

A Prayer for Peace

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Fall 2002

Introduction

Any revolution on the outside—any breaking down of current power structures—with no corresponding revolution in perceiving, being, and thinking, will merely further destruction, genocide, and ecocide. Any revolution on the inside—a revolution of the heart—which does not lead to a revolution on the outside, plays just as false

Derrick Jensen

There are women who walk all day every day hoping to find enough water for their children. Many people, all over the world are dying for lack of water, food and fuel for fire. Sometimes the water is poison, there is no food to be found, and it is brutally cold.

I have plenty of water today and so do my neighbors. I have a lot of firewood and I find myself trying not to think about the woman searching desperately to find something to burn to keep herself and her people warm. If only she would come by here, I'd give her what she needed. But it's not that simple, this is a complex problem. It is impossible to ignore the lack of justice and balance in today's world and it is difficult to know what to do about it.

It doesn't take ancient prophecy or channeled messages to tell anyone who is paying attention that there is something very wrong in the world today. We've seen and heard enough—we don't need more evidence. The real question is *what to do?* Many individuals and groups are acting to right the wrongs – cleaning up the water, feeding the hungry, meditating for peace, and working on other very important fronts. But until humans understand and are capable of feeling a connection to each other and all of nature, we will not get to the root of our problems and find the radical¹ solutions we need.

Human beings as a species are under the spell of a story which tells us that we are each separate individuals with individual minds and bodies hermetically sealed

off from all other individuals. As long as we are under the spell of this separatist story, we will not be capable of acting to bring balance and sanity to our world.

The stories we tell about the nature of the cosmos are called cosmologies. The current deeply ingrained cosmology tells of a divided world—an *us-them* world where *we* struggle against *them* in a wild and dangerous environment. But suppose our story were that life is a great symphony and each of us has our part to play. Imagine that we each realize and desire to play our part in the symphony, knowing that discord in one section creates disharmony in the whole. When we experience ourselves in the world connected with purpose, we each strive to find our unique part and our contribution to the whole.

As a philosopher, I feel that the answer to the question “What to do?” for me, is to do my best to tell a different story and help break the hold of the current nightmare. This is my prayer.

What is Reality?

Trudy the Bag Lady: “After all, what is reality anyway? Nothin' but a collective hunch. My space chums think reality was once a primitive method of crowd control that got out of hand. In my view, it's absurdity dressed up in a three-piece business suit.”

Lily Tomlin, in “The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe,” by Jane Wagner

The patriarchal materialistic story says that matter does not feel—it is seen, heard, touched, and tasted—but matter itself is inert, without any sense; it is a resource for mankind to use as he pleases. This story tells us that matter is an object and, by patriarchal logic, so is the body, woman, and nature.

The empiricist epistemology that usually goes hand-in-hand with a materialistic description of reality, holds that anything that is to count as valid knowledge must ultimately rest on information obtained through the physical senses. Feelings and intuitions are totally discounted.

Barbara Starrett points out that because women have been excluded, or chosen to exclude ourselves, from important roles in male structures, we have developed other ways of knowing, thinking, and being.

These ways can be described as emotional, direct, expressive, intuitive, immediate, subjective, relationship-centered. They contain an element that makes all the difference: emotional intensity. And it cannot be separated from the intellect in that process. They operate together, are experienced as the same thing...If we believe in peace, our feelings about the victims of war have a lot to do with the strength of our belief. We can have very good reasons for our Feminism, but unless we feel strongly about it, too, we are not likely to risk acting on it²

Emotional intensity combined with thought is a unique form of consciousness. When the physical, emotional, and mental natures are aligned or integrated, each playing its part in the personality, we begin to function from the soul level. When personality is attuned to the soul, emotion and intellect operate together creating a unique form of consciousness which encourages action. Unless we feel strongly, we are not likely to risk acting on our beliefs.

In order to break the hold of the collective trance we must act on our deepest feelings and intuitions, those experiences which, once we let them in, propel us to action. The deeper we go into our “true self” the more help we find and the more we understand that we are not alone. As Mary Daly points out, “We have allies who are eager to help us Realize our Integrity! Among these are the animals, trees, stars, and Elemental Spirits (commonly known as angels) who are our traveling companions across Time/Space.”³ The feelings and realizations which set one person on the path to expanded awareness are unique to her life and circumstances. Sometimes these awakenings come with religious or philosophical content. Others may be inspired by a great leader to embrace social and political causes. Many today come to consciousness when they see *and feel* their sister’s or brother’s suffering.

