

## WICCA AFTER STARHAWK

“Neo-Paganism, sometimes associated with feminism or homosexual affirmation, may be on the increase.”

—Robbins, *CULTS, CONVERTS AND CHARISMA*<sup>1</sup>

Since its publication on Hallowe'en 1979, *The Spiral Dance* has been the most popular book available on the theory and practice of Neopagan Witchcraft. Starhawk's writing style flows gracefully and is easy to read, whether she is rhapsodizing about the beauty of the Goddess and Her creations, explaining theological details, or looking forward to a future free from oppression, fear and want. The book has been used for fifteen years by those seeking a connection to modern Witchcraft, and has provided an entire generation of new Wiccans with a well-organized table of correspondences, dozens of short and easy to memorize spells and ritual elements and, based on the valid assumption that psychic skills can be learned, a graduated course of exercises that make up an internal course of psychic training.

Much of the success of *The Spiral Dance* derives from the popularity of Starhawk's vision of Witchcraft as a Goddess religion. North American Wicca had been moving in this direction since the early 1960s, on the assumption that in a culture like our own, where the concept of a feminine deity is virtually unknown, a theological system which is based a balance between the feminine and the masculine divine would have to devote at least a generation or two to the promotion of matrolatry. In this spirit, Starhawk defines Wicca as a Goddess-positive religion, speaking with great poetic fervour, not only of the Great Goddess, but of the Horned God of Wicca as well,<sup>2</sup> and rhapsodizing of a “world where the endlessly transforming, erotic dance of God and Goddess weaves radiant through all things, [while] we who step to their rhythm are enraptured with wonder and mystery of being.”<sup>3</sup>

Starhawk believes that all things, creators and created alike, are divine and worthy of veneration.<sup>4</sup> She extends this pantheism to the realm of ideas as well, seeing the complimentary value of, for example, the Eastern belief in the essential oneness of all and the Western tenet of the individuality of separate things.<sup>5</sup> Although she never mentions the contradictory behavior and moral ambivalence of the Gods in both Eastern cultures and Western antiquity, Starhawk does acknowledge that the divine contains both positive and negative attributes, and that the ancients experienced this paradoxical simultaneity of good and evil, friendly and terrible, as a form of unity.<sup>6</sup> Like the Taoists, Starhawk allows that this all-inclusive oneness is “polarized by two great forces, Female and Male, Goddess and God,” and in keeping with

the principles of Taoism (which is not mentioned by name), both Goddess and God “in their ultimate being are aspects of each other.” Neither “is ‘active’ or ‘passive,’ dark or light, dry or moist—instead, each partakes of all those qualities.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, from the very beginning of the book, the Goddess is represented not as the feminine polarity of the divine, but as the entire divine, the great Tao itself. Starhawk’s Goddess is “both poles of duality,” life and death, light and darkness.<sup>8</sup> She is the entire universe<sup>9</sup>—the material as well as the spiritual.<sup>10</sup> She is not only the feminine, she is the masculine as well.<sup>11</sup>

Because the masculine portion of the divine is contained within the natural, life-giving cycle of the feminine, it may be dark and diminishing, but it is not evil.<sup>12</sup> Starhawk imagines the God of Wicca as representing the power of masculine feelings, of untamed emotions, but never enacting violence, only serving the forces of life.<sup>13</sup> The powers of the Horned God are male, but exclusively positive, and everything a woman could hope that a man would be: “wild without being cruel, angry without being violent, sexual without being coercive, spiritual without being unsexed, and able to truly love.”<sup>14</sup> Invoked as “the Gentle Brother and the Rape Fighter,”<sup>15</sup> the God of Wicca never dominates, but rather surrenders, and through His power a man can better relate to his emotions and feelings<sup>16</sup> and “connect with his own nurturing qualities.”<sup>17</sup> Starhawk never mentions any value the Wiccan God might have for women.

Throughout the book, Starhawk presents the Craft as open to both women and men, invoking together the Goddess and the God<sup>18</sup> and celebrating with each other the sacred dance of creation.<sup>19</sup> She clearly states that a religion run by and for women would be no great improvement over one dominated by men, and that spiritual development depends on a willingness to celebrate differences and to engage with opposites, denying neither the feminine nor the masculine.<sup>20</sup> But while women, under Starhawk’s guidance, are expected to lead and direct Wiccan ceremonies in the name of the Goddess, men are apparently restricted to invoking the God.<sup>21</sup> For in spite of her emphasis on the positive, feminizing qualities of the Wiccan God, and her insistence that His characterization as the Horned One does not identify Him with anything evil or satanic, Starhawk is clearly ambivalent toward the masculine divine. While she tries her best to emphasize the positive nature of the God’s role in the pantheon of Wicca, she frequently represents Him as the force of death in contrast to the Goddess as the embodiment of the feminine life-force: the Goddess creating while the God destroys.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps it is this ambivalence that leads Starhawk to provide her readers with very little in the way of God-oriented liturgy. The God is very rarely mentioned in any of the book’s spells and exercises, and only occasionally in its rituals. Even traditional Wiccan ceremonial elements like the ‘Invocation to the Four Directions’<sup>23</sup> appear with all references to male deities and masculine attributes excised.

Men’s access to the Goddess is limited as well. Starhawk mentions the classic Wiccan admonition—that the Goddess will forever elude us until we

find Her within—but it is clear from the context that she is applying this principle only to men, assuming that women would experience no such difficulty.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the book, Starhawk uses the female pronoun exclusively. In one footnote she explains that “Generically, Witches are female—this usage is meant to include males, not to exclude them,” and in another she states: “An initiate may be female or male ... I use ‘she’ inclusively to simplify questions of grammar.”<sup>25</sup> In fact, Starhawk wonders on several occasions just what men might see in the Craft. If must be difficult, she believes, for men to give up traditional religion for Wicca, since the Craft has so much more to offer women in terms of empowerment and positive leadership roles.<sup>26</sup>

Starhawk speaks out very firmly against the patriarchal religions of the past for promoting what she calls the ‘Chosen People Syndrome.’ She reproaches those who consider members of other persuasions besides their own to be harmful or evil, and who therefore seek spiritual purity in the avoidance of others.<sup>27</sup> But on the same page she not only recommends the formation of women-only space—on the grounds that women need to withdraw in safety from all the harm that men (and, apparently, men alone) have caused them—but also praises women-only covens as having a “special intensity” and women who have no sexual contact with men as having “very special power.”<sup>28</sup>

Modern Wicca is well-known, even notorious, for its enthusiastic embrace of sexuality in most of its known forms, as well as for a spirited sense of playfulness, a dedication to mythological scholarship, and a strict ethical system. Starhawk’s version of Witchcraft seems quite stern and humourless by comparison, and the willingness of her followers to bend the hard-won rules of careful magical practice and balanced psychological well-being in the service of a political agenda is a source of some concern in the broader Neopagan community. In this paper we will examine both Starhawk’s system and mainstream Wicca in light of our knowledge of the sociology of religions, the psychology of spirituality, and the technology of magic.

