots of National Socialism* (New York: American Elsevier Inc., 1971).
9. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), esp. bk. 1, ch. 10, "Nation and Race,", and bk. 2, ch. 1, "Philosophy and Party."
10. Savitri Devi, *Impeachment of Man,* frontpiece.
11. Nicholas Goodrick-Clark, *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Occult Neo-Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming 1998).
12. Letter to author from Tony Williams, publisher of *Column 88,* dated 31 July 1998.
13. On the British connection, see Jonathan Cotter, "Sounds of Hate: The Roll of White Power Rock and Roll in the Development and Diffusion of the Neo-Nazi Skinhead Subculture," *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming), n. 27.
14. Fritz Nova, *Alfred Rosenberg: Nazi Theorist of the Holocaust* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).
15. Savitri Devi, *Impeachment of Man,* p. 20.
16. Ibid., p. x.
17. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
18. Savitri Devi, "The Lightening and the Sun (A New Edition)," *National Socialist World* 1 (Spring 1966).
19. Ibid.
20. Nicholas Goodrick-Clark, *Hitler's Priestess.*
21. Ibid.

This paper was originally presented as part of a panel session on "Nature Religion as a Theoretical Construct: Reflections from an Emerging Field" for a joint session of the Comparative Studies in Religion Section and the New Religious Movements Group at the November, 1998, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.

Author's Comments:

My AAR paper on Savitri Devi is of a piece with much of my research into what some at the AAR called the shadow side of nature religiosity. By whatever name, it is true that my research tends to demonstrate to me that every religious, social or political belief system, while seemingly benign, does harbor the potential for abuse, for misuse, or at the extreme, for violence.

Devi ... may be of some interest to feminist scholarship in that it is with her that the 'passion for control' of nature in National Socialist writings seems to have been relinquished. Instead, a desire to live as an integral part of the natural world—admittedly a sacrilized and violently purified natural world—was posited ...

My research focuses primarily in the shadowy areas where faith and violence converge. No human belief system in my experience is immune to the failings of human nature. I suspect that the Dead Kennedys may not have been so far wrong years ago when they cynically noted with regard to Jerry Brown's administration in California:

> Zen fascists will control you 100% natural
> You will jog for the master race
> And always wear the happy face ...
> And your kids will meditate in school
> California, uber ales ...

I suspect as well that the Dead Kennedys would have been in sympathy with Catherine Albanese's observation that was the starting point for this paper.

A biographic essay on Devi was an accessible way to present the immensely complex case for German National Socialism as the exemplar par excellence of the potential violence that can dwell in the shadows of nature religiosity. Devi too was chosen because she may be of some interest to feminist scholarship in that it is with her that the 'passion for control' of nature in National Socialist writings seems to have been relinquished. Instead, a desire to live as an integral part of the natural world—admittedly a sacrilized and violently purified natural world—was posited, perhaps for the first time in the post-War world.

It is this diminution of the "a passionate concern for place and mastery in society" that I wanted to stress in this article. My work, and the Devi piece in particular, does tend to point to the existence of a shadow side in the world of nature religiosity, and because so few scholars are working in this area, my work may be misread as putting too great an emphasis on these dangers. These are areas that many simply do not want to recognize, or to accept.

But just as there is a darker side to the religion of nature, nature spirituality too can be a critical force in bringing people, to strain the manichaean metaphor even more, into the light. This was brought home just today in a message from a very well known British National Socialist figure who, after many years in the movement, has quietly accepted Islam and denounced racism in all its forms.

(I anticipate here that many readers will utter a collective groan, but I don't want to

start discussion on Islam in any way. Suffice here to say that most Nazis are true seekers, and in my fieldwork experience, true seekers whose quest brings them into a prolonged sojourn in the world of the far right, or of other absolutist belief structures, and into that netherworld where faith and violence intersect, have as the object of their quest a definitive answer to their questions; a single *way* in which to order their lives and the world around them. For reasons others may be far better qualified than I to explain, such personality types are unlikely to find answers in belief systems such as paganism. Rather, they require a text, a dogma, and a more or less absolutist set of truth claims. Born-again Christianity in America has been one faith community which welcomes such seekers while absolving them of their past and offering the benefits of a supportive community of fellow-seekers, and I suspect that as multiculturalism becomes more the European norm, Islam will come to serve much the same role in Europe.)

In any case, among the reasons this seeker gave for his acceptance of Islam and his rejection of his National Socialist past was this:

> "Then, I started a new job, working long hours on a farm, often by myself. The close contact with Nature, the toil of manual labour, really did restore my soul, my humanity, and I became really aware of the Oneness of the Cosmos and of how I was but part of this wonderful Order which God had created. In my heart and in my mind I was convinced that this Order had not arisen by chance—it was created, as I myself was created for a purpose. It was as if my true nature had fought a long battle with Shaitan, who had deceived me, but who could deceive me no more. I felt the truth of the one and only Creator in my heart and in my mind. For the first time in my life, I felt truly humble."

Readers of Albanese, of the Transcendentalists, and indeed of many another text associated with the religion of nature will recognize the sentiments expressed.

And this, I suppose, is my point. The Devi piece had as an implicit agenda to warn of the dark underside inherent in nature religiosity. Some observers such as a scholar I very much admire, and whose words I quote in the conclusion of the article, Nicholas Goodrich-Clark, see this underside and find it to be inevitable. For my part, I am not so pessimistic. But to ignore this potential for "Zen fascism" is, in my view, dangerous. And it was for this reason that I wrote the Savitri Devi article.

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The Stoic Way of Nature: A Pagan Spiritual Path

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Stoicism doesn't have all the answers. It doesn't even have all the questions. But it has some very good answers to some important questions—sensible answers to questions people still ask today, in spite of two thousand years of Christianity and a century of psychotherapy. Like most Pagan and polytheistic world views, Stoicism, as developed by the ancient Romans, does not claim to be the only true path or to be suitable for everyone. Nor does it claim to be an easy path. It does not require a doctorate in philosophy or years of immersion in the obscurities of an esoteric system. It simply claims to be a sensible path for active people in everyday life. I believe that it is a spiritual path particularly suited to modern Pagans.

With its keen understanding of psychology, somewhat rare in the ancient world, Stoicism is a hard-headed, practical view of how to live. It is concerned with the acceptance of things as they are, not as they were or might be. This practicality is both grounded and given a rich spiritual dimension by the Stoics' profound intuitive grasp of Nature and her eternal cycles. The ideal of the Stoic path is to live in harmony with the Universe and thereby maintain one's soul or deeper self in a calm state of grace regardless of circumstances.

"Nature is sacred—that is, from nature we draw our inspiration, our teachings, and our deepest sense of connection." This statement reflects the core of ancient Stoic belief and practice, yet it comes from a recent Pagan book (Starhawk, et al. 1997: 6). "I am the soul of nature that gives life to the universe. From Me all things proceed and unto Me they must return." Every Pagan will recognize that these words are from a version of the Charge of the Goddess, but they could have been spoken by the Divine Fire—one of the many names by which the Stoics knew the Ultimate Reality. In our age of spiritual turmoil and change—which mirrors the syncretistic religious development in the later Roman Empire—the Roman Stoics speak to modern Pagans across the millennia with a clear and relevant voice.

Although Stoicism is a creation of the Graeco-Roman world and largely unknown to most people today, the Stoic approach to life and some of its ideas will have a familiar feel to contemporary readers. This is not surprising since Stoic thought has probably had a more powerful and lasting influence on the way people live their lives than any other philosophy in western culture (Dilthey 1975: 7). It is only in our own century that this influence has been forgotten.

In an article of this length, it is impractical to do more than point out a few places in the fabric of our culture where

Stoicism has some affinity with several eastern spiritual paths—particularly with Taoism and Zen... Ideas such as following Nature and living in the present are now commonplace in our culture. Stoicism offers some of the things we have found appealing and fruitful in the East without requiring the radical abandonment of familiar and useful western assumptions about reality that is often necessary to wholeheartedly follow an eastern path ...

Stoic threads can be found. The most important patch of the fabric is Christianity. As the religion spread outside of Palestine and early church writers developed a Christian theology in the successful attempt to appeal to educated Pagans, they borrowed liberally from Stoic thought. These Stoic strands are still with us, woven into Christian scripture and dogma. As one example among many possible ones, the cosmic "Word" of the Prologue to the Gospel of John was adapted by its philosophically minded author from the first principle of Stoicism, the *Logos*. We shall see later that "word" is only one of the many possible translations of *Logos*. In fact, it is this translation that makes the Prologue so mysterious, and once its Stoic context is understood it becomes less enigmatic, though no less profound.

Elements of Stoicism are embedded in many contemporary psychological and self-help regimes. The widespread Twelve-Step programs have many Stoic ideas at their core. Reinhold Niebuhr's famous Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference", for example, which is recited at virtually every Twelve Step meeting, is pure Stoicism. Cognitive therapy, a highly successful treatment for depression popularized by Dr. David Burns in a best-selling book, appears to be based on the Stoic principle of *apatheia*. Burns' statement that "your emotions result entirely from the way you look at things" is not a bad beginning at a definition of *apatheia* (Burns 1980: 29).

"Basing our happiness on our ability to control everything is futile," says Stephen Covey in his time-management book. "While we do control our choice of action, we cannot control the consequences of our choices. Universal laws or principles do. Thus, we are not in control of our lives; principles are" (Covey, et al. 1994: 13). Substitute fortune or the gods for principles, and you have a statement that no Stoic would repudiate. Exactly how Stoic ideas have turned up in self-help and time-management books in the late 20th century I do not know, especially as I find no evidence that the authors have read or even heard of Stoicism. It is perhaps the ultimate tribute to the influence of Stoicism that many of its ideas have simply become part of the Zeitgeist of our times. It would be an interesting exercise in the history of ideas to trace the development of certain Stoic concepts from the ancient world to our own popular culture.

Since I am interested in Stoicism as a western, Pagan, spiritual path, another very different reason for Stoic ideas being familiar to contemporary readers is more important than the issue of influence. This is that Stoicism has some affinity with several eastern spiritual paths—particularly with Taoism and Zen—that westerners are likely to be familiar with and perhaps have also practiced. Ideas such as following Nature and living in the present are now commonplace in our culture. We have brought these and other powerful ideas home from the East, yet they have been present in our own western spiritual tradition for over two thousand years.

Here at home, however, these insights are allied with a respect for and faith in the power of our minds to find truth and happiness without eschewing reason as does Taoism and without requiring years of practice in meditative techniques as does Zen. This is not to say that intuition plays no part in Stoicism or that meditation is incompatible with it. It is simply that Stoicism offers some of the things we have found appealing and fruitful in the East without requiring the radical abandonment of familiar and useful western assumptions about reality that is often necessary to wholeheartedly follow an eastern path—and that is often the cause of westerners turning back disillusioned from the East.

I have learned much from the East and plan to continue doing so. But exclusive concentration on eastern thought and practices leaves me feeling rootless, homeless, ungrounded, and disoriented (pun intended). C.G. Jung asked of what use are the insights and wisdom of the East to us "... if we desert the foundations of our own culture as though they were errors outlived and, like homeless pirates, settle with thievish intent on foreign shores?" (Jung 1962: 114). I believe that my true Self or Soul is somehow part of a community of spiritual brothers and sisters, extended back in time rather than space, and if I turn my back on the West, on my home, I cut connections with this community and am worse off for it.

Gnosis editor, Richard Smoley, wrote in an editorial (Winter 1994) that "today we assume we must seek truth as far afield as possible" and reminded us that "teachers with real insight" often urge us to "recognize and develop the strengths of our own traditions." But this can be difficult, since outside the institutional monotheistic religions and Native religions (which are often inaccessible to outsiders), teachers to pass on traditions are few and far between. People exploring western spirituality outside the mainstream seldom have a living link with the past, so they turn to books to find, recreate, or create traditions. As poet Gary Snyder writes, "In this huge old occidental culture our teaching elders are books. Books are our grandparents!" (Snyder

1990: 61). We are fortunate to have such grandparents as the works of the Roman Stoics.

The adjective "stoic" elicits in most people's minds the idea of simply not showing one's emotions. This attitude is unappealing to people in our age who have been constantly enjoined to "get in touch with your feelings," and it is downright politically incorrect if you are a male. But this usage does not do justice even to the dictionary meaning: "indifferent to or unaffected by pleasure or pain; impassive; enduring; brave," which itself barely hints at the richness of ancient Stoic thought.

Misuse of the word is one reason why Stoicism is little known today. Another is an understandable misapprehension of its true nature as a spiritual path. The best-known ancient Stoic today is Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180 CE). His *Meditations* have been in print since the 17th century, and most educated people today have heard of him, yet few have read him. The problem is that in libraries and bookstores his book will be found under the heading of "philosophy," and that word drives people away with its connotation of ivory-tower, logic-chopping irrelevancy or intimidates them with the idea that, even if it is relevant, it is too difficult to understand. A recent paperback edition of the *Meditations* carries the information on the front cover that this "is the book on President Clinton's bedside table." Perhaps Clinton will do for Marcus what a former president did for Tom Clancy. Or, even better, perhaps Marcus will do for Clinton what Stoicism did for Marcus.