Because it has ignored the inner world, the worldview which dominates the Western world today created what Gregg Braden calls “the path of external technology.”

[This path] may be viewed as the dominant paradigm that has been, a path of external technology engineered outside of our bodies as extensions of ourselves interacting with the world around us. This path represents our cultural response to the challenges of life. Causes of life events are found “out there” in a world that is perceived as separate and distinct from our bodies. Therefore solutions are engineered “out there,” discounting the interplay between us and our world.⁴

Notice that Braden says, the dominant paradigm *that has been* – that is dominant no more, that no longer works as a description of reality. From the perspective of external technology, if we are sick it's because something external or outside of us has gotten inside; we've been attacked by viruses, bacteria, or bad vibes. Similarly, war is caused by bad leaders and poor economic policies. The “cure” for what ails us is to be found outside of ourselves at the drug store or the hospital or in new leaders and order imposed from without. In such a world, effectual prayer, visualization, and meditation, as well as other forms of “internal technology,” are dismissed as bogus. Of course, medical treatments are often very valuable and diplomacy, economic aid, and military action are sometimes necessary, but they are limited solutions to the ills that effect humanity today.

What's missing on earth at this time is what Doris Lessing called “the-substance-of-we feeling.”⁵ Humans, for the most part, have lost awareness of their essential interconnectedness or “we-ness.” Our most intimate relationships are often a struggle and couples seek out counseling and workshops to get in touch with their “true” feelings. The airways are filled with songs about losing love and finding love.

Love is a real thing like oxygen, it is within and all about us, without it humanity cannot live. I like the expression “substance-of-we-feeling” because relationship is about feeling--we know love by feeling. Human beings are in a hypnotic trance, half-asleep, because, as a species, we have ignored our feelings.

Emphasis on the external to the exclusion of the internal alienates us from our inner wisdom. Under the influence of the dominant paradigm we are alienated from ourselves, each other and nature. Suppose we truly felt our connection to the world around us and to other people as real. Suppose we felt the reality of the world situation in our bodies. Imagine experiencing the life of all people as your own regardless of where they lived on the planet, what their circumstances, or their religion, or the color of their skin. If *we* truly experienced a *we-feeling* in the very substance of our being the world be very different.

Many Americans watch the evening news—graphic reports of the latest suicide bombings, vivid scenes of poor and starving people, violence of every kind—and calmly eat dinner at the same time. This is possible because of the incredible

extent and depth of our alienation from each other and from our own feelings. Turning off the television is no solution either, it is all still happening. If we allowed ourselves to feel our connections to others all the time—opened ourselves empathetically to their reality—things would change.

The materialistic culture has offered artificial escapes from the pain of emptiness. From drugs to food, to sex, to expensive toys, to wealth and power, our society is worshipping/adoring false gods. As we tire of this, we begin to seek self-actualization, but until we awaken and understand that *escape is possible*, no one knows to seek the more obscure path. Humanity has entered the outer courtyard of the inner temple. In accepting “spirituality” as a buzzword for the 21st century, it acknowledges something deep and wonderful is astir.⁶

There is an escape from the modern materialistic culture, not one that is necessarily without struggle and conflict and disease, but a world where we are all equally important elements in a vast embodied consciousness. Individual mystics, from all ages and walks of life, have taken “the more obscure path,” quietly in the background of the *dominant-paradigm-that-has-been*. But now it is no longer just individuals, now people form groups and communities, and new connections are being made in the collective mind. The Internet facilitates and symbolizes the collective consciousness that circles the globe and unites all life.

Philosophers call the study of being “ontology.” The *dominant-paradigm-that-was* held that there are two major types of being or existents, mind and matter, and these are not only distinct, but they are also entirely separate. This ontological separatism is a relatively recent philosophical position, and it describes the experience of people completely isolated, cut off from others and the world around them, and entirely alone with their own thoughts and feelings.

The ancients knew what anyone who interacts honestly with the natural world knows: “Matter itself tingles with the spark of spirit, and therefore nature, in all its forms and glory is sacred to its deepest roots.”⁷ As the *dominant-paradigm-that-has-been* loses its hold on the masses, more and more individuals break out of the collective trance and become aware of our relationship to the life within us and all about us. When a dominant paradigm breaks down, those using it to interpret their

experience and guide them in their lives, experience a loss. They lose their sense of reality and meaningfulness, often without knowing why.