## **Wicca as a Religion**

Technically, Neopagan Witchcraft is a religion, albeit a relatively new and fledgling one. It meets the requirements for a religion set out by Robert Ellwood and Harry Partin, in that it displays their ‘three forms of expression’: “myth and doctrine, ritual and cultus, and the structure of corporate expression.”<sup>29</sup> Wicca is also, again technically, a cult—not only in the classical sense of “the worship of a particular object within a larger system,”<sup>30</sup> (the ‘larger system’ being the whole of European and Near East mythology and folklore), but also in Ellwood and Partin’s sociological terms:

Our definition of cult—a group offering an alternative to the dominant spiritual tradition, which is small, has strong authoritative and charismatic leadership, offers powerful subjective experiences which meet personal needs, is separatist, and claims a relation to a legitimating tradition.<sup>31</sup>

All Wiccan organizations are alternative, small, subjectivist, and claim connection to a ‘legitimizing tradition;’ some are separatist, and a few, most notably Starhawk’s, have a strong, charismatic leader. In accord with Bronislaw Malinowski’s observation that “Art and Religion alike spring from unsatisfied desire,”<sup>32</sup> Wicca meets Thomas Robbin’s definition of a cult, being “primarily in the business of selling seemingly novel *compensators* (beliefs and prescriptions which substitute for immediate rewards).”<sup>33</sup> Wicca also satisfies Ellwood and Partin’s observation that religious cults are “interesting and important for reasons that have less to do with size than the fact of their very existence, sticking pins in the social construction of reality.”<sup>34</sup>

The practice of Wicca implies a system of beliefs that varies widely from one group to another, but some tenants are basic enough to claim universal credence. The efficacy of magical practice depends on a belief in “a universe of design rather than caprice, linked in all its parts by fine-strung wires of influence.”<sup>35</sup> To the Wiccan practitioner, the connecting agencies are the myriad Gods and Goddesses, interacting with humanity and the rest of nature—and with each other. Wiccan deities are not the monistic, impersonal, and abstract entities that comprise the ‘ultimate reality’ of shamanic and other New Age religious practices,<sup>36</sup> but are rather “a panoply of contending and yet unchanging inner gods.”<sup>37</sup> First among this impressive array of deities is the syncretic Goddess of Wicca. Her worship is an attempt to sensitively integrate all the feminine qualities that our culture represses: the realm of birth, death, the tides of inwardness, moods, and emotions. The Goddess’s consort is the Horned God, and in traditional Wiccan practice she never appears without him. He embodies the equally repressed masculine domain of desire, joy, aggression, neediness, and destruction. These two deities, each of which actually represent constellations of the eternal feminine and masculine principles, present a problem for those seeking to understand their subtle and apparently opposal natures. Sukie Colegrave advises us that it is “necessary to distinguish their fundamental qualities from the values attached to the two principles during different historical periods and stages of consciousness.”<sup>38</sup>

In antiquity, opposites often remained united in the same deity, and this paradoxical behavior and moral ambivalence of the Gods did not disturb the (perhaps) more ‘intuitive’ archaic mind in the least. Mythology is full of Goddesses and Gods whose legends contain as many contradictions as do their moral characters. These primordial deities most often combine in one divine person both positive and negative attributes, and early mankind clearly experienced this paradoxical simultaneity of good and evil, friendly and terrible, as a form of *unity*. Archaic Goddesses had dominion over both love and war, were credited with both chastity and promiscuity, nurturing

motherliness and bloodthirsty destructiveness, and monitored the cycle of life through its points of focus: birth, growth, death, and rebirth. One of the most pressing problems that Wiccans believe our culture must now deal with is that the theology of the major religions has evolved to the point where the splendor of the all-good God of light has been enhanced beyond measure, and as a result the darkness that was once supposedly represented by the devil has localized itself in humankind. Since the reality of darkness and evil can not be denied, there has seemed to be no alternative but to hold humanity responsible for it. John Dourley comments:

If a one-sided and so pathologizing deification of the powers of consciousness, often in alliance with a rapacious technology, is of the essence of the patriarchal myth as the ground of Christian religiosity, then its true compensation and removal would itself require nothing less than a new religious or mythical consciousness.<sup>39</sup>

It has been, until recently, the view of modern culture that the subject and the object, the creator and the created, are distinguishable. The knowing mind has been seen as different from what it knows.<sup>40</sup> Another view, actually developing in Western culture since the Renaissance, is that the consciousness of humanity is continuous with divine consciousness.<sup>41</sup> This alternative belief system “emphasizes continuity between humanity, God, and the rest of the universe,” involving as it does “little-known laws of nature, unexplored psychic or spiritual human capacities, or superhuman hierarchies ... hidden laws and superior beings assist the aspirant toward higher wisdom.”<sup>42</sup> This clearly represents a shift from belief in the authority of Book or Church to the authority of a God actually revealed in the process of history. In this way, transcendentalism has been giving way for many years to religious systems based on immanentist doctrine.<sup>43</sup> The cults of the Graeco-Roman world are a major source of inspiration to modern Wiccan practitioners in this regard, their practices centering as they did “on ecstatic personal experience [and] syncretistic symbols.”<sup>44</sup> The personal experience of immanent deities is central to Wiccan practice, but unlike the epiphanies of shamanism, this “ecstasy is not just a display trance by the central figure, but a central act”—at best a reliable, repeatable, and (most important) *collective* activity—a mystical experience of the divine that serves, in the words of Eric Sharp, as “a refuge from the disintegrating structure of modern theology.”<sup>45</sup>