But philosophy to the Romans meant something very different from what it means today. For them it had a meaning much closer to what we think of as religion. They even spoke of being "converted" to a particular philosophy. Most of the things we moderns turn to religion for—spiritual practice, moral guidance, comfort, insight, and encouragement in time of suffering—educated Pagan Romans found in philosophy, not religion. "Philosophy!" Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE) exclaims, "the guide of our lives! Had it not been for your guidance, what would I ever have amounted to?" (*Tusculan Disputations* 5:2). Marcus Aurelius writes: "Where, then, can man find the power to guide and guard his steps? In one thing and one alone: Philosophy. To be a philosopher is to keep unsullied and unscathed the divine spirit [*daimon*] within him" (*Meditations* 2.17). And Lucius Annaeus Seneca (*c.* 4-65 CE) writes to his friend, "Without it [philosophy] no one can live with courage or serenity" (*Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales,* 3 vols., Harvard UP, 1917: 25; all translations from Seneca are mine unless otherwise noted).

To literate Romans, "religion" was synonymous with ritual that one performed out of patriotism and respect for tradition. It had little to do with ethics or the soul. Divinity and one's personal, as opposed to public, relationship to it—whether in the form of gods and goddesses, a philosophical One, or one's personal daimon—was a matter of philosophy.

Earlier, in the more circumvented world of the city states of Classical Greece (5th and 4th centuries BCE),

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philosophy had had a broader meaning. Plato and Aristotle, while never forgetting that philosophy meant "love of wisdom" which included guidance on how to live, also developed speculation on the nature of reality into elaborate systems of metaphysics, ethics, politics, and natural science.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE and the division of his empire into the smaller, warring empires of his successors, the world changed radically. This new Hellenistic world was now much larger and more diverse and in an almost constant state of political and social upheaval. Life became profoundly disorienting.

> Both individual freedom and responsibility were undermined by the massiveness and confusion of the new political world. Personal destinies appeared to be determined more by large impersonal forces than by individual volition. The old clarity no longer seemed available, and many felt they had lost their bearings. (Tarnas 1991: 75)

Although Plato and Aristotle were still studied, the times demanded something different and more down-to-earth. New philosophical schools arose, whose inspiration "arose less from the passion to comprehend the world in its mystery and magnitude, and more from the need to give human beings some stable belief system and inner peace in the face of a hostile and chaotic environment" (Tarnas 76). If philosophy originally began in wonder, as Aristotle said (*Metaphysics* 982b.12), these new Hellenistic philosophies surely began in confusion and suffering.

Among them was Stoicism, founded by Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (335-263 BCE). Zeno (not to be confused with Zeno of Elea, author of the famous paradox bearing his name) taught in Athens at a well-known site, the *stoa poikile,* the painted colonnade or porch — hence the name of his school. We could perhaps translate the name of this school as Porchism and refer to its followers as Porchers, but somehow these words don't quite have the proper ring of dignity. He and his successors as

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head of the school, Cleanthes (*fl. c.* 263 BCE) and Chrysippus (*fl. c.* 233 BCE), taught a stern ethic proclaiming absolute virtue as the only way to happiness. They also apparently developed theories of logic and cosmology, but so little of their work survives that reconstructing their systems is largely speculation.

The later Stoics modified and softened the early dogma and were much more interested in practical applications of Stoic ideas than in systematic philosophy. They never ceased, however, to speculate and wonder about the universe. While Stoicism maintained a continuous tradition from Zeno onwards through the Hellenistic period, the Roman Republic, and into the Empire, when it was the dominant philosophy of educated people, it is three Stoics of the first two centuries CE who are most important today: Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a politician and virtual head of the Roman state during Nero's youth; Epictetus (55-135), a freed Greek slave; and Marcus Aurelius, an emperor and general.

Since I am more interested in showing the relevance of the Stoics to people today than in providing a balanced history of Stoicism and do not have the space to consider all three in equal depth, I will concentrate on one philosopher—Marcus Aurelius. This is to some degree an arbitrary choice reflecting my personal taste; I don't mean to slight Epictetus and Seneca. Far from it. They are both worth repeated reading and study, and both have been more important than Marcus in transmitting Stoic ideas to later centuries. But there are practical reasons for this choice also. Marcus' *Meditations* is much more easily available in translation than any other Stoic work. It is a short and compact book that bears repeated reading and can serve as the Pagan equivalent of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ,* to which it has often been compared. Epictetus' ideas are often reflected accurately in Marcus, since the emperor considered the former slave his spiritual master. Touching only lightly on him will not, therefore, distort the picture of Roman Stoicism unduly. Some consideration of Seneca, however, is indispensable, even though his work is uneven and scattered among numerous essays and plays and 124 letters. His Stoicism is warmer and more poetic than that of the emperor and contains some profound insights into social psychology. He is useful as a balance to the austerity and solitariness of Marcus. A portion of Epictetus' work is available in *The Enchiridion,* T.W. Higginson, trans. (Macmillan, 1948). A selection of Seneca's letters can be found in *Letters From a Stoic,* R.C. Campbell, trans. (Penguin, 1969).

Marcus Aurelius wrote, as far as we know, only one literary work, his *Meditations,* although some of his correspondence has also survived. And he wrote only for himself. The *Meditations* are apparently a personal, undated journal he kept with no idea of its ever being made public. The title is not his but was added later. The readers' attention is directed to *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography,* by Anthony Birley (Yale UP, 1987). Emperor from 161 to 180, Marcus spent most of his time away from Rome defending the Danubian frontier against various Germanic tribes in the Marcomannic wars, which have been compared for their horror and barbarity to the First World War in the same area. Compared to most Roman emperors, Marcus lived a life of hardship and extreme stress. There can be no doubt that he followed his principles. He felt it was his sacred duty to personally supervise the defense of the empire, although he could have, as many emperors did, sit in luxury in Rome and delegate the dirty work to someone else. At the age of 59, he virtually died in the saddle, worn out by the rigors of almost constant campaigning.

If you live with Marcus and his thoughts for a period of time, you begin to feel a kinship and even friendship with him as a living spirit—an uncle, say, or grandfather, who always has a word of counsel when it's needed. He is not a remote mind delivering the word of god or some other form of putative absolute truth. He is a human being with his own doubts and failings as well as virtues. Marcus can sometimes be depressingly melancholy and annoyingly inconsistent, but his courage, wisdom, and humanity shine through every page.

En archê ên ho logos. "In the beginning was the Logos." Thus begins the Gospel of John, and thus begins Stoicism also. The word *logos* is untranslatable by any one English word. "Word" is only the commonest of its meanings. It also denotes universal mind, explanation, meaning, measure, universal reason, purpose, plan, providence, inner structure, divine law, divine archetype. It is a vague, encompassing, and powerful word, sometimes seeming to carry an even mystical weight. One thing that can be said with certainty about it is that it is the opposite of randomness and chaos, and that it is the ground of all being. Perhaps it is best thought of as the divine archetype of the universe, both the plan, the creation, and the substance of things together. A suggestive and fruitful analogy is the equally untranslatable Chinese word *Tao.* Logos is probably the closest word in a western language to Tao. Tao is often translated as "way," and it is suggestive that Christ, who is the Logos in the Gospel of John (14:6), says "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Marcus sometimes uses Logos interchangeably with the words god, the gods,

Nature, the Universe, Fate, Necessity, and even Zeus. For modern Pagans, as I will discuss later, there is no inconsistency in adding Goddess to the list. The most important thing to bear in mind is that the word "God" has none of the connotations of the word in monotheistic religions: "If Greek philosophers speak of 'god' in the masculine singular, this is generally to indicate everything encompassed by the divine or to distinguish a supreme god from lesser divinities; no formal commitment to monotheism is implied" (Long 1989: 136). (Although the word is capitalized in all the translations, I will use it in lower case to attenuate this association.) To us his most exotic term for this primordial creative principle is "Mind-Fire" or "Active Fire" (*pyr technikon*), a concept going back to Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE). To the Stoics, the Logos or Mind-Fire or god is both the creator and the substance of the universe. It is in everything, and everything is in it, and everything is destined to return to it.

The Stoics are technically classified as materialists, since they believed that the Logos, and therefore everything else, is ultimately made of "matter." But *hylê* (matter) has such a rarefied meaning by the time of the late Stoics, that translating it by the English word "matter" is gravely misleading. Matter to us means something that solidly fills space, can be touched, has weight and mass, etc. We will be much closer to the Stoic understanding of the word if we think of the fundamental substance of the universe as energy. (After Einstein, of course, we realize that matter is energy in frozen form.)

Each human soul is a particle of the Logos. "Sunlight is all one, even when it is broken up by walls, mountains, and a host of other things. Soul is all one, even when it is distributed among countless natures of every kind in countless differing proportions" (12.30). This concept implies a deep interconnectedness of everything in the Universe, and although the Stoics only occasionally express a passionate relationship with the deity, their "deepest religious intuitions are founded on their doctrine that the human mind, in all its functions—reflecting, sensing, desiring, and initiating action—is part and partner of god" (Long 1989: 149). This relationship points the way to right action for each human being.

The end of human life for the Stoics as for most ancient philosophers is happiness. (*Eudaimonia,* the Greek word for happiness, literally means "blessed with a good daimon, or inner god." Hence the English, "to be in good spirits.") Happiness is to be found in virtue (*virtus* in Latin, *aretê* in Greek), and virtue for the Stoics means living courageously in harmony with Nature. This does not necessarily mean living in Nature, retiring to a Roman Walden Pond for instance, although something like that was often a dream or fantasy of many Romans, including Marcus (4.3), Seneca (Ep. 28), and Horace (Odes 3.29). Cicero, like other wealthy Romans, had his country estate as well as his house in Rome. (I am indebted to Richard Smoley for pointing this out to me.) Living according to Nature first of all entails realizing that one is as much a part of Nature as wild animals or the wind. God or the Logos is present in everything in the Universe. In life as a whole it is manifest not only in the turn of the seasons or the march of the years but also in the actual course of events, the way things happen, the way things are here and now on both a personal and impersonal level.

In life as a whole [the Logos] is manifest not only in the turn of the seasons or the march of the years but also in the actual course of events, the way things happen, the way things are here and now on both a personal and impersonal level. What is, is God or Logos or Nature. There is no recourse to a Platonic realm of ideas or a Christian afterlife.

What is, is God or Logos or Nature. There is no recourse to a Platonic realm of ideas or a Christian afterlife. As historian of philosophy Frederick Copleston says, "The Stoics rejected not only the Platonic doctrine of the transcendental universal, but also Aristotle's doctrine of the concrete universal. Only the individual exists and our knowledge is knowledge of particular objects" (Copleston 1962: 386).

"[T]he interest of every creature lies in conformity with its own constitution and nature," writes Marcus (6.44). Trees, lions, and people all have their place in the great woven fabric of Nature. Our place and purpose are determined by the form the Logos takes in us: a rational soul. Reason had a much broader meaning in antiquity than it does now. The Stoics' "commitment to rationality as the essence of what is divine and good includes the love of wisdom, *philosophia* ... The Stoics did not, as is frequently supposed, set up as their ideal one whose wisdom excludes all emotion or feeling. Rather, they ex-tended the notion of rationality so that it included desires and 'good feelings' (*eupatheiai*), in contrast to the passions and mental perturbations that characterize a soul whose reasoning faculty is disordered" (Long 1989: 146).

Since the seventeenth century, we have split off our reasoning capacity from our emotional capacity, seeing them even as warring opposites. It's notable that recently even empirical science is beginning to recognize that this is a dangerous error: the "absence of emotion appears to be at least as pernicious for rationality as excessive emotion. It certainly does not seem true that reason stands to gain from operating without the leverage of emotion. Emotion may well be the support system without which the edifice of reason cannot function properly and may even collapse" (Damasio 1994: 144). The more holistic view of the ancients is being confirmed by neurobiology.

Marcus says that the qualities of the rational soul include " love of neighbors, truthfulness, modesty, and a reverence for herself before all else" (11.1). If my soul and your soul are ultimately the

Stoic self-reliance and the serenity or happiness that follows from it derive from a total acceptance of things as they are. Pain, loss, and death itself are all as natural as the change of the seasons. To resist or resent them is as futile as trying to stop a hailstorm.

same, then it follows that self-love (not selfishness) leads directly to love of all humankind. Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus proclaim the doctrine of "love thy neighbor as thyself" so often that it is superfluous to cite specific examples. It's not difficult to see why the Church Fathers found such useful allies in the Stoics. This strain is strongest in Seneca, which explains why, if not how, the legend of his correspondence with St. Paul arose.