Feminism

As radical feminists we must withdraw our energy from the institutions that fuel the “death machine,” not in hatred or spite, but for the purpose of self-actualization. We can never know or be ourselves within a world that does not value all of who we are—including our thoughts and feelings (i.e., our power).

Journal entry, fall 1977

Breaking through the hypnotic trance and authentically *being-in-the-world* (as opposed to *along-side-the-world*) involves encountering our own internalized oppression. Mary Daly describes these encounters as demons who block the various thresholds as we move through gateway after gateway into the deepest chambers of our Selves into the Background.

The demons who attempt to block the gateways to the deep spaces of this realm often take ghostly/ghastly forms, comparable to noxious gases not noticeable by ordinary sense perception. Each time we move into deeper space, these numbing ghostly gases work to paralyze us, to trap us, so that we will be unable to move further. Each time we succeed in overcoming their numbing effect, more dormant senses come alive. Our inner eyes open, our inner ears become unblocked. We are strengthened to move through the next gateway and the next. This movement inward/outward is be-ing. It is spinning cosmic tapestries. It is spinning and whirling into the Background.⁸

Shifting paradigms or moving into a new age is not merely a mental exercise; it requires courage and persistence. But as we enter upon the journey we find we have senses that have been numbed or are lying dormant. We discover our extended senses, our ability to hear the voice within, to communicate with animals and plants, and to see auras. Too often, without proper guidance, when people wake up to the fact that the dominance paradigm is no longer feasible, they feel lost, crazy, confused, disoriented, and sometimes violent. The world as it was is no more and, for many, there is nothing to put in its place. The ancients provided mystery schools to guide people on their journey to authentic being. Today, new mystery schools are forming in the background of the collapsing *paradigm-that-has-been*.

Our authentic being is to be found in the background of the dominance culture. This was experienced by many in Women's Studies programs in the 1970's and perhaps today as well. In my experience, the college went on with business as usual but in the background, behind the scenes, was where the most exciting and positive learning took place. It was as if there was a boring play on center stage getting all the attention while the real meaningful life was lived behind the scenery.

In the background we have access to original female energy which Daly calls "gynergy." Gynergy is "the female energy which both comprehends and creates who we are; that impulse in ourselves that has never been possessed by the patriarchy."⁹ The Background is where Sophia has been hiding through the centuries of patriarchal domination and it is in the time/space of the Background where auras of plants, planets, stars, animals and all other animate beings connect.¹⁰

The self-actualization of individual women is a necessary element in the awakening of wisdom as an active force in the outer world. Today both men and women are feeling the effect of the efforts of feminists past and present—like ripples in the pond created by a pebble, the circle has widened, and more and more people are stepping outside the box created by the patriarchal materialistic mindset, and recognizing the feelings in our bodies as valid forms of knowing.

In addition to its exoteric work of bringing about changes in laws and social customs, the feminist movement has strengthened the connectedness and trust among women. It provides environments where women can discover who we are from the inside out—without external definition. The women's movement, in its many forms and disguises, has encouraged the return of women's wisdom, and made room for the planet herself to be heard. Once we realize that we exist in our own right, undefined by the dominant culture, we move, according to Mary Daly, into "The State of Natural Grace."

Natural Grace is a quality of the soul of one who is moving out of the unnatural state of captivity and contamination. It is often experienced as a gift, which may take the form of a flash of intuition, or a heightened sense of beauty—as of a sunset or glistening grass or the branches of a tree tossed by the wind. It may be found in acts of lovemaking, composition of music, interchange of energy that takes place in conversation with a friend.¹¹

Grace “is the innate source of our capacities to clearly intuit, think, will, sense, imagine, remember, feel, heal, teach ourselves and others, and act consistently with our knowledge and desires.”¹² Our natural powers are not recognized by the *dominant-paradigm-that-has-been* but new paradigms are emerging as the old ways of knowing and being collapse.

Paradigm Shift

There is consciousness in all that exists on Earth, down to the molecules in your fingertips, and it is all meant to work together. ...The difficulty with Earth at this time is that humans believe they are separate from all the energy that is here to work together. Your current belief in separate parts prevents you from seeing and accessing the wholeness of existence.