## **Religion and Psychology**

Many modern writers have remarked that as our society becomes more secularized, and as more people turn within for solutions to problems of a spiritual nature, ecclesiastical canon has become, to varying degrees, supplanted in broad areas of our culture by the insights of psychology. Philip Rieff has termed this trend in modern religious practice the ‘triumph of the therapeutic,’ and calls our attention to the emergence of the new ‘psychological man.’ Rieff wrote in the mid 1960s, and his predictions have

subsequently demonstrated remarkable accuracy. The ‘fourth wave’ of psychological theory—the transpersonal psychology of Carl Rogers and others—has provided the religious community with a model of humanity’s inter-psyche landscape at once client-centered and non-cognitive, which optimistically views humanity as inherently good, with an intrinsic desire to self-actualize.<sup>46</sup> Many of the psychological theories of C.G. Jung that were rejected by the ‘first wave’ community to which he belonged as ‘excessively spiritual’ in nature have been adapted by the transpersonalists to great effect. Post-Jungian writers such as Mary Louise von Franz, Carl Kerényi, Sylvia Perera, Edward Whitmont, and Christine Downing, have examined issues such as the psychological implications of myth and fairy tales, the mechanics of projection and denial of the Other, and the hitherto unacknowledged spiritual value of the material and the feminine.

Unfortunately, Starhawk’s knowledge of psychological theory seems to have been acquired outside of a scholarly setting. Like her mother, Bertha Simos, Starhawk is a member of the ‘third wave’ of humanist psychology that gave us the encounter group, as well as Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and R. D. Lang’s notion of the psychotic as visionary. Starhawk presents her version of Wicca as a religious movement based sound psychological principles which can help people to cope with the difficulties of life through a modern version of magic.<sup>47</sup> This idea was well received, and Starhawk’s methods worked adequately at first, since the encounter group’s supportive environment can meet the needs of the vast majority of those who are experiencing psychological distress. But not everyone’s problems are amenable to support.

Because of Starhawk’s basic political position that all the problems afflicting women and other marginalized members of our society are caused entirely by forces outside of themselves (by men and other agents of the patriarchy), she and those she has trained continue to be unable to deal constructively with the increasing number of people who have been drawn to her movement with genuine psychological problems—people who are not OK, and whose pathologies require therapeutic intervention, not support. In contradiction to egalitarian theories, which favour of peer-counseling and censure professional hierarchies in the therapeutic process, considerable training and expertise is now widely believed to be essential in the administration of the encounter group model—if for no other reason than to apply the protocols of triage. Persons of either sex who exhibit schizoid tendencies or are clearly delusional should ideally be referred to a more ‘transformational’ regimen of therapy, where they can be convinced (with a greater or lesser degree of patience, depending on their economic abilities) that they need either to change, be changed, or at least learn to accept the understanding that their problems are being generated by their own beliefs and behaviour, not by the depredations of others. Lacking the ability to protect encounter groups from those who have, for example, narcissistic

leadership pathologies, Starhawk's organizations have, more often than not, become dominated by women whose psychological processes are not being fostered by their placement in positions of authority.

Starhawk has adapted the 'Younger Self—Talking Self—Higher Self' model of Gestalt (without ever mentioning Fritz Perls),<sup>48</sup> and has a clear understanding of the Jungian concepts of the Shadow (the unacceptable, never completely knowable, dark and secret part of our psyche), and Projection (the natural human tendency to see our own shadow material only in the personality or behavior of others). Starhawk explains both of these ideas briefly and coherently, cautioning her readers against the kind of denial practiced by those in the New Age who claim that mastery of a spiritual path allows them to transcend their own shadows.<sup>49</sup> She also warns against the distracting excitement and drama inherent to the conflicts that projection can set up in a group.<sup>50</sup> But all her examples and are limited to personal and small-group issues. When Starhawk urges her readers to mobilize against the political enemies of women and nature, all warnings against the projection of internal shadow material are forgotten or discounted.

Starhawk assures her readers that the angry and aggressive power raised by women in the name of the Goddess can only be used in a responsible fashion because of women's natural tendency to love life and to honour all living things. But Nature itself is seen as being endangered—by others, not by Goddess-loving women—and those who would poison the environment and destroy the diversity of natural life must be restrained.<sup>51</sup> Without a hint or irony, she compares the power to be gained for women by means of magical practice with the infamous Great Ring of Sauron in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, warning against irresponsible use, lest it destroy the user.<sup>52</sup> But in Tolkien, the One Ring was said to inexorably corrupt and destroy *anyone* who used it, regardless of their noble intent or sense of responsibility. Even the greatest among Elves and Humans—Gandalf, Aragorn, Galadriel, Faramir, and Elrond—all refused to possess the Great Ring because of its corrupting power. Starhawk maintains, however, that this is a different kind of power. This is not the patriarchal 'power-over,' this is the 'power-from-within' and 'power-with,' that is raised in a circle of women, "each coming into her own power," and thus automatically empowering the whole group, never just an individual.<sup>53</sup> Women's circles can prevent the misuse of power by simply not allowing themselves to be drawn into "each other's defense strategies."<sup>54</sup> Mutual practice of scrupulous honesty is expected to generate such a deep and forceful level of conviction that the group's beliefs will remain in alignment with their revealed truth.<sup>55</sup> This belief in the enormous introspective wisdom of small groups and the hitherto undocumented ability of communities of women to avoid misuse of power is central to Starhawk's system of beliefs.