Living in conformity with one's own true constitution, which is the same as following the Way of Nature, leads to the state of *autarkia*—self-reliance. Self-reliance brings inner freedom when one realizes that one can only truly rely on oneself when that self is recognized and felt to be part of and in harmony with the universal whole. Stoic self-reliance and the serenity or happiness that follows from it derive from a total acceptance of things as they are. Pain, loss, and death itself are all as natural as the change of the seasons. To resist or resent them is as futile as trying to stop a hailstorm. Everything is in constant change. "We shrink from change," Marcus writes to himself, "yet is there anything than can come into being without it?" (7.18) Change is Nature's way, the only way. "Out of the universal substance, as out of wax, Nature fashions a colt, then breaks him up and uses the material to form a tree" (7.23, 25).

Fortuna, Imperatrix Mundi, Fortune, Empress of the World, seems to dispense her goods and ills without regard for a person's character. Often, the just suffer, and the unjust prosper. In the parlance of a modern best seller, why do "bad things happen to good people?" Every philosophy and religion must ultimately come to terms with this problem of theodicy, defined by the dictionary as "the vindication of divine justice in the face of the existence of evil." For a monotheistic theology that holds that there is one transcendent, omnipotent, omniscient, and good God, the problem is simply insoluble. Augustine spent much of his life in the unsuccessful attempt to prove that evil doesn't really exist in and of itself but is merely a lack of good.

The Stoic, like the Taoist, sees the question differently. Neither falls into dualism: the practice of seeing good and evil as separate entities at war with each other. Both, being followers of the Way of Nature, see them as opposite but complementary, each necessary for the other's existence, like day and night, summer and winter, life and death. The universe could not exist without these contraries. Alan Watts' description of the Taoist yin-yang principle could have been written about the Stoic Logos or World-Fire: "being and nonbeing are mutually generative and mutually supportive the somethings and the nothings, the ons and offs, the solids and the spaces, as well as the wakings and the sleepings and alternations of existing and not existing, are mutually necessary" (Watts 1975: 23-25).

As far back as Chrysippus, the Stoics had maintained that one of a pair of contraries cannot exist without the other. If any twentieth-century person knows what the Universe and the World Fire is like at the most fundamental level, it must be a quantum physicist. One of the greatest, Niels Bohr, had emblazoned on his coat of arms the motto: *"Contraria non contradictoria sed complementa sunt."* Opposites are complementary not contradictory. Seneca would have agreed: "Eternity consists of opposites. To this law our souls must adjust themselves" (Ep. 107.8-9).

"The picture, then, is of a world in which everything ultimately fits together according to a divine pattern" (Long 1989: 148). Following nature "involves contemplation of nature's ways, recognition of their fitness, and perception that all of them are 'good' in the sense of being essential to the pattern as a whole" (Blofeld 1978: 10).

If you realize this in your bones, you will be able to "keep a straight course and follow your own nature and the World-Nature (and the way of these two is one)" (5.3), and you will find "peace of mind under the visitations of a destiny you cannot control" (3.5). Stoic happiness lies in accepting and flowing with things as they are, not wasting energy fighting against things you can't control, and realizing that you are usually powerless to change people, places, and things. What the Serenity Prayer requests, the Stoic strives for: "the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Although we cannot control most external events, we can decide what our attitude toward them will be. From this insight rises the infamous Stoic virtue of *apatheia,* which does not mean apathy or not feeling, but rather not being thrown about and controlled by our emotions, either positive or negative. The Stoic does not deny or suppress the emotions but recognizes them as reactions to external events and not as parts of the essential self and also as not necessarily accurate evaluations of the external world.

"If you are distressed by anything external," Marcus says, "the pain is not due to the thing itself but to your own estimate of it; and that you have the power to revoke at any moment" (8.47). "Subtract your own notions of what you imagine to be painful, and then your self stands invulnerable" (8.40). "[T]hings can never touch the soul, but stand inert outside it, so that disquiet can arise only from fancies from within" (4.3). Seneca tells his friend Lucilius that once he has tested his powers of *apatheia* by dealing with the whims of Fortune he will know that "true spirit will never allow itself to come under the authority of anything outside ourselves" (Ep. 13.1). Epictetus enjoins us, when faced with something unpleasant, "to examine it by those rules which

you have; and first and chiefly by this: whether it concerns the things which are within our power or those which are not; and if it concerns anything beyond our power, be prepared to say that it is nothing to you" (Enchiridion, I).

Copleston concisely describes the rewards of *apatheia*: "happiness depends on that which alone is in our power and independent of external conditions—namely our will, our ideas concerning things, and the use we make of our ideas" (Copleston 1962: 435). In this insight lies the Stoics' greatest contribution to psychology (Peters & Mace 1967: 7:4), one of the things that makes their philosophy directly relevant to active existence today.

Love and respect for all fellow human beings as well as other creatures follows from the premise that we are all part of the same unity. There is no doubt that the Stoics tried to practice as well as preach this truth. Marcus Aurelius seems to have had a particular problem with impatience and anger, compounded by his position as Emperor. He had the power to do a great deal of damage to a great number of people, but he was aware of the temptation and constantly admonishes himself to remember "the closeness of man's brotherhood with his kind; a brotherhood not of blood or human seed [a tacit acknowledgment of class differences] but of a common intelligence; and that this intelligence in every man is God, an emanation from the deity" (12.26).

Seneca wrote passionately against the stupid cruelty of gladiatorial games (Ep. 7) and the degradation of drunkenness to which the Romans were particularly susceptible [he was a teetotaler] (Ep. 88). Incredibly, and as far as I know, uniquely in the ancient world, Seneca also proclaimed the equality of the sexes and demanded that conjugal faithfulness in a husband be interpreted every bit as strictly as the honor of the wife (Ep. 94).

He is especially passionate on the subject of slavery: "'They are slaves.' No! They are human beings. 'They are slaves.' No! They are comrades. 'They are slaves.' No! They are unassuming friends" (47.1). "We treat them not as human beings but use and abuse them as if they were beasts of burden" (47.5). "I'd like you to think of this, that the one you call your slave comes from the same human stock as you, has the same skies above him, breathes, lives, and dies exactly the same as you" (47.10). Seneca's influence led directly to the improvement of the legal status of slaves in the Roman Empire.

Nature, the Universe, and the gods were not just abstractions to the Stoics. Although they used these and many other words almost interchangeably, this was a matter of mood, of context, or perhaps of recent personal experience. When writing in a mode of logic, they may reduce all spiritual reality to the One—the Mind-Fire or god—but Stoicism was not a systematic philosophy nor a doctrinaire religion. The gods may ultimately be manifestations of the unity of the Universe—just as you and I are—but that does not make them any less real. The Stoics were polytheists with all the tolerance, open-mindedness, and acceptance of ambivalence that makes Paganism increasingly appealing to spiritual searchers today. I can make an offering to Hekate at a shrine in the woods and still be a Stoic. Like Taoism and Zen, it is compatible with other spiritual beliefs and practices. I can do *zazen* on my cushion everyday and still be a Stoic.

Nature, the Universe, and the gods were not just abstractions to the Stoics. ... The gods may ultimately be manifestations of the unity of the Universe—just as you and I are—but that does not make them any less real. The Stoics were polytheists with all the tolerance, open-mindedness, and acceptance of ambivalence that makes Paganism increasingly appealing to spiritual searchers today.

No one reading the Stoics carefully can doubt that much of what they write is based on personal spiritual experience, not just ideas. Listen as Seneca, in his famous forty-first letter, describes just such experiences:

> If you have ever come on a dense wood of ancient trees that have risen to an exceptional height, shutting out all sight of the sky with one thick screen of branches upon another, the loftiness of the forest, the seclusion of the spot, your sense of wonderment at finding so deep and unbroken a gloom out of doors, will persuade you of the presence of a deity. Any cave in which rocks have eroded deep into the mountain resting on it, its hollowing out into a cavern of impressive extent not produced by the labors of man but the result of processes of nature, will strike into your soul some kind of inkling of the divine. We venerate the sources of important streams; places where a mighty river bursts suddenly from hiding are provided with altars; hot springs are objects of worship; the darkness or unfathomable depth of pools has made their waters sacred.

How many readers have felt something like this? I know I have. Unmistakable experience of the Holy in dark, quiet places in the Rocky Mountains was one of the things that led me away from Christianity as a teenager and into Paganism as an adult.

If they can overlook the fact that the ancient Stoics—from the slave Epictetus to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius—were born, lived their lives, and died in a patriarchal society, and that they were all, through no fault of their own, members of the much maligned society of DWMs (Dead White Males), modern Pagans or Neo-Pagans may find in them congenial spiritual ancestors.

Starhawk, probably the best-known modern Pagan writer, says in *The Spiral Dance*: "The Goddess does not rule the world; She is the world. Manifest in each of us, She can be known internally by

every individual, in all her magnificent diversity." And further, that:

> ... all things are swirls of energy, vortexes of moving forces, currents in an ever-changing sea. Underlying the appearance of separateness, of fixed objects within a linear stream of time, reality is a field of energies that congeal, temporarily, into forms. In time, all 'fixed' things dissolve, only to coalesce again into new forms, new vehicles (Starhawk 1989: 23, 32).

Since I have taken the liberty of adding the Goddess as one of the names and forms of the Stoic Universe or Mind-Fire, I find these words of Starhawk's completely compatible with Stoicism. There is nothing in them with which Marcus or Seneca would disagree, and perhaps they wouldn't even object to my addition of the Goddess. Men of their time also worshipped the Goddess. Although he was a Platonist, not a Stoic, Apuleius (*c.* 123-? CE) wrote in his *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass,* a beautiful and powerful prayer to the Goddess in the form of Isis, of which this is a small part: "Neither day nor any quiet time of night, nor indeed any moment passes by that is not occupied by your good deeds. You roll the globe, you light the sun, you rule the world the stars answer to you, the seasons return, the godheads rejoice, the elements serve you. At your nod, breezes blow, clouds nourish, seeds germinate, seedlings grow" (*Metamorphoses* 11.25). As a Platonist, Apuleius would not of course identify the Goddess with the world as would pantheistic Stoics and modern Pagans, but his delight at and reverence for the connection between divinity and the natural world is common to both.

Stoicism is an ancient spiritual path that can help us on our journey today. This is not an empty statement. As an instructor of humanities, I have had the privelege of teaching the *Enchiridion* to university students and have heard from several that studying Epictetus changed their lives. The man who was Ross Perot's running mate in 1992 is a Stoic. Vice-Admiral James Stockdale was a prisoner of war in Hanoi for eight years during the Vietnam War. What kept him and many of the men for whom he was responsible alive was Stoicism. He had previously found Epictetus so appealing that he had memorized much of the philosopher's work. From the moment he was captured, he began to apply his internalized Stoicism and thereby saved his sanity and his life under some of the worst conditions and treatment imaginable (Stockdale 1993).

Stoicism is western and thus lies at the roots of our culture and traditions, yet it offers wisdom that many have struggled through the esotericism of the East to find. It offers in concentrated form psychological insights that can lead to a life of serenity, insights that are scattered throughout much modern psychological literature but without the deep spiritual dimension of Stoicism. Above all, it is a way of Nature and wholeness, a way of realizing our unity with all living things and with the Universe itself.

Every day I pray—and try to live up to the courage it requires—a passionate, beautiful prayer written for himself by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus seventeen centuries ago:

> All is in harmony with me that is in harmony with you, O Universe. Nothing is too early or too late if it is in due season for you. All that your seasons yield is fruit for me. You are all things, all things are in you, and to you all things return. (384.23. My translation).

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Love, Suffering and Evil: A Neopagan View

by Gus diZerega

This article is condensed from Chapter 3 of Pagans and Christians in the New Millennium, *now seeking a friendly publisher. This book discusses the character of Paganism as a specific kind of religion, Traditional Wicca as an instance of Pagan religion, similarities and differences between Pagan and Christian religion, and the strengths and insights Pagan spirituality brings to contemporary American life. It is* not *a "Wicca 101" book.*

No one born in the 20th century can have missed the challenge to spiritual worldviews raised by the carnage of its wars and massacres, as well as the suffering caused by disease, natural disasters and general hard knocks of everyday life. So much pain! So much unhappiness! Neopagan religion celebrates and honors all basic dimensions of existence, but in light of so much suffering, some critics ask whether in doing so we demonstrate a naive or even willful blindness to evil and the omnipresent nature of human affliction.

It is correct that Neopagan religion does not focus on evil, spiritual or otherwise. But this lack of emphasis is no failing. Our understanding of the relationship of good and evil is different, reflecting the different dimension of spiritual reality upon which we focus. Our view of suffering is in broad agreement with that of Pagan spirituality in general, emphasizing healing our relationships and restoring harmony within the world. Our world is neither perfect not fallen, but it is sacred. We see around us beauty and folly, wisdom and suffering, life and death, acceptance and transcendence.