Barbara Marciniak

The idea that psyche or soul permeates nature and provides direction for all life can be traced back to the beginnings of Western philosophy, and has precursors in many prehistorical cosmologies such as those found in shamanic cultures. It is found in the ancient Greek notion of “entelechy.” The word ‘entelechy’ derives from the Greek words meaning, “complete” or “in perfection” (*en-teles*) and “having” (*ekein*)¹³ Entelechy means having or fulfilling an essential, dynamic purpose. Entelechy is what propels us to actualize our essence. It can be thought of as the “form” or organizing principle of the body. The term originates with Aristotle, who uses it to mean the essence of a thing being fully realized. Entelechy is innate and inherent in all substances, or processes, and acts from within to bring about change and development. For example, the entelechy of an acorn is to become an oak tree; it is the entelechy of a baby to be a grown-up; it is every individual’s entelechy to be uniquely who she or he is. This is what Teilhard de Chardin calls the “within of things,” a psychic, subjective, feeling, complement to the external forms and energy of atoms, cells, plants, and animals.

In normal circumstances, entelechy combines the sense of a given purpose, with the sense of the freedom to shape the unfolding of our unique purpose. We are not blindly driven or determined. It is as if we were each dealt a specific hand of

cards, and our task in life is to exercise our consciousness in how we play our hand.

Christian de Quincey compares this to the image of a sailing ship:

The movement of the ship is constrained by its particular bulk, by the turbulence of the waves, by the ocean currents, and by the caprice of the winds—yet as captain and crew of our own ships (our self-consciousness blending with our unique entelechy or essence) we do have choice and power in the unfolding of our destiny. We must blow with the winds of fate; nevertheless, we have the option for what Buckminster Fuller called “trim-tabling”: making slight adjustments to the rudder that can result in major shifts of direction.¹⁴

We are at that point now. The seas are so rough that “slight adjustments to the rudder,” may not be enough. Those who choose the path of peace may experience the chaos and destruction along with everyone else but we must seek a point of peace within ourselves and act from that place. Carol Parrish uses the metaphor of the ship at sea in the midst of a tremendous storm to talk about the situation of humanity today.

Remember that deep deep deep in the sea, the sands rest and it’s calm there. The life in the water goes deep when there is a storm, and here in the calmness life waits.... I want to suggest that we have to go to the deep calm place, we have to go within. Here within we can live in a gentle way taking action as we need, knowing all is in divine order. Remember, the soul is the mother of the personality, she watches over, she is the protectress.

We need to find our tool, our way, whatever that may be, to figure out how we are going to stay in the center, and be poised, knowing that our ship is going through high waves, and that we are on the ship, on the planet, as the planet has to experience new currents, new thought forms, new beings of consciousness. Humanity is enduring a period of time to awaken other intelligences that already are held within us, it’s not just a matter of something out there doing it to us and for us, it is to stimulate the intelligence held within us so that we know the many levels within ourselves.¹⁵

By going within, inner eyes open, inner ears unblocked, we find the intelligences held within us. The intelligence of our physical, emotional, and mental natures awaken and began to work together and we began to function from the soul level where we realize our part in the divine order.

As more and more people join in the deep calm place in group meditation, we meet the soul of the world, Sophia, the architect or ordering principle of creation.

Whereas Sophia has been ignored in modern Western philosophy, in Chinese philosophy, the deep and abiding consciousness and wisdom that is Sophia pervades all that is.

Today many Westerners are familiar with the Chinese concept of *chi* because of the introduction of Chinese healing, meditation, and exercise techniques. *Chi* is closely related to the Western concept of matter/energy.¹⁶ But in keeping with the denial of the “within of things,” its complementary concept, *li*, is usually ignored. In Chinese philosophy *chi* does not exist without *li*, the universal organizing principle or intrinsic patterning of *chi*. *Chi* or matter-energy alone without the organizing action of *li* is impossible; it could achieve no form or order and would tend to run down into chaos.¹⁷

According to this worldview, the universe is not only capable of self-organization, but of realizing the highest expressions of human consciousness:

Composed of matter-energy (*chi*) and ordered by the universal principle of organization (*li*), it is a universe which, though neither created nor governed by any personal deity, was entirely real, and possessed the property of manifesting the highest human values (love, righteousness, sacrifice, etc.) when beings of an integrative level sufficiently high to allow of their appearance, had come into existence.¹⁸

As we become more integrated, with mind and body functioning as partners, we bring into expression ethical qualities and virtues. As self-aware, soul-infused beings, we are able to direct our attention (energy or *chi*) to certain qualities such as *peace* or *freedom* by holding it as a seed-thought in meditation, and thereby allow the appearance of peace or freedom in the world. This is the practice of Agni Yoga, the yoga of ethics—a powerful strategy for the peace activist today.