If Starhawk shows a certain naïveté toward psychological matters, she is not alone. As early as 1975, writers such as Bruno Bettelheim had begun gently chiding the encounter group movement for its inherent misunderstanding of the process of liminality, a misunderstanding that by then was beginning to be spun off into the human potential movement. Twenty years before, Bettelheim had led a popular movement to ban violent and irrational elements from children's reading material—specifically from comic books, but also from juvenile adventure literature and fairy tales. As a dedicated social scientist, however, Bettelheim continued to do research on the results of this ban, and by the mid-70s had become convinced that the generation whose literary input had been restricted in accordance with his earlier theories was in many ways less able to cope with the incongruities of adult life than had previously been expected. Quoting Piaget's theory that a child's thinking remains animistic until puberty,<sup>56</sup> Bettelheim theorized, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, that children may have an innate need to believe that the world is essentially magical, and that to deprive a child prematurely of an animistic magical approach to life can lead, in late adolescence, to an inappropriate escape into daydreams of magical experiences and powers—or worse, into drugs, gurus, 'black magic,' etc.: "It is as if these young people feel that now is their last chance to make up for a severe deficiency in their lives—without having a period of belief in magic, they'll be unable to cope with adult life."<sup>57</sup>

In a generation committed to self-improvement and the avoidance of responsibility for the well-being of others, 'late adolescence' can run well into a person's 30s—or even later—so Bettelheim's theory may go a long way toward explaining the enormous interest in magic and animism among those raised in North America after the early 1950s. Neopaganism may well be filling the niche thus vacated, but in spite of the fact that authentic self-realization always brings about the restoration of naïveté, Bettelheim warns his readers that a certain amount of sophistication is required less the search for a 'child-like' state degenerate into the institutionalization of 'childish' behaviour patterns. The restoration of fairy tales to their original dark and violent form, with all their gender exclusivity, ethical ambiguity, and distorted sexuality intact, has been a project pursued vigorously from the mid-seventies onward by scholars such as Bettelheim, von Franz, and Ralph Manheim. Their efforts, along with those of more popular writers such as Janet Dallett, Robert Bly, and Clarissa Estés, have continued to provide us with valuable information about the mechanisms by which psychological insight has accrued to humanity over the centuries.

According to von Franz, fairy tales evolve from ordinary stories as they move: "All the elements which are not interesting to the next village will be dropped and what is archetypal in the story will remain," and as a result, "fairy tales migrate well because they are so elementary and reduced."<sup>58</sup> Myths as well are said to reveal primal psychological material that has not



only survived but been augmented by hundreds of generations of telling and retelling. They are thus considered invaluable by many psychological theorists for their healing potential, as long as it is firmly kept in mind that the entire corpus of myth and fairy tale must be taken as a whole, since our psychological problems are so complex and difficult that no single story can accomplish our deliverance.<sup>59</sup> We will refer later in this paper to the importance of the psychological shadow material theoretically embedded in fairy tales, myth, and dreams, but there are two aspects of this line of inquiry that bear on our present subject—the problem of the ‘Hero’s Journey,’ and the unfortunate lack of distinction that exists between the ‘Divine Child’ and the infantile shadow.

Transformational theory holds that people caught in the liminal condition of a life-process change—betwixt and between, say, the paradise of childhood and the full power of maturity—experience sudden and confusing personality changes that may be upsetting to themselves and their friends and family, but may also lead them into the purlieu of self-help and potential-developing movements which can, at best, help to move the now-fragile ego through the relatively well-known initiatory stages of development and safely on to the appropriate level of accomplishment. The ‘Hero’s Journey’ is a typically popular strategy, but John Dourley warns us that it is legitimate to describe the ego as hero or heroine only as long as one realizes that “such a hero or heroine is a thoroughly tattered and battered one. Such a protagonist enters or, more frequently, is dragged into the realm of the Goddess to confront her and to demand or beg from her treasure.”<sup>60</sup> Likewise, it is extremely important in the process of accessing and actualizing the Divine Child within to be able to recognize and acknowledge infantile shadow material—which can run from the extremes of puerile self-aggrandizement on one hand, to the self-destroying consumption of alcohol, drugs, food, or abuse on the other—that always emerges during this process.

As von Franz points out, “One has to first become adult, and then a child.” Both of these popular processes must also be clearly understood, by their liminal nature, to be time-limited events. Once the transitional period is over, the need for a guided liminal experience ends,<sup>61</sup> and the pilgrim can ideally be sent on her or his merry way. But if those administering the process are intent on establishing a religion, founding a political movement, or raising an army, then the natural progression of the ego through the stages of initiation and out the other side may be viewed as defection, and the shadow forces revealed in the process of liminality may be invoked to prevent the process from reaching anything resembling a state of completion.

## **The Shadow**

Whether we possess a collective unconscious that functions as an inborn source of spiritual information and the contact point between

consciousness and the divine, as the Jungians maintain, or whether the unconscious mind functions as a reflecting matrix for that which is ineffably beyond us (as above, so below) as the practitioners of ceremonial magick believe; for the purposes of this paper we will assume the numinous nature of this inner landscape, a ready source of Otto's *mysterium fascinans*, as well as his *mysterium tremendum*. For the psychology of the unconscious assumes that there is an enormous amount of pain and rage stored in the psychic darkness that exists outside the small island of light which is our everyday mind. And Ellwood reminds us that in spite of our positive expectations of the sacred as a place or time "in which a person feels as totally real and sufficient as he conceives the gods were at the beginning;" there is also "a frightening dimension to the sacred; it may reach out to slay those who presume too much upon it."<sup>62</sup> These frightening elements require a kind of cautious awareness that honours them as a part of our psyche that cannot be rendered harmless by good will or reflective meditation. Most especially, they cannot safely be denied or repressed, for they are elements of the numinous, and what belongs to the sacred must somehow be acknowledged lest they act themselves out as a demonic urge toward such activities as the Black Mass, Witch hunts, bloody inquisitions, or holy wars.

By somehow rendering conscious and acceptable these subterranean aspects of the divinity—these suppressed underground emotions—we can legitimate the demonic and destructive as having rights of their own on the strength of their therapeutic potential. But we must clearly understand that we do so at our own peril. Whitmont suggests that from a psychological point of view the main purpose of magic may be to provide solidly-crafted containment for the conscious and intentional *enactment* of forbidden behavior: the erotic and ecstatic as well as the violent and destructive—all of which is instinctual material which we repress at our peril, but cannot release in polite society with any degree of safety.<sup>63</sup> The greatest danger is our tendency to consider some aspects of the divine as good, benevolent, or intentionally helpful, and other aspects as distinctly different—as malevolent or evil. A more cautious way of regarding the numinous is to think of it as loaded with power for regeneration—we can profitably suppose that that is its purpose. But the same power that can give us rebirth can also drive us mad. However we think of the divine—as God, or Gods, or Goddesses and Gods—they are intrinsically neither good nor bad; they all have a positive constructive aspect and a negative destructive shadow. They are enormous dynamos of spiritual energy, but because they are immortal, they are not moral creatures. Morality is human, and not a trait of the divine.