In our clearer, stronger moments, we accept and embrace it all, as ultimately good, no matter how well disguised. At the core of our worldwiew is "perfect trust" in the "perfect love" of our Gods. But if our world is the sacred manifestation of a loving Source, indeed a perfectly loving Source, why does it contain so much suffering, and why does so much of this suffering seem gratuitous? Even beginning to answer these questions raises fundamental theological issues. If the world is an artifact, produced by a Master Potter, it may make sense to combine all suffering into a single category of transcendent malignity. But this approach is certainly alien to a Pagan perspective which delights in the diversity as well as the ultimate goodness of the world. This indiscriminate amalgamation of everything harmful—from tornadoes to cancer to serial killers—into a single category hampers our capacity to come to terms with them.

I would divide the suffering we encounter in life into three broad, and distinct, groups: 1) suffering which is the natural result of embodied existence, 2) accidental suffering which is the result of unintended human actions, and 3) deliberately inflicted suffering, both human and spiritually caused. None are ultimately in conflict with the basic idea that the Source of all and the world which is its manifestation are absolutely good.

Embodied existence necessarily brings suffering in its wake. Disease, drought, earthquakes, floods, the pain and decrepitude arising from our aging, and other natural calamities, all cause human suffering. Neopagans may not consider death and illness to be an evil, resulting from human sin, but we deeply mourn the passing of our loved ones, and in the midst of sickness and pain we sometimes doubt whether our world is in fact a truly good place. Our approach to these issues necessarily combines personal spiritual experience and insight with efforts by the broader spiritual community to answer these questions, since among today's Pagans, spiritual understanding is as much based on personal experience as on philosophy or theology.

A Mystical Experience

The event that proved most pivotal to my understanding of suffering occurred during a "dark night of the soul" where everything in my life seemed jinxed, and my strongest efforts to accomplish any important goals appeared utterly in vain. I was depressed, frequently in despair, and painfully aware of my own shortcomings. What hope I felt drew upon my earlier experiences of the Goddess and Her unconditional love. It seemed to me that if I could cultivate that feeling within my own heart, I would be less vulnerable to the pain arising out of continual disappointments.

One morning, while driving from the country to the city where I was moving, I was suddenly surrounded by a Presence of perfect love. Unlike my previous experiences with the divine, no other qualities were present. I sensed neither maleness nor femaleness, neither a feeling of the natural world nor of an ethereal realm. This loving Presence was neither personal nor impersonal; rather, it was completely personal but without the limitations we associate with personhood. In trying to describe this experience such limiting terms fail. There was nothing but love and perfect understanding for all things, everywhere. This Presence poured forth an immensity of care for each unique and individual being. The insight accompanying my experience indicated this was the fundamental quality of All that Is, the Godhead, the Source from which all Gods and Goddesses and everything else manifests. In Traditional Wiccan terms, this Source is known as the Dryghton.

Within the context of this outpouring of love, all suffering and misfortune acquired a context that redeemed them. At the deepest level it was clear that everything was as it should be—all beings were loved, none were truly alone, and all were of consequence. Lilies of the field, falling sparrows, and despairing Pagans were not living futile lives, nor was the meaning of their lives located solely in the part they played in a larger drama whose nature and outcome they could not grasp, although that was also true. In addition, each being was personally important and protected at a spiritual level. As with similar reports from others so blessed, this experience passed all too quickly. But my memory of it, and ability to recall the love and beauty which characterized it, decisively changed my view of life. Unconditional divine love embraces all beings and permeates everything.

Despite powerful similarities, many spiritual traditions describe this encounter with the Ultimate in different ways. Most important, some depict their experiences in personal terms, others in impersonal ones. All describe what happened to them in the context of their own spiritual traditions, using concepts familiar to their audience. Usually

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left unaddressed are the efforts of modern theologians to make something important out of these terminological difference. On the other hand, reports of these encounters almost always say that no words are adequate to the experience, so it may be best to avoid unnecessary precision when describing the transcendent. I am not suggesting all mystical experiences are the same. But mystical accounts from many traditions of which I have knowledge do appear to share the view that perfect and unconditional love, not suffering, is fundamental to reality.

Those beings whom I term the "high Gods" partake of this same loving quality, but in a more individualized way. The Goddess, for example, is feminine and, as She has manifested to me, carries a sense of nature, of sun and shade-dappled meadows, dark groves of trees, merry brooks and brilliant flowers. By virtue of possessing these characteristics She does not possess others, for example, the masculine. She is therefore a more limited expression of that ultimate Divinity which is beyond limits.

Love and Reciprocity

If Ultimate Divinity is best described as perfect love, why would it manifest, or be manifested in, a world where we love imperfectly, suffer greatly, and then die? Why do limited, fallible, suffering beings exist at all: what's the point? At best we can speculate. If love cares for nothing so much as the beloved, then the more perfect the love, the greater the understanding and treasuring of the beloved. There is no greater nor more perfect love than that of the Ultimate. From this, everything flows.

This view can be challenged. Because the Divine is beyond human understanding, some argue no terms adequately describe It/Him/Her. In one sense I agree. Even the experience I had was beyond the power of words to describe, and my experience was limited by my humanity. But if the Divine were totally other we would not only be unable to describe it even imperfectly, we would have no reason to worship or honor it. It may be that love, which we first learn about in a human context, is only a metaphor for how we experience the Divine, but it is universally recognized as the best metaphor. As love, it connects with a human capacity, but it encompasses complete understanding and universal unconditional acceptance which human love does not.

A perfect and limitless love would desire the existence of an enormous variety of beings manifesting every way in which a good life can potentially be lived. Each being would be treasured and cherished, regardless of whether that love was returned, because Divine love is unconditional. Individuality brings variety, both of beings and of how they act. For choices to be genuine some must be better than others. Meaningful choice implies the possibility of error. In addition, given the assumption of Divine perfection, individuality can arise only if Divinity in some way limits itself.

The material world is limited. When matter exists, boundaries exist. In manifesting itself in the material world, the Divine necessarily individuates. Self-aware material beings are particularly aware of boundaries, and with this awareness comes the recognition of individuality.

Every limitation creates the possibility of new individuality, and a new way of manifesting Divine love. That this limitation is self-chosen by the Divine is evidenced by Its capacity to manifest in the awareness of people through mystical experience. If such love is part of perfection. Therefore, being influenced by others is part of perfection. Each of us loves uniquely, and is loved uniquely. In this relationship something genuinely new is created, something that depends upon a change in the relationship of the beloved to the lover.

Because the Divine is aware of everything, its existence is enriched without thereby implying it was previously impoverished. Here, perhaps, is the ultimate meaning behind the phrase "to him who has is given." Love is only genuine when given freely. Free beings, particularly ones limited in knowledge and wisdom, expand their capacity to love in different ways and at different times. Each takes its own path. Each will be uniquely itself.

Because the Ultimate is aware of everything, when we become more loving towards one another, the well being of both the Divine and the other is enhanced. Believing otherwise may thus be seen as an error of the ancients.

From fullness comes even greater fullness. Hartshorne quotes Jules Lequier as saying, truly, that "God, who sees things change, changes also in beholding them, or else does not perceive that they change" (Hartshorne 1984: v). The world of freedom is a world where each of us, slowly, hesitantly, often fearfully (and perhaps over lifetimes), grows in our capacity to love and care. In doing so we enrich ourselves and All That Is. Along the way many of us take plenty of detours, and given our limitations, make plenty of errors.

Spirit and Matter

Many classical Pagan philosophers considered matter to be the "densest" manifestation of Spirit, or as that dimension of Spirit farthest from the Source of ultimate Goodness and Love. Often the words of Classical philosophers such as Porphyry seemed almost to condemn the existence of the physical world every bit as much as did the ancient Gnostics, who considered the world the creation of an evil god who used it to trap souls into material bodies. Classical Pagan philosophy was well aware of the difference between spiritual love and material life as most of them experienced it. As a result, it was often critical of the material world, although it rarely condemned matter because physicality was thought to be a manifestation of God and so worthy of regard.

It is obvious that I take a happier view of the matter of matter. I think this difference is two-fold. First, the place and time in which I live enables most people to live in at least modest prosperity and freedom. Our times

are not unique in this regard. Apparently hunting and gathering peoples rarely found the world a bad place to live. This unhappy condition came later with the advent of slavery, despotism, and mass poverty. Observers from those less fortnuate times can be forgiven their jaundiced conclusions about life. The liberal democratic transformation has finally enabled the mass of people to again enjoy modest security and prosperity. The poor are now a minority group. Second, I reject the error of equating perfection and the Ultimate with imperviousness to change, a position which necessarily devaluates matter.

Yet there is a sense in which our ancestors were correct. Embodiment situates us in a world permeated by need. All living things live in a state of need. Physical embodiment requires us to seek physical sustenance. We must take in energy to survive. We need food, water, safety, shelter, and more. Much of physical life is oriented towards satisfying those needs or suffering in the absence of their satisfaction. Consequently, material existence seemingly stands in stark tension with our experience of the Ultimate, which manifests perfect and unconditional love while being itself perfectly fulfilled. As physical beings we are always subject to need, and therefore to the possibility of deprivation. From this possibility comes a consequent fear of doing without, and the suffering it causes. I think that most human suffering has its deepest roots in the ubiquity of need, and our fearful response to deprivation.

Individual awareness in our world is mediated through physical structure. Every individual of every species is characterized by the limitations and possibilities inherent in its physical nature. Every being is powerfully shaped by the forces which influence how it survives and reproduces. This is so even if the core of all awareness is perfect love—for physical structures shape and allow awareness to manifest and act in material form.

Throughout most of life's history on earth, natural selection was the ultimate editor determining which forms flourished and which did not. If life is free to develop in all directions, learning how to acquire energy, survive and thrive in a material world, ultimately some beings will begin to explore the possibilities of living at the expense of others. If other beings can provide more readily accessible energy than could non-living processes such as sunlight, the path to greater complexity of living beings expand considerably. This expansion began with the first munching of a plant and accelerated enormously when an early muncher was, itself, munched.

Less-aware forms of life seek sustenance with no concern other than acquiring enough to maintain their existence, and to multiply. A very rich and diverse world must have arisen before a physical organism could become complex enough to manifest individuated self-awareness. The shape of our bodies, and the complexity of our brains, are the result of millions of years where natural selection edited what was viable in this world, and what was to be cast aside. A consciousness such as our own could only exist because beings were continually subject to pressures to change and adapt, gradually enriching and diversifying the forms life takes. For physical consciousness to evolve to the point where it could act with self-aware loving-kindness, it had to evolve through many less-aware levels, taking advantage of whatever opportunities existed to obtain the energy needed to survive and prosper.

Our genes and DNA are the record of our inheritance, and our kinship with all life. And

... mystical accounts from many traditions of which I have knowledge do appear to share the view that perfect and unconditional love, not suffering, is fundamental to reality.

so our awareness is involved, on one hand in meeting the needs for physical survival, and on the other with comprehending values far beyond personal utility. In an important sense, the physical world is complete and sacred in its own right. It manifests peace and beauty, marvelous variety and the many delights apparent to the senses. We make contact with this perfection when we contemplate nature without judgment.

There is no real need to subjectively import beauty into nature. It is there, and we discover it. Robinson Jeffers caught this point when he wrote of the natural world: "the human sense of beauty is our metaphor for their excellence" (1977: 2` 57). I suspect this is why so many medit`yhbnative traditions maintain that, in order to experience our deepest and most fundamental state of being, we must quiet the part of our minds involved in everyday awareness—a self-awareness shaped by the requirements of survival in a world of need—and that when we accomplish this, what is revealed is indescribably good.

Until we finally develop our capacity for genuine love, Nature will remain that manifestation of Spirit which is most fulfilling for us, precisely because in itself it is complete, and we are still incomplete. Even so, there are additional possibilities for Spirit to manifest physically, possibilities that require self-aware consciousness in order to arise. But because our existence is rooted in need, our obsession with meeting needs and avoiding fears can cause us to lose sight of both the perfection of nature and of our own inherent possibilities. As more complex beings than our less self-conscious relations, we are also more prone than they to error. We are capable of making all the mistakes other kinds of life can make, plus many more they cannot.

To flourish, human beings depend upon physical and emotional intimacy and affection. Infants deprived of loving human contact rarely survive. Nor does this appear true of human babies alone. The experience of gentleness, care, and intimacy appears to be necessary for living beings whose awareness has developed beyond a certain threshold. And the more self-aware the being, the more it needs and desires trust, affection, and delight in the affectionate reciprocation of others. In its absence such beings often die, and those that survive are scarred. This is what we would expect to find if full awareness is love, and if we are the most self-aware of material beings. In our self-awareness we are separated from most animals and, without long and disciplined effort, from their ability to focus on the moment. But that very self-awareness which so easily separates us from living in the beauty of the moment also deepens our capacity for love. If self-awareness was our peculiarly human Fall, it is also our Glory. Self- awareness is a necessary element in the development of loving awarenes. It makes possible a differentiated and recipro-

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cated love between individuated beings. Such love need not be limited but, among human beings who are dominated by their fears and needs, it often is.