The modern materialistic view conceives of spirit and matter as separate and often in opposition, not as partners mutually creating a world. The psyche or soul is characterized as struggling with the body, trying to impose and maintain order and often attempting to escape from the imprisoning restrictions of the body. These problems do not exist within Chinese philosophy. Everything is made of *chi* according to the organizing patterns of *li*. “As *li* produces more complex patterns of

chi, matter-energy ascends the organic hierarchy¹⁹ until the threshold of self-reflective consciousness is reached. Thus, all human mentality is the result of an evolutionary process.”²⁰

In the twelfth century the neo-Confucian philosopher Chu Hsi expressed this as follows:

Someone asked whether consciousness is an inward stirring of something spiritual or due to activity of *chi*? The philosopher answered, “It is not entirely a question of *chi* because the *li* of consciousness exists beforehand. *Li* alone is not conscious, but when *li* is combined with *chi*, then consciousness arises. Take, for example, the flame of this candle: it is because it receives so much good wax that we receive so much light.”²¹

DeQuincey points out that when Chu Hsi says, “the *li* of consciousness exists beforehand,” he is referring to the *logically* prior necessity of *li*; he does not mean that *li* precedes *chi* in time—chronologically.”²² In this context, *li* is analogous to *Sophia*, or Wisdom, who is described as being “created first...before the earth itself...when there was yet no ocean...before the mountains were settled in their place, before the hills.”²³ “Before time he created me, and until the end of time I shall endure.”²⁴ “Sophia moves more easily than motion itself; she is so pure she pervades and permeates all things.”²⁵ “She spans the world in power from end to end, and gently orders all things.”²⁶

Sophia is the wisdom or pattern of creation and she pervades and permeates all things. She is the entelechy within us and all of creation. As the “order of all things,” Sophia may be compared to the *Tao* of Chinese philosophy. “Tao may be understood as the Great Pattern, a way or tendency within which the innumerable conglomerations of *chi* are ordered into subsidiary patterns according to *li*.”²⁷ Everything moves, acts, and reacts, and changes according to the Tao, or we might say, according to Sophia.

The world is out of order. We are experiencing a time of great change and chaos. The old separatist and materialistic worldview is no longer feasible. The world as we have known it is over. To prepare for the new we must look deep within ourselves for wisdom, for Sophia.

So May It Be

Notes

- ¹ The word 'radical' means roots, origins, and essences. Today's problems are so complicated and many layered that we require truly radical solutions.
- ² Barbara Starrett, *I Dream in Female: The Metaphors of Evolution and The Metaphor of Power*, (Glouster, MA: Cassandra Press, 1976), 23.
- ³ Mary Daly, *Quintessence*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 225.
- ⁴ Gregg Braden, *Walking Between The Worlds: The Science of Compassion* (Bellevue, WA: Radio Bookstore Press, 1997) xiii-xiv.
- ⁵ Doris Lessing, *Shikasta* (New York: Random House, 1979).
- ⁶ Carol Parrish Harra, "Sharing with Carol," *Sparrow Hawk Villager*, July-September 2002. Emphasis mine.
- ⁷ Christian deQuincey, *Radical Nature* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002), 147.
- ⁸ Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 3.
- ⁹ Mary Daly, *Wickedary* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 77.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ¹¹ Mary Daly, *Quintessence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 225.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Christian deQuincey, *Radical Nature* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002), 250-252.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 251-252.
- ¹⁵ Carol E. Parrish-Harra, *End of The Era of Bargaining*. Sermon, Light of Christ Community Church, July 14, 2002. On line: www.sanctasophia.org
- ¹⁶ Since the introduction of relativity theory, it is generally accepted that matter and energy are two expressions of the same thing.
- ¹⁷ Christian de Quincey, *Radical Nature* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002), 253.
- ¹⁸ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China: History of Scientific Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 412, quoted in de Quincey, *Radical Nature*, 253-254.
- ¹⁹ An organic hierarchy is not separate from what is ordered. It is the "spiritual DNA," inherent in all that is.
- ²⁰ Christian de Quincey, *Radical Nature* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002), 256.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *The New Oxford Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) *Proverbs* 8, 22-25.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Ecclesiastes* 24, 9.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, *Wisdom* 7. 24.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, *Wisdom* 8, 1.
- ²⁷ Christian de Quincey, *Radical Nature* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002), 257.

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