Spirituality is the practice of staying human in the presence of the divine, of learning the ability to honour the Goddesses and the Gods without identifying with them. It is easy to see how Lang and some of the other early theorists could confuse psychosis with mysticism—the manic acting out of elements of the numinous in the absence of sufficiently developed ego-

structure can be an impressive sight. But as a result of our culture's new interest in the magical and the matrifocal, a great deal of material that has long laid dormant in our unconscious is now being brought to the surface. For the most part this is a good thing, but as Whitmont cautions us: "these free-floating impulses from the magical layer are powder charges waiting to be ignited by the sparks from the torches of the returning Dionysos and his menadic retinue."<sup>64</sup> Any magical and matrifocal organization which insists that exclusively beneficial aspects of the Goddesses and the Gods can be intentionally selected for invocation, are going to soon be overwhelmed by more powerfully disruptive forces than new members with addictions who have abandoned a fundamentalist religion for a New Age belief system and simply brought their addictive baggage along with them.<sup>65</sup>

Starhawk and her followers proudly call themselves Witches, and insist that they are reclaiming the power of the wise women, midwives and healers of the ancient and rural world who were despised, denigrated, and dismissed with the insulting term 'witch.' This has evolved over recent years from a kind of 'in-your-face' effrontery to a militantly defensive 'anti-defamation' movement that threatens legal action and throws up picket lines at any pejorative use of the word 'witch,' insisting that 'witchiness' was never evil, has always only been constructive and good, and that all the darkness surrounding the mythology of the Witch has been the intentional result of repressive patriarchal slander. But in both ancient myth and modern dream work, the dark side of the Witch predominates. In fairy tales the Witch is recognized by her irritability, her fretfulness, her bad temper, and her malevolence; she is the angry woman who hates, who envies, and who destroys. The other image of the Witch, that of the wise old woman who is a healer of people on both the physical and psychological level, is only false when the image of the Witch as evil is denied.

The good Witch and the bad Witch, when taken as a whole and acknowledged as a *unity*, constitute Rieff's 'demonic and destructive' subterranean divinity with all its implied therapeutic potential. The Witch's impulsive irritability, abrupt greediness, unfairness, unexplainable hostility, and her underground current or rage, may serve as fair warning, as it were, that she is not unlike all the other archetypal beings we may invoke for our healing and our regeneration, but only at our constant and unrelenting peril. Like all the other Goddesses and Gods, the Witch is not concerned with our conventions, nor our need for safety. She allows us access to unconscious mental processes that exist very close, but not quite inside the normal limits—not only of acceptability—but of any hope for complete control. The successful wielding of Witch energy therefore requires serious training, great restraint, deep humility, and—above all—enormous compassion. Whitewashing the Witch, even in the laudable name of 'pagan public relations,' serves only to trivialize the powers involved, and the denial of the darkness and the destructive energies inherent in the Witch—with the

concomitant deemphasis on training, restraint, humility and compassion—can only serve to allow the stirring up of storms of controversy that can invade entire communities. The well-known tendencies for even minor conflicts in the Wiccan community to get immediately out of control, to take on an almost magical life of their own, might give responsible leadership pause to reconsider their assumptions.

Starhawk not only insists on the uniform goodness of the Witch, but defines the Goddess as all-encompassing, and exclusively positive as well. In what way, we might well ask, is the Goddess thus described any different from the previously noted ‘all-good God of light whose splendor has been enhanced beyond measure’ that our culture has inherited from its patrifocal past? According to Raphael Patai, humanity has always exhibited “the overriding, irresistible tendency to view both the physical cosmos and the metaphysical world of the divine in human terms, which has inevitably centered on the sexual reference.”<sup>66</sup> The Biblical Yahweh, who was abstract, devoid of all physical attributes, yet pronouncedly male, and whose will was embodied in the Law, was clearly a projection of the patriarchal family-head and a reflection of the strictly patrifocal nature of Israelite society.<sup>67</sup> Religions centered on a masculine deity would, like ancient Judaism, be expected to stress the moral and intellectual aspect of spirituality to the relative neglect of its affective and emotional side, and would probably emphasize the study of the law over against “mere belief expressed in traditional and emotion-laden images.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, in polytheistic religions—those with both Goddesses and Gods—the moral, legal, and intellectual aspects of the masculine existed in balance with the Goddess’s affirmation of life, the satisfaction derived from existence, and the comforts of mother, bride, protectress, redemptrix, and the opener of the Gates of the Beyond.<sup>69</sup> These primitive Goddesses have distinctly feminine characteristics that are often quite different from the resurrected (and at times concocted) abstract Goddess images abounding today: they seem oriented to love rather than justice, to patient humility rather than assertiveness, and prefer faith to intellectuality and feelings to deeds; but most important is their apparent willingness to respond to personal feeling more readily than to abstractions.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the distinctly feminine characteristics of early Goddesses, we must also note the proliferation in the ancient Near Eastern of deities who were at once virginal and wanton—blood-thirsty love Goddesses such as Anath, Tannit, or Astarte, who were a focus of both fear and attraction to worshippers of both sexes. This union of opposites in primordial deities presents a challenge to those who demand only goodness in their deities. The Goddess-oriented feminine consciousness that now seems to be emerging from the realm of the numinous is a welcome ally in our struggle against the psychological fragmentation that characterizes our age, and the even more formidable enemy of materialistic atheism, mainly because it is an integrating

force that does not operate in divisive separation, but through intuitive perception of whole processes and inclusive patterns.