Rooting our capacity for love in self-awareness seems paradoxical. Only self-aware beings can be selfish. But this commonplace only scratches the surface of what it is to be self-aware. To act in my own interest requires me to have a conception of my future self, a self which does not yet exist. My capacity for empathy enables me to identify with this future self because from my present perspective this future self is an "other"—a hypothetical other. Without my capacity to put myself in the place of an other I could never overcome the temptation to seek immediate gratification at the expense of my long term well-being. If I empathize with my future self, putting its happiness ahead of my immediate gratification, I can refrain from that temptation. The same empathetic capacity that helps me act for my own long term well-being enables me to identify with other selves and act in their interest.

Implicit in human nature is the capacity to love in ever-widening circles of inclusion, and the more we develop our humanity, the more inclusive those circles become. It is this capacity for expanding that which we love which appears most truly unique to human beings among the life forms on this planet. The American ecologist Aldo Leopold captured this insight when he wrote that while we can mourn the extinction of the passenger pigeon, whose flocks once numbered in the millions before being destroyed by market hunters, no passenger pigeon would have mourned our passing had it been we who disappeared instead. He concluded that "For one species to mourn the death of another is a new thing under the sun" (1966: 117). It is this quality of unselfish care, care that blossoms into love, that we can bring into the world. It is our most unique gift to life.

Death

But what about the abundant suffering we all experience? The same world which makes our physical existence possible also makes that existence necessarily brief. Death may not be the greatest source of suffering, but we often fear our own pas-sing and are deeply pained by the passing of loved ones, especially the young and innocent. How may death and suffering be made to harmonize with the idea of perfect love? Is death the sad tax we must pay so that the Ultimate can love us, or is there more to the matter? Nothing seems more directly to undercut the value of individuality than the death which destroys our physical existence.

Individuals are filled with extraordinary potential, and death brings it to an end, often in ways that appear very premature. On a billboard in the town in which I live is the photo of a happy young boy. It reminds us that he was killed by a drunken driver. How can a young child, with almost all his life ahead of him, be killed by a drunk driver in a good world? Yet if the world is good, death is too central a feature to our existence to be no more than a sign of worldly imperfection or a sad necessity for physical embodiment.

We can take two approaches in trying to come to terms with death, and both are valid. We can ask what role death plays in the existence of those conscious beings for whom we care, and we can ask why death exists at all.

The first question is the easiest. Christian and Pagan alike agree that consciousness is not dependent upon physical bodies. Destruction of a body need not imply the destruction of awareness. This is a commonplace for any spiritual practice which encourages, and even teaches, its adherents how to have contact with the world of spirits, as does Traditional Wicca and much of Neopaganism in general. What is really at stake here is not whether departed loved ones no longer exist, and most Pagans agree there is no compelling reason to believe this is the case. From a Pagan perspective death appears to be a moving on, a shedding of one's skin, a change of abode to a new dimension of existence.

If the Source of All is supremely good, and the universe is its expression and receives divine love without condition, then only our partial vision makes death appear to be an evil cutting down of vital, loving and beautiful beings. We are not aware of the true context in which a being dies. Our perspective is inevitably limited and to an unavoidable extent, self-centered. But by itself this answer is unsatisfactory. If life is a blessing, why move on? Why experience death at all? If we simply reincarnate, why ever leave? Ultimately, of course, the answer to this question remains a mystery. But reasonable speculation helps give us confidence that the ultimate truth is in harmony with our spiritual experience. An analogy I have long liked may help us to understand this.

Each time I backpacked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and out again, at some point I questioned why I was doing it. Sore and blistered feet, the fatigue of carrying a heavy pack back up 5000 feet of trail to the rim, and the relentless draining heat of the desert sun are no fun. Once one of my knees went out at its very bottom, just after crossing the Colorado River on a suspension bridge. I could not bend my leg without excruciating pain. It was a very long hike out. But even when my knees were fine, more than once I have wondered why I was doing this. More than once I have thought of nothing but the restaurant on top, with its comfortable chairs, good food, air conditioning, great views, and table service. And when I get to the top, I go there. And I enjoy that restaurant immensely.

But, and this is my point, I am also very grateful to have been at the Grand Canyon, to have backpacked into its immensity, to have experienced its beauty and peace in ways unavailable to those viewing it from its rim or by airplane, unavailable even to those who take a mule to the bottom. Trips such as I have taken are transformative in ways less challenging ventures are not. I and the others who do these things are enriched in ways in which those who settle for a view from a restaurant are not, no matter how good the wine, the service, and the food. And once I have been away for a while, I am ready for another trip. These trips inevitably entail suf-

fering. And there have been times when my physical suffering was far the greater part of what I experienced. However, the suffering is the price of the experience, and in my view one well worth paying. Abstracted from the experience as a whole, of course, the pain is not worth while. But the pain is not abstracted. It is part of the package. I can reduce my suffering through wise preparation, or make it worse (or even terminal) through foolishness or bad luck, but it is an unavoidable part of the trip.

In some ways I think life is like a backpack into beautiful but challenging country. It is strenuous and tiring, but it is also enriching in ways unavailable without the experience, and in this context death may be viewed as a time of relaxation. Our religions and our philosophies are trail maps, hopefully good ones, guiding us into and through terrain far beyond our ken. But if the world and its Source are good, there should be no ultimate cause for worry. This faith-as-confidence is in harmony with Pagan spirituality because it is grounded in spiritual experience, not dogma written by another.

There may be other reasons for death. To manifest and develop our own capacities we may need to live more than once. For example, to be a man or a woman leads in many respects to very different ways of living. Perhaps we need to live at least once in each role. As a rule our individual gifts and talents vastly exceed the opportunities available to us to develop them in a single lifetime. Our lives are continually filled with fateful choices. We take one path rather than another, becoming different people than we otherwise would have been. Our world offers far more ways to live in fulfilling ways than can be grasped in a single lifetime. Perhaps we need many lives—to backpack not just into canyons, but high into mountains and exploring coasts and valleys and forests and plains as well.

This view is strengthened by those of a Pagan culture of great antiquity. In South Asia we commonly think people regard rebirth as a misfortune. The reality is more complex. From the time of the early Upanishads until the present, their spiritual traditions have acknowledged that some will wish to get off life's wheel, others to return again (Doniger 1998:28). And for those we most love, is there not a special blessing in loving them in many ways over many lifetimes—as lover and as friend, as parent and as child? The myriad ways we can live may constitute a vital part of this process of developing our capacity to love. As a Traditional Wiccan teaching puts it, "to fulfill love you must return again at the same time and place as the loved one, and you must remember and love them again" (Farrar 1984:30).

For those of us who love life, and one another, reincarnation is a blessing. It is yet another trip into the sacred beauty of the Grand Canyon. Death also appears to be a necessary accompaniment to physical growth. Only a form of life which no longer reproduced itself would need to be freed from the hand of death. Immortal material forms that reproduced would sooner or later fill up all available space. The worst predictions of the pessimistic English clergyman, Thomas Malthus, would come true. And as I emphasized, complex forms such as ourselves arose from the process of natural selection, with death the final editor. If physical life is good, it is appropriate for other beings also to have the experience of living. Part of life, and certainly part of love, is sharing. Divine love includes unconditional respect, concern and regard for and delight in others. We who do not fully embody this quality nevertheless find ourselves in a world where each life-form cannot help but provide for the existence of others.

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The attitude with which we confront this truth is important. Concern for the well-being of generations to come, human and otherwise, is perhaps the most unselfish type of love we can easily practice. From a Neopagan perspective, part of life is learning to be in harmony with the sacred rhythms that make embodiment possible, including living in harmony with death. When we see death as sacramental, and acknowledge the dependence of virtually all living things on other living things, the modern tendency to over-sentimentalize life, and be offended by its reality, can be healed. So long as we deny the sacredness of death, we cannot truly embrace life.

Our society's denial of death's sacramental character takes many forms. Disapproval of death motivates those who attach a deep moral significance to vegetarianism. There are good reasons for some people being vegetarians, but refraining from killing is not one of them. Human beings cannot avoid killing—or at least delegating that task to others on whom we depend, so it is done out of our sight. This is as true for vegetarians as anyone else. To grow crops a farmer must displace countless animals from their homes as he or she prepares fields for sowing. More animals, gophers and rabbits, crows and sparrows, and countless insects, may be killed so that the crops can be preserved and harvested for our use. The best farmers minimize killing, but few can eliminate it. Some vegetarians feel more virtuous than omnivores because they do not eat animal food, but they miss the point. There is plenty of blood hidden in a plate of spinach.

To live well, life requires us to integrate a paradox. In unconditionally accepting life's value and beauty, we must also accept death, which appears to be its negation. How we accomplish this acceptance is one of the challenges facing all spiritual paths. Neopagan theology provides a way to embrace both poles of the paradox within an unconditional affirmation of life. I believe this is one of the gifts Pagan spirituality can offer—an acceptance of death as part of a world that is good. Not finding death to be evil does not lead us to devalue life, or fail to treat others well. For example, my criticisms of self-righteousness in some vegetarians in no way justifies contemporary factory farming, where chickens, pigs, and other animals are confined to simplified mechanical environments, and treated as protein producing machines. Neither ani-

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mals, nor anything else, are simply objects to be shoved and manipulated for human ends. Animals are worthy of respect, and in a factory farm there is no respect for life.

But when we fear death as the greatest of evils, we desperately utilize any and all things in a futile attempt to prevent it. In doing so we devalue the world around us. Physicality itself becomes an enemy we need to conquer in order to preserve what?—our physicality! Another paradox, but this is a harmful one. In honoring death we embrace life more fully. In rejecting death we retreat from life itself. The physical world is always in a state of change. Things come into being, manifest, and then pass away. In seeking to arrest that change we try to make the physical world something it is not. To preserve our physical existence against all change, we find ourselves unable to truly accept or appreciate it. We act not so much from a love of life as from a fear of death, thereby committing a double error. For life should be loved and death should not be feared. To do less with either is not truly to trust the Divine nor to act with gratitude for the life we are given.

Neopagans honor death as a necessary part of life. Traditional Wiccans invite its presence at Samhain. It is not that we seek to die. But we know that for each of us our time will come, and we seek to grow in wisdom and insight to the point that when it does come, we will pass that way without fear, saying, as would the wisest of the Plains Indians, "Today is a good day to die."

Physicality and Suffering

Arguments such as these demonstrate there is no necessary reason to believe death is in any way evidence of spiritual fallenness or failure. But, important as they are, these considerations only begin to address the issue of suffering. Why does so much suffering exist if the world is at bottom holy and sacred? Granted some death and attendant suffering may be unavoidable. Why is there so much of it? Why does the sum total of suffering that we see around us appear so much greater than a reasonable minimum? A world of change and creativity will of necessity also be a world where anything in material form is subject to decline. All change is a passing away as well as a coming into being. In the world we experience, everything changes. At the peak of physical vitality the seed of decline sprouts. A world of freedom and creativity seems to require a process like this. We commemorate this world with our ritual cycle of the Wheel of the Year.

A good model of this dimension to physical reality is a kaleidoscope, or perhaps a sunset. Each moment of beauty must pass if new beauty is to arise, and the full cycle of such a process far surpasses that available in any freeze frame, for change is part of the beauty. To enjoy a kaleidoscope or a sunset we do not fixate on a single moment, allowing ourselves to become enchanted by the beauty of the changing patterns. The same is true for life itself.

From this perspective there is no contradiction underlying the tension between spirit and matter. For living matter to exist a tension between need and sufficiency naturally arises. Only through incorporating this tension into the heart of existence can new and deeper ways of loving emerge, or at least emerge into physical reality. The pull of our material needs can, and usually does, get in the way of our awareness of Spirit, yet our physicality simultaneously provides the means by which beings such as ourselves would exist in the first place. And in overcoming the tension between the two through embracing it, we develop powers of wisdom and depths of love and compassion far more deeply than would otherwise be the case.

Spirit as it manifests in matter uses need to create a beautiful world which is complete in itself, but which also creates the preconditions for even more inclusive and varied manifestations of love to arise. What might be seen as imperfections in a world created once and for all by a master craftsman are not necessarily imperfections when the same phenomena are understood as moments within a pattern of change in which Spirit gradually expands the reality of love into the material realm. The orthodox Christian "Divine Potter theology" necessitates criticizing the world as we encounter it. Pagan process theology does not. From our perspective what appear to be the world's "imperfections" take on added dimensions of meaning, fulfilling them and raising them to blessings. Great music is always more beautiful than even the purest note repeated over and over again even if, for music to exist, that note must "die."

Suffering as a Blessing

There is still another dimension to consider. While we rightly do not want to contribute to the suffering of others, it does not follow that their suffering is an unalloyed misfortune, a tragically high price for mere existence. So much depends on context. The natural world provides many examples enabling us to see how that which superficially appears to be suffering and struggle are often essential for the well-being of the individual beings so "afflicted". Helping a butterfly struggling to emerge from its chrysalis means its wings will not develop. The butterfly will be crippled, never to fly and soon to die. The butterfly's long and exhausting struggle is essential to its becoming a strong and beautiful being. Perhaps in an analogous way, the insights we gain from accepting and overcoming suffering in our own lives helps us find its deeper significance—even in suffering from which it may seem we cannot recover, or in observing the apparently pointless suffering of others.

Experientially, I know for myself that suffering can ultimately be a blessing. My own experience has shown me that, once worked through, suffering leaves me better off than before. Some whom I know to have life-threatening diseases have also told me their illnesses were good for them in very profound ways. So I hesitate to judge suffering as simply bad, much as I also try to avoid it.

In rejecting death we retreat from life itself. The physical world is always in a state of change. Things come into being, manifest, and then pass away. In seeking to arrest that change we try to make the physical world something it is not. To preserve our physical existence against all change, we find ourselves unable to truly accept or appreciate it.

For suffering to be to the ultimate benefit of those who suffer, it must help create qualities which would not otherwise arise. Otherwise it is needless. Occasions for suffering are so many, and in some cases apparently go uncompensated, that any analysis here must be very tentative, for how can a human being know what qualities will arise from suffering that he or she has not undergone? Yet general patterns do arise.

Genuine care for others often seems to arise from our suffering, either directly or by empathic identification with the suffering of others. Often it first ignites the fire of care in our hearts. Until that fire is lit, we possess only the seed of a human spirit, closed in upon itself, without depth of understanding of either ourselves or others. The fire of care warms and softens that seed, enabling it to sprout. If I had never suffered, I doubt that I would either understand compassion or practice it to the limited extent that I do. It is our compassion that opens us up to loving others for themselves, fulfilling our humanity. I am not suggesting that what appears bad to us is not really bad. It is sometimes very bad. A compassionate person will regret former actions which hurt others. If those others are able ultimately to turn those actions to a good end, the person who caused the pain will still rightfully regret having caused that suffering. But while bad things do happen they are not meaningless, ultimately gratuitous, or cosmically bad. They do not leave irreducible stains on the fabric of existence.

Suffering is often, though not always, evidence of mistakes by ourselves or others. Every time a misstep occurs, an opportunity arises to take the dance into new directions of grace and beauty. If we fail, it is often because we do not know the steps. We stumble a lot. At least I do. But over time we become more sure-footed. Practice makes us into better dancers, each with our unique steps.

My argument is subject to a serious misinterpretation. Neither I nor anyone else can appropriately approach someone suffering a great evil, such as the murder of a loved one, and say that this was for their own or the victim's ultimate good. If I do not know what that greater good is I have no right to say such a thing, and I feel some trepidation in even discussing this issue abstractly. I know my argument has proven true for me, so far, and also for many others. But I would never tell someone who just suffered a great tragedy that this was a blessing. The event itself is still bad and those responsible deserve no thanks. The redeeming context has yet to make itself known. It is the worst kind of arrogance to volunteer these judgments to others, particularly concerning suffering we ourselves have not experienced.

My encounter with Divine love convinces me that somehow, and ultimately, good will come of any misfortune, but identification of that good is beyond my knowledge. I am not wise enough to grasp the greater pattern to which so much suffering by human and other beings contributes. I am happy enough occasionally to grasp the pattern of spiritual growth that suffering helps create in my own life. At the level of action, the suffering of others offers us an opportunity to act with love, wisdom, and compassion. At such times that is all that is truly appropriate because that is all that is truly in keeping with our understanding.

On Suffering as the Result of Malice

What of suffering deliberately caused by other human beings? If evil is anything at all, it is malice, a desire to cause suffering in others. But why does malice exist? In my experience, malice is perhaps the most powerful and painful result of ignorance. Errors of judgment by free beings are inevitable. Their existence makes it possible for malice to arise. Many of us have found our anger towards another suddenly evaporate when we learn we had been misinformed, or had misunderstood that person's actions. What if we had not learned we were wrong? In such cases, our anger could fester and grow. If in consequence we struck out at another verbally or in other ways, that person might strike back, confirming our opinion of their nastiness. The more we distance ourselves from others, the easier it becomes to treat them as alien to us. Psychologically, we do this even to our own selves.

Until our attitudes have been adjusted, our eyes and hearts opened, it is all too easy to feel resentment and anger. If we wallow in it, our comprehension of things can become so distorted that we can give ourselves up to malice. I know. I have done so myself. Many Pagans, myself among them, would say that some spirit entities apparently act from malice. There is no reason to believe that just because a being exists in a non-material way it must therefore be spiritually wise. When I die, why should that make me spiritually

Genuine care for others often seems to arise from our suffering, either directly or by empathic identification with the suffering of others. Often it first ignites the fire of care in our hearts. Until that fire is lit, we possess only the seed of a human spirit, closed in upon itself, without depth of understanding of either ourselves or others.

wiser than I am now? It may. It may not.

Furthermore, many Pagans believe that mind creates, or at least shapes, energy, and energy so influenced reflects the quality of mind which shaped it. We do not need bad spirits for very unpleasant things to manifest and happen on non-material levels. But the existence of malevolent humans and spirits is not evidence of a deep flaw in existence or of an ultimately demonic spiritual principle. We can follow how evil can arise from non-evil sources without outside intervention. All that is required is enough ignorance.

Conclusion

From a Pagan perspective we can now conclude that much suffering is unnecessary, in the sense that wise beings would neither inflict it nor suffer it. But there is still an irreducible core of suffering inherent to physical existence as such. This irreducible core stems from our existing as mortal material beings who must meet our physical and psychological needs in order to live, and who have limited understandings about how to do so, and therefore cannot help but make mistakes. Some people may regard these conditions as signs of fallenness. They are in fact necessary aspects of being a human being in this beautiful world, and the price is worthwhile.

Suffering is not evidence of radical failure. It goes with the package of life—and on balance the package is good. Indeed, often it is in confronting opposition and trouble that we develop genuine spiritual strength, depth, and beauty. And it is in this sense that our world is truly harmonious—with perfect love, perfect goodness, and perfect wisdom.

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At the editor's suggestion, along with the sources cited in this text, I have culled several additional titles from the bibliography of Pagans and Christians in the New Millennium *which I believe contribute in an important way to developing a solid philosophical and theological foundation for Pagan religion in the modern world. I have focused on books with which many readers may be unacquainted.*

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My favorite proverb is from Africa: "I am because we are." Certainly this article reflects the wisdom and creativity of more people than myself alone.

It exists because we are. I would like to thank Kim Atkinson, Richard Ely, Rowan Fairgrove, Anastasia Fischer, D. H. Frew, Anodea Judith, and Anna Korn. To all of them my most sincere gratitude.

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Hekate the Salvatrix in Late Antiquity

Hekate Soteira, A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature. by Sarah Iles Johnston. America Philological Association Classical Studies 21, Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1990, ISBN 1-55540-426-X hc, 1-55540-427-8 pb

This book is a revision of a dissertation by Sarah Iles Johnston, written while she taught in the Princeton Department of Classics. It is likely to intrigue persons interested in Hekate, in the development of late-stage Mediterranean magic and paganism, or in the Neoplatonic ideas of cosmic spheres and ensoulment

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Gods and peoples do not give each other up without a struggle. During the thousand years following the temples and plays of Classical Greece, when the Gods slept no further away than Olympus, inclination toward Neoplatonic philosophy made those Gods that survived transcendent, removing them to the celestial sphere above the moon. Hekate was a survivor. In the minds of many ordinary people, she always remained the chthonic goddess of the crossroads and source-protectress for witches; but to a select cadre of philosophers and theurgist-magicians, she became the intercessor between the celestial deities and the world of man, and furthermore, the Cosmic Soul from which each human's soul flowed.

From a complex field covering Neoplatonic and Middle Platonic concepts and a

... in Classical times Hekate acted as an escort and mediator between the world of man and the Underworld realms reached after death. She was favoured by the Orphics as the companion of Persephone. She might be petitioned for acts of magic and she controlled the chthonic daemons who did the magician's work ... She dealt with the liminal gateways and carried their key.

subset of religious philosophy labelled Chaldean by its first writings, Sarah Iles Johnston has selected the parts describing Hekate's transformation, the world view of this group, her identification with the Cosmic Soul, and the Oracles attributed to her. Johnston then follows the development of the Chaldean doctrine. To relate Johnston's work to historical, Neoplatonic, and magical thought, one might wish to consult writings such as the Greek magical papyri and a copy of the full collection of 226 fragmentary Chaldean Oracles, of which Johnston uses 95.

The Oracles may have been written—or collected—by Julian the Theurgist, who was reputed to have taken part in the campaigns of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius *ca.* 172 AD and said to have used magic against the enemy. He was the son of Julian the Chaldean, who may also have written part of the Oracles. Johnston avoids this argument, stating, "use of the name 'Julian(s)' indicates my agreement only with the premise that the Oracles emerged during the mid to late 2nd century and not necessarily with the premise that they were composed by one or both of the Julians."

Julian claimed that the doctrines contained within the Oracles were handed down directly by "the god" or "the Gods". Hekate and Apollo were the two deities usually credited. Hekate is named five times and may speak directly in up to 11 fragments. Hekate/Soul is discussed in 66 fragments. Other deities named are Eros (2x), Zeus (2x), Rhea, the nymphs, and Helios, once each. Unlike surviving oracles from Delphian Apollo, which often concern economic and political matters, Hekate's oracles seem largely advice encouraging the spiritual and theurgical progress of the believer.

The word and concept of "theurgy" emerged at this time, meaning something different from magic (*goeteia*). Theurgy required proper piety and intention, designed to purify and prepare the soul of the theurgist in a way that ordinary magic did not. The pious theurgist subordinated himself to the gods, allowing them to work upon him; the traditional magician attempted to work upon the gods. The theurgist approached the divine through sacred names and tools directly given by the gods in oracles or "planted" to be discovered by the believer. He was enjoined to avoid divination by physical means such as bird flight and to open his mind to the messages of the gods, delivered through speaking statues, mediums speaking with the deities' voices, or direct epiphanies of the gods.

Chaldea was located in southern Babylonia near the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates. The Chaldeans were a semi-nomadic people from Arabia whose city was Ur. In 720 BC they briefly held the throne of Babylon and under Nebuchadnezzar II they captured Judaea. The Persian invasion of 539 BC ended their dynasty. In the Book of Daniel and by many writers of antiquity the name "Chaldean" was applied to legendary Babylonian magi learned in astronomy, astrology and magic. It was a name of power given to a doctrine developed seven centuries later: no more direct relationship has been implied.

The Neoplatonist and Chaldean systems modelled their cosmos on Plato's 3rd century BC writings, especially *Timaeus, Philebus* and *Laws*. Johnston extends her research through the commentaries of Porphyry, Plotinus, Psellus, Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius.

How, then, did Hekate change? Even in Classical times Hekate acted as an escort and mediator between the world of man and the Underworld realms reached after death. She was favoured by the Orphics as the companion of Persephone. She might be petitioned for acts of magic and she controlled the chthonic daemons who did the magician's work Three-faced, she guarded the chaotic space of the triple crossroad, where travellers had to decide between two alternatives in order to continue their journey. She dealt with the liminal gateways and carried their key.

The Neoplatonists divided the cosmos into two realms: the divine celestial, which existed outward from the moon's orbit, and the worldly one of man, which lay beneath the moon. Since they were fond of tripartite systems, the Moon became the third, intermediary part. It became the location of Elysium and was identified with Hekate. Johnston says that verifiable associations between the Moon and Hekate do not survive from earlier than the first century, about two centuries after the evidence in which Moon is associated with Artemis. Hekate became two-faced instead of three. She looked upward and down, herself being the third part.

Above was the divine Father, who generated Ideas. His name is never given. Hekate's role was three-fold: through her womb she transmitted his Ideas and thereby structure to the physical world; she was both division and bond between the "Intelligible" and "Sensible" worlds above and below; and as the Cosmic Soul, she was the source of individual souls and enlivener of the physical world of man. Of the few traditional deities retained, she was the most accessible mediator between the increasingly transcendent male divinity and humans. The daemons or angels had moved up to the celestial realms—to control them, she must follow. But still she guided man through the uncertain journeys of dying and being born. Psellus said that she had the middle place among the gods and was the center of all power, also the source of dreams.