## Religious Leadership

The deities of Neopagan Witchcraft are considered to be transcendent only in so much as they are universal, eternal, and can be found everywhere. Wiccans mainly think of their Goddesses and Gods as being immanent, and this concept impacts heavily on the issue of leadership. If the divine is everywhere, and is accessible to everyone, then anyone can reveal truth.<sup>71</sup> This belief system, compounded by a wide-spread rejection of the authoritarian religious systems of the past “in which the few, the chosen, and the called control the many,”<sup>72</sup> has caused most practitioners of Wicca to be inherently suspicious of leadership in any form, and in the most extreme cases, this has led to a kind of fundamental egalitarianism that often ends up militating against any form of authentic human worth. Maslow is often quoted for support of this anti-authoritarian position, but between the 1964 publication of *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*, and its second edition in 1970, his views underwent modification:

The rejection of a priestly caste who claimed to be exclusive custodians of a private hot line to the sacred was, in my opinion, a great step forward in the emancipation of mankind, and we have the mystics—among others—to thank for this achievement. But this valid insight can also be used badly when dichotomized and exaggerated by foolish people. They can distort it into a rejection of the guide, the teacher, the sage, the therapist, the counselor, the elder, the helper along the path of self-actualization and the realm of Being. This is often a great danger and always an unnecessary handicap.<sup>73</sup>

Malinowski brings our attention to the fact that the practice of magic among tribal peoples always is believed to coincide with personal success, skill, courage, and mental power: “in all savage societies magic and outstanding personality go hand in hand.”<sup>74</sup> In our own times, there is an inescapable association of magical practice with charismatic individuals who are often touched by more than a little madness, and Robbins notes that new religious movements often suffer from “a distinctive precariousness,” because of the “volatility and deviant proclivities” of their charismatic leaders.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, esoteric religious systems that have become disconnected from the authoritative structure of their exoteric core values (by distance or schism) have been seen to attract more than their own share of deviant and dysfunctional personalities, due to their propensities for self-realization, self-forgiveness, self-appointment, and self-deification. This potential combination of aberrant leadership and abnormal followers is clearly the cause of the ephemeral nature of many new religious movements, especially considering “the role of absolute power and the adoration of followers in psychologically destabilizing a leader.”<sup>76</sup>

Rather than a leader developing a new religious system in order to meet his or her own inner psychic needs (Robbin's psychopathological model), "an alternative entrepreneurial model posits cult founders who develop new meanings with the definite intention of propagating them and receiving substantial rewards in *exchange* for their ideas."<sup>77</sup> A combination of these models is certainly possible, since many writers believe that the rewards which pathologically deviant leaders may receive from their followers can serve to significantly mitigate their illnesses. This 'double reward' system, material gain *and* psychological stability, can produce a particularly tentatious relationship between prophet and followers, especially when combined with a kind of manipulatively protean leadership quality that is symptomatic of certain borderline personality disorders. In its most extreme forms, this produces a state of perpetual organizational flux that can severely limit the ability of a movement to thrive, but Robbins notes that in spite of its basic nature as a pathological leadership strategy the intentional use of kaleidoscopic shifts in organizational emphasis can serve as an effective resistance by a leader to the demands of institutionalization:

Moses David Berg, the founder of the Children of God, ... employed a strategy of "perpetual environmental change and the shifting of goals," which "brought down the institution-builders, the administratively inclined who sought to bridle the free reign of God's spirit through Mo, but it mobilized the following, freeing them from institutional controls, directing them away from mundane and routine considerations ..." Perpetual flux renewed members' fervor and commitment.<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, in spite of the ways that leadership and membership pathologies may successfully interact, any amount of psychological deviation in a group is certain to lead to tension and conflict with the broader culture, and if the group is too deviant these conflicts can become intense, and the costs of membership are likely to become too high.<sup>79</sup> A traditional response of groups who find themselves in conflict with their social environment is to claim that the behaviour patterns that seem culturally deviant from outside the group are actually being engaged in for the benefit of the entire community, race, nation, or universe. In spite of the fact that the organization is clearly serving the personal problems and needs of its leadership and membership, its goals are publicly stated as vague idealistic prescriptions for society as a whole.<sup>80</sup> Such claims are often made in the context of a belief system that negates the relevance of objective accountability, while positing a vision of God, Gods, or Goddesses that excludes all darkness and evil as something outside the divine, and therefore outside the group. When an organization projects its shadow needs and agendas away from itself and onto an enemy, especially when the enemy is portrayed as an opponent of society in general, a perilous context has been created. According to von Franz, when one is unaware of the shadow, the personality can be falsified, and people can cheat themselves by thinking that they have highly moral motives, while in fact what they have are cruel drives for power.<sup>81</sup>

## Wicca and the New Age

All of what has been said above applies to modern Witchcraft as a subset of the entire spectrum of new religious movements that constitutes the New Age. Most Wiccans would fervently deny that the Craft is a New Age religion, usually on two grounds. First and foremost is the Wiccan ethic that prohibits members of the Craft from accepting money (beyond basic expenses) for training, initiation, or any of the services essential to the celebration of the religion. Secondly, Wiccans generally disagree with the common New Age belief that spirituality is best learned at the feet of a master teacher or new world messiah,<sup>82</sup> whom one must either travel to seek out, or patiently wait until he or she appears locally on the New Age ‘white robe’ circuit. Obviously the organizational problems that result from such beliefs have produced a wide range of interpretations, and the implications of these restrictions have been a continual focus of debate within the Wiccan community. But among all those in North America and Europe who self-identify as Neopagan Wiccans, Starhawk is the only one who frankly and openly operates outside both these demarcations. It would therefore seem profitable to take a closer look at the New Age as part of our examination of Starhawk’s contribution to the Wiccan religion.

Ellwood states that the kind of new religious movements that make up the New Age “generally center on subjective experience powerful enough to counter the claims of conventional religion or society, and to offer simple, sure keys to realizing it,”<sup>83</sup> thus allowing them to appeal to the “whole generation, coming of age in the 1960s, [who] learned to distrust institutionalized religion but not necessarily to discard all religious impulses.”<sup>84</sup> Many New Age religions compare their practices to shamanism because “they are looking for roots in those ages when humans were not aware of history, because that is the kind of consciousness they would like to have today—and believe is still valid,”<sup>85</sup> but what is most distinctive about the vast majority of these alternative movements is their Oriental character, or at least flavour. West and East may have influenced each other in the past (Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism are possible examples) but “when the West rediscovered the East in modern times, the impact on the alternative tradition was massive, so much so as almost to swamp the Western lineage.”<sup>86</sup> Wicca, including Starhawk’s version, is very nearly unique among the modern religious movements in that it is firmly Western, even European, in its derivation.

One of the results of Wicca’s economic restrictions is that it ‘plays’ as a religion to a more financially modest (either by necessity or intention) audience than most New Age religions. As a result, the Craft often finds itself dealing with demographics that are more often related to fundamentalist sectarian organizations than with those associated with the excursive cult that it is generally considered to be. Most traditional religious organizations that

count the truly poor among their membership have based their appeal on a millennial prophecy or on the promise of a more comfortable arrangement for their followers in the afterlife. According to Peter Berger, however, the secular kind of religiosity that is typical of the New Age has never made much headway in this regard:

... the peculiar Christian theodicy of suffering lost its plausibility and thereby the way was opened for a variety of secularized soteriologies, most of which, however, proved quite incapable of legitimating the sorrows of individual life even when they achieved some plausibility in the legitimization of history.<sup>87</sup>

One of the purposes of sectarian membership, of course, is to help overcome personal powerlessness and inadequacy by reducing the stress of unorganized relationship.<sup>88</sup> This has traditionally been very appealing to minorities and to the young. A person who is oppressed, discriminated against, or simply feels alienated from the broader culture because of “age, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic background,” may well be attracted to such ‘secularized soteriologies’ especially if part of the message is that the deities will, in the end, punish your oppressors.<sup>89</sup>

One of the traditional sources of Wiccan lore is Charles Geoffrey Leland’s 1890 classic, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, which the author presents as the poetry and spellcraft of an order of nineteenth century Tuscan Witches who, as otherwise defenseless peasants, had used the magical arts from time immemorial to protect themselves from (and to wreak vengeance upon) their hereditary enemies, the landowners. The tradition of magical usage as a method for ‘leveling the playing field’ or ‘evening the score’ is a long one, but most modern practitioners are aware that society’s ‘landowners’ were just as likely then, as they are now, to have in their own employ ‘magicians’ who would have had access to more venerable volumes of older lore than the peasants, and who were likely to be better fed and have more spare time as well. Baleful magic is always most effective against those who are weaker than its practitioners.

Inner, more personal demons are much more susceptible to spellcraft than are outer enemies, and it is for the purpose of psychological healing and spiritual transformation that most contemporary Wiccan magical workings are used. This, of course, makes Wicca more congruent in its ends with most New Age practices. As the healer of mainly spiritual ills, Wicca shares many of the ‘soft spots’ that characterize much of the New Age. The free-floating anxieties associated with neurosis—“the constant presence of fears that have no particular object”—give rise, in a magical environment, to a state of free-floating optimism in which one may hope for anything and everything, and believe in the existence of cracks in the structure of the mundane world “through which any imaginable marvel might suddenly appear,” all the while immersed in the diffuse feeling that all things are possible but that nothing is certain to be true, “in a broad if dim spectrum of hope” which is in fact a pale relection of the world of religion.<sup>90</sup> Under these conditions, boundaries



grow fuzzy and edges slide past each other, and any attempt to evaluate the efficacy of a treatment or a protocol founders—only to be precariously shored up by the use of vaguely scientific-sounding language. Wicca is as susceptible as the rest of the New Age to a desire to be modern and scientific, while at the same time disdaining materialistic empiricism and technology, an effect that Ellwood describes as:

...an instinctive realization that something in science—especially the broad confident assertion of unchanging natural law more typical of Victorian than of contemporary science—is congenial with the experience of timeless absolute reality and can be used to strengthen it intellectually.<sup>9192</sup>

All religious systems posit the belief in more than the mundane, all are concerned with a higher order of being and the methods by which transformation to this higher order may be effected.<sup>93</sup> Ellwood provides us with a definition of religion based on his three categories:

A *religion* means a group centrally concerned the ‘the means of ultimate transformation,’ which has simultaneous expression in three areas: *theoretical* or *verbal* (myth and doctrine); *practical* or *worship* (ritual, cultus, and other special behavior); and *sociological* (a structure of interpersonal action which enables a continuing group life.<sup>94</sup>

Durkheim, as usual, is more succinct: “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things ... beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”<sup>95</sup> Geertz tells us that religion functions to bring together ethos and worldview. According to this model, *ethos* is the tone, quality, style, ambiance—the practical functionalism of the ideal—that generates and validates the *worldview* of a culture (or a cult) through the experience of ritual. The ritual component of a religion provides not only a method for dependably accessing some aspect of the numinous, but also provides a framework for assessing the experience: “aha—I have experiential evidence of the worldview!”<sup>96</sup>

Many of the smaller religious organizations that typify the New Age do not offer a sufficiently complete theology to qualify as religions, according to Stark and Bainbridge. Providing magical services as a means of effecting cures for specific physical or emotional problems, or for improving an individual’s economic situation or social competence, “they do not offer complete answers to the existential problems of human life.”<sup>97</sup> Grandiose claims, of course, are not uncommon under these circumstances. Parallels and even causal relationships between the individual and the general are often implied, whereby an individual’s health problems, money worries, or social insecurities become manifestations of the health of the planet, the state of the economy, and the problems of society in general. This all-too-casual assumption represents a new twist to the belief, prevalent in both traditional and New Age magical theory, in operational correspondence between the

mundane and the realm of the universal and the divine. Knowledge of the relationship between the nature of the divine and an individual's inner nature may provide insight into the workings of society or the culture as a whole, but confusion between the concepts of individual change and societal change only serves to blur the distinction between spiritual and political activity, a subject we will examine more fully later in this paper.

Another example of aggrandizement that Wicca and the New Age hold in common is the propensity for new religious movements to see themselves as "legitimated by a long tradition of wisdom or practice of which it is only a current manifestation."<sup>98</sup> Religions in newly emergent traditions tend to believe that they are older than the more normative churches; that they possess continuity with the practices of aboriginal shamanism or the ancient European mystery religions.<sup>99</sup> Studying historical or anthropological material in order to intentionally reconstruct a modern version of a venerable tradition is, of course, a legitimate objective. It is important to bear in mind, however, that religious information from the past comes to us 'stored' in the form of *symbols*. Geertz tells us that religious symbols "are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it."<sup>100</sup> Because of this, symbolic religious information from the distant past must be regarded as time- and culture-specific, and although it may have enormous potential value to modernity, its application thereto should be considered complex and problematic.

We must nevertheless acknowledge, following Ellwood, that New Age religions (Wicca not excluded) are often founded on a popular mandate for the strange and unusual. But in spite of the promise of new kinds of self-discovery implicit in religious information from exotic cultures, for the last hundred years or so such elements as meditation, monism, and spiritual leadership by women have become such standard elements in New Age religious practices as to acquire a kind of orthodoxy of their own.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, since our first contact with exotic religions is most often with their more marginal esoteric elements, the result has often been a mistaken equation of the exotic with the esoteric. This was particularly noticeable in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when esoteric practices such as Zen Buddhism were regularly compared with the more mundane or exoteric elements of European religions, much to the detriment of the latter. Exoteric Buddhism, of course, is surely as structured, dogmatic, and supportive of the social mores of its culture—inequities, corruptions, and all—as is exoteric Catholicism in the equally culpable civilizations of Europe and the Americas.