The second part of Johnston's book deals with Hekate's connection with the individual theurgist and also the role in the cosmogony for "angel", "iynx" and "daemon". The use of a top or iynx wheel, seeming to be a symbolic counterpart of the whirling iynx energy (the Idea of the Father God) is debated. There is also an Oracle in which Hekate gives

directions for making her telestika/statue, containing small lizards and wild rue. Finally, some Platonists divided the Cosmic Soul into two, creating a lower, irrational soul called Physis whose source was still Hekate and who carried her previous bad traits. Physis was associated with daemon-dogs capable of distracting the theurgist from his work.

Instructing the theurgist to recognize her epiphany, Hekate speaks:

If you say this to me many times,
you will observe all things growing dark,
For the curved bulk of the heavens disappears
and the stars do not shine;
The light of the Moon is hidden
and the Earth does not stand steady.
All things are revealed in lightning.
Having spoken these things,
you will behold a fire leaping skittishly
like a child over the aery waves;
Or a fire without form,
from which a voice emerges;
Or a rich light,
whirring around the field in a spiral.
But [it is possible] that you will see a horse
flashing more brightly than light,
Or a child
mounted on the swift back of a horse,
a fiery child or a child covered with gold,
or yet again a naked child;
Or even a child shooting arrows,
standing on a horse's back.
But when you see the sacred fire without form,
shining skittishly
throughout the depths of the Cosmos,
Listen to the voice of the fire.

Review by Kate Slater

In the opinion of the Pom editors, Ms Slater is a Canadian National Treasure.

Mything in action: new ethnicities, paganisms and English law.

Ethnicity, Law and Human Rights. by S. Poulter. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1998. hb, 391pp + bibliography, index, tables. ISBN 0-19-825773-2.

In this text Poulter considers the way in which the English legal system engages with a variety of ethnic groups, concentrating on a number of case studies. Although the focus of the work is ethnicity, rather than religious identity and practices, the case studies, as I shall discuss below, make this an important work for any student of the interaction between the law and religion in the United Kingdom jurisdictions. In this narrow review I wish to discuss some problems arising from Poulter's definition of ethnicity, in particular the problems his analysis poses to Pagans in the United Kingdom.

A concept of ethnicity is central to Poulter's discussion, but in developing it he departs from two obvious foundations for his discussion. At the very start of the text, he makes it clear that he favours legal analysis for its "clarity and precision of exposition in a subject often bedevilled by obfuscating sociological jargon, impenetrable to all save specialists in the subject" (p.1). His engagement with non-legal sources on ethnicity, accordingly, is fairly limited. He also departs from obvious legal sources on how to define ethnicity and ethnic groups, particularly the jurisprudence on the racial discrimination legislation. Instead, he favours a broader definition of an ethnic group as "a group of people differentiated from the rest of the community by racial origins or cultural background" (quoted on p.6). He relegates racial origins to the status of "merely ... the colour of their skin" (p.15), and clearly sees ethnicity as being a matter of cultural background. His emphasis on shared culture, and a common cultural heritage, leads him to discount the interests of groups, and hence of individuals, which do not possess these elements. This is particularly to be noted in relation to non-Gypsy travellers, although a brief reference to Paganism per se also needs to be discussed.

The only case-study which does not deal with a community clearly defined largely by a shared religion is that discussing "Gypsies: The Pursuit of a Nomadic Lifestyle" (ch. 5). To clarify this, the other case studies deal with Jews and ritual slaughter; Muslims and family law derived from *shari'ah;* Hindus and the Bhaktivedanta Manor Temple; Sikhs, beards and turbans; and Rastafarians, dreadlocks and cannabis. Although all of these deal with elements of ethni-city which are as much cultural as religious—if that is a sensible distinction—the importance of the shared religion is clear. The discussion of the importance of nomadic lifestyle to Gypsies does not share this characteristic. It is in this case-study that the interests of groups Poulter is prepared to exclude from ethnicity are most clearly compromised.

In his discussion of "attitudes of the majority community" (p.150), Poulter notes "Conflict between gypsies and the settled population appeared to grow during the 1980s and early 1990s, perhaps accentuated by the adverse publi-city attracted by the antics of 'New Age Travellers' who were often mistakenly linked in the public mind with ethnic gypsies." (p.152). In a later discussion of the government reactions of the 1980s, he returns to this theme—"in 1986 the law of trespass was strengthened, following the antics of a convoy of 'hippies' who were attempting to make a pilgrimage to Stonehenge ... although this new statutory offence was aimed directly at bands of 'hippies' rather than at gypsies, it was clearly liable to be used against the latter in suitable circumstances" (p.166-7). In discussing a shift in government policy in the 1990s he stresses that "the advent of significant numbers of 'New Age Travellers' had complicated the problem" (p.173), in particular because members of the majority community tended to "attribute the behaviour of one group to the other ... Certainly, 'New Age Travellers' have a very tarnished image among Conservative voters in rural areas and their antics must have contributed to pressure on the Government for decisive action to be taken to curb unlawful encampments" (p. 174).

There is a tension between the discussion Poulter gives these two nomadic groups, and he seeks to resolve it, in passing, by a strong assertion. "While 'New Age Travellers' and 'hippies' also seek to follow a different pattern of life from that of the bulk of the majority population, they do not constitute an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority group. Hence, while their preference for a nomadic existence is certainly entitled to respect in a democratic society, specific differential treatment in law to preserve a distinctive cultural tra-

... there seem to be strong connections between conceptual problems posed by Rastafarians and Pagans to the legal system. As Poulter notes "to describe Rastafarianism as a religion when it is of such an amorphous nature and lacks any authoritative doctrine or controlling institutional framework may ... give rise to practical difficulties of formal recognition ...." (p.341-2). In the case of Rastafarianism, Poulter does not see these problems as being insurmountable ...

dition is not required in their case, as it is for gypsies" (p.192).

There are two important elements to draw out from this defence. Firstly, Poulter's approach towards ethnicity allows him to blur "religious minority group" and "distinctive cultural tradition". Although in this quote being a religious minority group can show possession of a distinctive cultural tradition, is there not a danger that the absence of a cultural tradition might impact adversely on the treatment of a religious minority? I return to this point below. Secondly, while I would agree that New Age Travellers and hippies do not constitute a religious minority group, I would argue that Poulter is asking the wrong question.

An analogy might be drawn between a nomadic lifestyle and the consumption of wine. If we pose the question whether "those who consume wine" are a religous minority, the answer would seem to be no. A wide variety of people consume wine for a wide variety of purposes, including social and recreational ones. Dealing with this question might lead us to consider that prohibition of wine would not raise any questions relating to religious minorities. If the question we pose, however, is whether one particular, specific, group of those who consume wine, for instance Catholics in communion, constitute a religious minority, the answer would seem to be yes. Thus, prohibition of wine would raise questions relating to a religious minority. Poulter asks the general question, rather than unpacking the different individuals, and groups of individuals, he treats under this term. I would not argue that all 'New Age Travellers' adopt a nomadic lifestyle as part of their religious practices and identities; I would not argue that all 'New Age Travellers' who actually identify with a New Age spirituality, a Pagan spirituality, or both, adopt a nomadic lifestyle as part of their religious practices and identities. I would argue that Poulter has neglected the possibility that at least some of this group treat their nomadic life as as central to their religious life, as some Gypsies to their cultural life. In the quote above, some of the 'New Age Travellers' may well have been on a religious journey to Stonehenge.

Paganisms are dealt with extremely briefly in the chapter dealing with Rastafarians, which is unfortunate, as there seem to be strong connections between conceptual problems posed by Rastafarians and Pagans to the legal system. As Poulter notes "to describe Rastafarianism as a religion when it is of such an amorphous nature and lacks any authoritative doctrine or controlling institutional framework may, as we shall see, give rise to practical difficulties of formal recognition by the state and its bureaucracy" (p.341-2). In the case of Rastafarianism, Poulter does not see these pro-blems as being insurmountable in recog- nising them as a group entitled to consideration as such. Additionally, he rejects judicial opinion suggesting that Rastafarianism lacks sufficient shared history to be an ethnic group — "To regard a sixty year history as insufficient for the construction of an ethnic group is to disregard modern anthropological perceptions of ethnicity and ethnic identity as concepts which can be fashioned, moulded, and even invented to suit particular social circumstances" (p.354). The application of this approach to Paganisms seems clear. Unfortunately, the only reference to Paganisms in this chapter, and indeed the text as a whole, is at best ambiguous. In discussing religious identities and practises of prisoners, he notes "There is sufficient evidence of the usual attributes of a religion, including reverence for a deity, to warrant such recognition, and even Pagan prisoners are now permitted to record their religion officially" (p.364). It may be that Poulter implicitly recognises that some of the structural aspects of Rastafarianism which pose problems to the legal system are even more pronounced in Paganism. This is a preferable reading to a suggestion that Rastafarianism is a more authentic religion than Paganism.

In conclusion, I would suggest that a number of problems are demonstrated by Poulter's discussion of ethnicity. Firstly, ethnicity might seem an attractive concept with which to secure fundamental human rights for minorities within the United Kingdom jurisdictions. As it has been read by Poulter, who it should be noted takes a considerably more liberal view of the term than the courts, it may encompass some religious communities, but exclude others. The protection of the rights of minority ethnic groups is important, but it is not synonymous with the protection of religious rights. Secondly, even as thoughtful a writer as Poulter, well aware of the dangers of structural and doctrinal demands imported from well-estalished religious systems, can be led into discounting individual rights through too broad a focus on the religious community and the religious organisation. Both of these problems are of general importance, but particularly acute when considering the position of Pagans within the United Kingdom.

It may be hoped that the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into United Kingdom law will enhance the protection of individual religious rights, and avoid the problems flowing from an ethnicity analysis of this type. Certainly, the jurisprudence on the religious liberty guarantees of the Convention holds out some hope. But it should be

noted that, even in the act of incorporation, the United Kingdom legal system stresses organisational and group religious rights. The probable final draft of the instrument incorporating the ECHR into United Kingdom law provides that "if a court's determination of any question arising under this Act might effect the exercise by a religious organisation (itself or its members collectively) of the Convention right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, it must have particular regard to the importance of that right" (Human Rights Bill, clause 13). It is to be hoped that legal protection of the rights of religious organisations, and religious communities, will not eclipse protection of the rights of the individual religious believer.

Review by Peter W. Edge

Professor Edge is the Senior Lecturer in Law and researches law at the University of Central Lancashire, in the UK. His main interests are the interaction of law and religion in the UK, and under pan-European bodies such as the European Convention on Human Rights. He has published a number of articles on the topic, including a piece dealing with Paganisms in the Journal of Civil Liberties. *He is currently working on a book in the area, due for release by Kluwer in 2000.*

READERS' FORUM

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to the nature of any and all reality as being nothing more nor less than human subjective self-expression and projection. And on the other hand, in some more progressive pockets of postmodern thought, one finds a renewed appreciation of the co-participation of ecological and cosmological elements. The new physics, for example, instructs us that what we discover depends on where and when and how we look; that there is something else out there beyond human discourse. How does this relate to the questions of being self-aware about our own theoretical assumptions, and the manipulations of data to fit pre-conceived theories? How do we shift this debate beyond the overly deconstructionist claim there is no there there, and the overly empiricist claim that the scientific method produces objective data that are value-free?

Philosophers of science advise us, "all data are theory-laden." I doubt anyone ever has absolute truth; neither humans nor human institutions are infallible; and we need to keep open minds. I also think we can settle into probable conclusions that are subject to later amendment or refutation. The significant question for truth-seekers then becomes how do we constitute shared thresholds of plausibility and probability? I want to not just debate facts with archaeologists, but to dialogue about theoretical frameworks and primary assumptions. To some extent, all humans "manipulate" or rather construct data within theoretical and philosophical frameworks. But what allows us to change our *systems of thought* to see reality in a clearer way?

Contrary to what some of Gimbutas' critics contend, she did not practice archaeology self-identified as a feminist but as a scientist. She was not a goddess-worshipper seeking evidence for her contemporary beliefs. She became an expert in studies of the European bronze age typified by bronze weapons, mass graves and other evidence of widespread warfare. The contrasting material from Neolithic excavations surprised her, and she had no explanation for it. After years of carefully studying over 30,000 artifacts from 3,000 Neolithic sites (she did not claim all the artifacts were female, but that there was a preponderance of female and animal images; Gimbutas 1974:11; 1989:175), she became especially intrigued by the symbolic markings. Instead of dismissing them as random scribbles or arbitrary decorations, she began to notice correlations among the distinctive signs and kinds of objects they inscribed. She sought some explanation for the correlations of signs with figurines, while recognizing the importance of context for interpretation. She gradually began to formulate her view of this proto-writing as sacred script, the stylized female sculptures as goddesses, and the artistic, relatively peaceful pre-Indo-European societies as a goddess civilization. She acknowledged male gods. She saw the bull and the snake as polyvalent symbols carrying multiple meanings, including both male and manifestations occur as a gift of grace, I suspect it is because a limi-ted awareness cannot on its own encounter the unlimited. In such experiences we directly experience the context within which we exist, a context which is perfect and loving. The Divine takes joy in loving. The more beings to love, the greater the joy.

Classical philosophers would challenge such a statement as supposedly implying an incompleteness on the part of the Ultimate. They assumed that all possible value can be actualized in an ultimate being all by itself. Not only does this view beg the question of why anything else exists, it also implies that perfect love is uninvolved with its beloved. But Charles Hartshorne, among others, has persuasively argued this is an error (1984: 27-32). Unconditional love is most fulfilled when the beloved is also fulfilled. To care about another is to be changed by that other. The more the beloved is fulfilled in love, the more delight to the lover. So it makes little sense to argue a perfect being is less perfect because its perception of its well-being can be influenced by the circumstances of others. Tofemale connotations of divinity.

Given the enormity of her research and analyses, I say Gimbutas deserves to have her interpretations and theory critiqued within an atmosphere of collegial respect, and not disdainfully dismissed as "highly subjective speculation." Are we conversely supposed to think of J. Couvin's theory characterizing Neolithic populations as "people of the bull" as objective and not biased toward male dominance and aggression? Gimbutas' explanation of the data seems plausible and acceptable to me, not simply on the basis of her prodigious intellectual knowledge and methodology of archaeomythology, but by appeal to another epistemology from my own field of philosophy—the Socratic dialectic method of truth-seeking, which is not, as caricatured, a "feel-good epistemology"—although I might want to argue another time it is in part an erotic epistemology. Socratic dialogue is a means for mutually respecting truth-seekers to engage in a conversation that moves them from the initial level of mere opinion (usually under-informed and prone

to biased misinformation), to a careful consideration of empirical data, to the level of theoretical explanation, to the level of dialectical debate about primary theoretical assumptions, and beyond this to a place of intuition (deep mind) or visionary experience where one senses an apprehension of primal reality (although not in absolute terms). What is the universe and what does it mean in relation to us, and we in relation to it, and what does this have to do with the particular questions we are asking? At this point, one is not yet finished. The dialogue-in-process then returns from a sense of universal reality to engage in further discussion of first principles, then again to a comparison of theories, then again to facts, before rendering a standpoint.

I addressed my comments about Gimbutas to archaeologists because I was hoping to engage more scientifically minded colleagues in a conversation about the epistemological factors of how we claim to know what we eventually choose to claim to know. I brought in the Socratic dialectic not because I believe it is the only way or necessarily the best way of knowing, but because it is a good way to move the complex question of truth-seeking beyond the simply opinionated and empirical levels. If I could continue in direct dialogue with Gimbutas' critics, we might point out to each other some of the specific ways the other side may misread fact to fit theory. Some distortions might simply be the result of insufficient information. I probably do not know the history of the discipline of archaeology as closely as Brian Hayden. But my view parallels the criticism of Greek archaeologist Nanno Marinatos who writes, "there has been a tendency to marginalize religion by the positivistic school of New Archaeology … [I]f we reduce the study of culture to pottery classification and data quantification (with some spice from the socioeconomic sphere) the scope of the humanist may be lost to that of the pseudo-scientist" (1993: 10). I know the technical archaeological definitions of cultural evolution and civilization; and I still think Gimbutas' theory of European origins and her (yes, revolutionary) re-definition of civilization provide us with information about a different kind of civilization and pattern of cultural evolution than the technical ones currently prevailing, which are worth considering fairly. Neolithic and bronze age Crete prior to the Mycenaean invasions of 1450 BC, for example, show us the possibility of another way to understand cultural evolutionary stages, and how to live in an advanced, complex and more balanced society with hierarchies of actualization, not domination (Eisler 1987).

Some disputes regarding empirical facts are not simply amenable to further discussion of facts alone. For example, Hayden argues for the presence of male dominance by referring to the notable male with the gold penis cup. But without more discussion of theories of sex and gender past and present, how would we know if it is more plausible to interpret him as a dominant male, or perhaps as an early example of male homosexuality instead? One needs to move beyond the level of fact to the larger level of theory. Gimbutas did not ignore the evidence of warfare, fortifications, and chieftain graves with sacrificed women, children and animals, but came to believe they were more plausibly explained by a theory of incursions of Proto-Indo-Europeans rather than by a theory of internal cultural change.

As a feminist, I am especially interested in dialogue about what different theories of gender might be involved in the controversy around Gimbutas' work. Why do scholars like Hayden, Ruth Tringham ("Households with Faces: The Challenge of Gender in Prehistoric Architectural Remains" in: *Engendered Archaeology,* eds. Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, Cambridge USA, 1991: 13), or Larry Osborne ("The Women Warriors" in: *Lingua Franca,* Jan. 1998) assume Gimbutas claims women in Old Europe dominated men—despite her assertions to the contrary that Old Europe was egalitarian and not a matriarchy? Is the "alternative" list Richard Smoley recommends really so alternative, or just more about the men-have-always-and-everywhere-been-dominant-and-warlike? From my vantage point, some of the authors he mentions, while interesting in respect to detail, represent the same old story when it comes to gender frameworks. To me, C. Christ's *Rebirth of the Goddess,* G. Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy,* H. Haarman's *Early Civilization and Literacy in Europe,* R. Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade* and *Sacred Pleasure,* J. Marler's *From the Realm of the Ancestors,* and Starhawk's *Truth or Dare* are of more value both in regard to detail and the reframing of gender relationships.

After years of carefully studying over 30,000 artifacts from 3,000 Neolithic sites … [Gimbutas] became especially intrigued by the symbolic markings. Instead of dismissing them as random scribbles or arbitrary decorations … She gradually began to formulate her view of this proto-writing as sacred script, the stylized female sculptures as goddesses, and the artistic, relatively peaceful pre-Indo-European societies as a goddess civilization. She acknowledged male gods. She saw the bull and the snake as polyvalent symbols carrying multiple meanings, including both male and female connotations of divinity.

I find it ironic to be charged with fundamentalism, when it seems opponents of Gimbutas are even more attached to their deeply held beliefs as the one and only way. For example, Hayden's comment that "the only method that has so far proved to be of any reliable value is the scientific method." Gimbutas' intuitive ability to discover an internal coherence in the symbol system and spiritual ideology of the peoples of Old

Is the "alternative" list Richard Smoley recommends really so alternative, or just more about the men-have-always-and-everywhere-been-dominant-and-warlike? From my vantage point, some of the authors he mentions, while interesting in respect to detail, represent the same old story when it comes to gender frameworks. To me, C. Christ's Rebirth of the Goddess, G. Lerner's Creation of Patriarchy, H. Haarman's Early Civilization and Literacy in Europe, R. Eisler's The Chalice and the Blade and Sacred Pleasure, J. Marler's From the Realm of the Ancestors, and Starhawk's Truth or Dare are of more value both in regard to detail and the reframing of gender relationships.

Europe is neither mere speculation nor a projection of wishfulness. Her theory was formulated in reference to the data and their interconnections that persisted through millennia and across vast geographical regions. She herself only later came to appreciate its greater significance for our own time.

My desire for a more gender-balanced, nature-balanced, peaceful, prosperous and artistic future does not depend on the acceptance or rejection of Gimbutas' theory of European origins. Never the less, like so many others, I draw inspiration from the artifacts of Old European art with their wonderful images of women and goddesses, men and gods, and shamanic zoomorphs, as well as from the relatively peaceful, egalitarian, nature-embedded and spiritual ways of life manifested there. We also draw inspiration from Gimbutas' multi-dimensional approach and discoveries which can help us to resacralize both women and men, to honor our interconnectedness with the rest of nature, and to choose cooperation instead of aggression as our primary and preferred means of interaction.

I wish I could address more of the points raised, but this must suffice for now. In the spring I will be team-teaching a course with Joan Marler that carefully addresses the controversy surrounding Gimbutas' work. For more discussion of these issues, please check the California Institute of Integral Studies' website, Women's Spirituality page, at www.ciis.edu; or email me at marak@ciis.edu. Blessings!

Jenny Blain replies:

Thanks to Mara Keller for her responseregarding the Gimbutas article. I found some of her clarifications very helpful in appreciating her position. However, there are a couple of issues over which I feel rather uneasy.

I'm not an archaeologist. The points I'm addressing concern the positioning of Gimbutas and her work as (a) pioneering but disregarded, and (b) postmodernist. The first I mentioned briefly earlier and, as I said, Hutton deals with it in more detail in his 1997 Antiquity paper. Brian Hayden in his article noted that Gimbutas' construction of 'Old Europe' and Kurgan invaders was for some time, and may, he says, still be, the predominant view. As for the second—it seems to me that central to postmodernist thinking is the distrust of metanarratives that Lyotard speaks of. Yet what is Gimbutas' construction of Old Europe and its overthrow by bloodthirsty invaders—which has become a central tenet of some forms of feminist goddess spirituality—if not a metanarrative? This is why I maintain that Keller's claims based on Gimbutas, and Gimbutas' method of comparative analysis, really cannot be seen as allied to a postmodern understanding.

However, the concept of applying gendered goddess-centred interpretations is very much compatible as an experimental/intuitive interpretation within specific contexts, but not as 'Truth,' not as metanarrative. Acknowledging gender is crucially important—and so is acknowledging that today's gender processes are not hard and fast, are culturally and sociohistorically arising, and that our interpretations are formed from these processes of today, one way of another. So for me, a postmodernist understanding would put the emphasis on the multiple ways that we see and use the material now and how diverse interpretations form part of that. As far as I can see as a non-archaeologist, there's quite a lot of this going on, and while this is indeed contested terrain we're not exactly still in the 1970s. (And even then there were alternative voices.)

How would Keller view the work of (for instance) Ian Hodder, who admits outright that among the hardest aspects of his work were recognizing and jettisoning both his own double standard (that elaborate female symbolism constituted a problem to be explained either in terms of women having power or women being powerless, whereas elaborate male symbolism was unproblematic), and a (residual, positivist) desire for certainty about these gender questions. He speaks of adoption of a feminist critique leading to a recognition of complex interrelationships between people, gender, relations of production, with the intervention of cultural values and representational systems, themselves constructed historically and specifically. From this he concluded that he "needed to return to the Neolithic example and start again by not assuming that there was one type of power. I needed to accept that there were different types of power in society, many cross-cutting and multivalent—to approach the question of the subordination of women in the Neolithic by realizing, first that the question was complex and multivalent and, second, by trying to understand the representation of men and women as contextually constructed and contextually meaningful" (Ian Hodder, *Theory and Practice in Archaeology,* London: Routledge, 1992: 259).

So, rather than this debate of letters

which is heading into the 'Is so!' 'Is not!' realms, wouldn't it be nice to see people writing about some of these specific, contextualized interpretations, and how they can open new directions for our understandings of our own practices?

In faith, Jenny Blain.

Kate Slater comments:

After my frustrated mumbling from the other side of the Rockies about the endless nature of this debate, the Pom editors asked, "How much is enough?" and my answer is, "Take it further if the discussion is constructive, stop it if it's not." Constructive means that people on different sides of the various facets of argument are acknowledging and responding to specific items of interpretation. The biggest problem is apples and oranges—a controversy originating mostly between people in different disciplines who do not speak each other's language, practice each other's skills, or respect the sources that each other quote.

My personal response to all this is frustration because neither side is saying things I find specific enough to allow me a sense of "Here is some truth." My own field of science—geology—allows me to go to cliffs and decide for myself if I see what others have described there. Endless debates from diametrically opposed viewpoints leave me cold, but the core of my frustration is that I don't think, in my heart, that the matters debated are diametrically and immutably opposed.

What I would value more might look like this: Experts would choose three specific sites where they differ on interpretation of specific items found—perhaps material from a graveyard in one place, a midden in another, habitations in a third. They would evaluate the same items according to contemporary science and present their interpretations in an atmosphere of mutual courtesy. Perhaps each side might come some percentage of the way toward understanding the alternate interpretation. And perhaps observers like myself could get their own sense of what might be real and what is ideology.

I see in Dr Keller's letter a strong plea for continuing dialogue between archeologist and philosopher about interpretation. She says, "Some distortions might simply be the result of insufficient information." I think this is a pretty leafy olive branch. It would be nice to see something equally civil coming from the other side.

But if there is no hope for understanding, let it end. Keeping on is sado-equine necrophilia—beating a dead horse.

Kate Slater.

Pom readers who came in late may be interested in reading "The Neolithic Great Goddess" by Ronald Hutton in issue #2; the response by Mara Keller in #5; and the variety of replies to Prof Keller in #6.