### **Wicca and Politics**

Unfortunately, the popular association of esotericism with New Age societal values and political expectations has led to some more serious

misunderstandings. Esoteric religious practices are certainly gnostic, excursive, initiatory, and derive from personal experience of the transcendent. But exoteric religion, because of its basis in society-at-large, is broadly democratic, holding in general commonality all who follow its rules and accept its beliefs. Esoteric spirituality, on the other hand, can be far less egalitarian. Everyone may have the divine spark within, but some are obviously more capable than others of realizing their potentiality. Furthermore, when esotericism loses touch with its core values, the results can be even more horrifying than in exoteric religion. The exotericist who falls out of alignment with the divine may still recall esoteric realizations such as the relativity of good and evil or the illusory nature of consensus reality, but losing touch with exoteric doctrinal elements such as compassion or mercy can lead to an ‘anything goes’ amorality whereby surrender to the Divine Will (or Higher Self) is replaced by an individual or group Will to Power. This is a persuasive argument for the separation of esoteric Church and political State.

Dismissing “authority” and “temporal hierarchies,” in favour of a personal vision of truth,<sup>102</sup> Starhawk introduces her political agenda by describing the ‘Burning Times.’ According to this theory, which apparently originates with Gerald Gardner, the original publicizer (and many believe, inventor) of modern British traditional Wicca, the pan-European tradition of Witchcraft into which he claimed to have been initiated had left no traces on the fabric of history because it had been driven underground and all its artifacts and records destroyed by the Inquisition,<sup>103</sup> begun by the Roman Church in the 15th century and continued in many different forms in Europe, Britain, and America until the early 18th century, which resulted in the death of over ‘nine million women.’ The figure alone is highly suspect, considering the size of the European population of the time and the fact that the first known reference, in a Wiccan context, to this 9 million figure dates from the early 1950s—shortly after the discovery that 6 million Jews had been put to death by the Nazis.<sup>104</sup> But Starhawk not only accepts and promotes the nine million figure, she goes even further, implying that the entire Inquisition was aimed at eradicating the still-extant Goddess religion, and that 80 percent of its nine million victims were women, the remainder being the (mentally-ill or perhaps homosexual) marginalized of Early Modern society!<sup>105</sup> This additional information derives from a Hungarian occultist from Los Angeles who wrote under the name of Z. Budapest, with whom Starhawk studied in the early 1970s.<sup>106</sup> Budapest would have us believe that all the Cathars, Muslims, Manicheans, alchemists, Unitarians, Waldensians, Montanists, Knights Templar, black-mass monks, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews who were condemned by the Inquisition as heretics and satanists, were actually all (and more) Goddess-worshipping midwives and herbalists, the vast majority of whom were women. Starhawk brushes aside the fact nothing resembling a Goddess religion is ever mentioned in the documents of the Inquisition on the

grounds that “the interrogators of Witches were looking for evidence of Devil worship, not Goddess worship.”<sup>107</sup>

Starhawk’s political agenda, one that would undoubtedly benefit from her version of history, filled as it is with great matrifocal civilizations done to death by patriarchal violence and falsehoods,<sup>108</sup> is concise and straightforward: more power—temporal, material, political power—for women. It is a program that she maintains could be more effectively realized if the political actions that promoted it were presented as the rituals of a religion.<sup>109</sup> She represents women as a universally victimized and marginalized sub-class, and stresses the fragile nature of their inner beings.<sup>110</sup> Goddess religion can liberate women from their debilitating need to be gentle, passive, humble, or reserved,<sup>111</sup> but in order to achieve the power to overturn centuries of injustice, women first must see themselves as physical repositories of the divine. Then anger, aggression, and the power of destruction can be seen as purifying and sacred<sup>112</sup>—even life-sustaining<sup>113</sup>—when wielded by Goddess-empowered women. Men in the Craft are invited neither to help nor to share in this power, but to accept the authority wielded by women, a prospect for which Starhawk has little optimism.<sup>114</sup>

Nearly all religions have had as one of their goals the improvement of society. This often takes the form of social action in the broader community (‘good works,’ advocacy, etc.), or the modeling of an ideal society by the religion itself (monasteries, communes, etc.), both of which certainly have political overtones. Under ideal circumstances, however, the call to political action is generated by compassion. This compassion ideally derives from discriminating wisdom, which in turn is the result of the kind of enlightenment that is most usually arrived at through contemplation of the divine. Wisdom without enlightenment is trapped in narrow confines and cannot perceive whole systems. Discrimination without wisdom is divisive and territorial. Compassion without discrimination is doomed to failure. And political action without compassion is self-serving at best, and at worst can be destructive of entire societies.

Even the most benign attempts at social action—or the modeling of an ideal society—are likely to be confused and self-defeating when attempted by a religious organization that has not yet evolved to the point where it can resolve those internal contradictions which prevent the calm contemplation of the divine. A case in point is that of the New England Transcendentalists of the 19th century. In spite of their belief in the spiritual realm as causal and the material world as the effect thereof, and their emphasis on intuition over against reason—two prevalent elements in almost all of today’s excursive religious movements—their political activities in the field of anti-poverty and anti-slavery were greatly impeded by their romantic, and essentially contradictory, views of nature. On one hand, they held that nature (as matter) was unreal and illusory, and was therefore an obstacle to be transcended. On the other, nature was seen as imbued with spirit—an embodiment of

spirituality—and therefore divine. This is a common problem in those ‘literary’ religious movements that Rieff characterizes as demanding “more imagination than faith, more magic than science, more creativity than morality.”<sup>115</sup> It may be important for us to keep in mind that magic is, as Bryan Wilson reminds us, largely concerned with the amendment of nature,<sup>116</sup> and that as a result there is a significant danger in drawing an equation between nature and the divine forces we invoke in order to reform or improve the world around us. This admonition is especially important in relation to the beliefs that both the Transcendentalist and the New Age seem to have inherited from Rousseau concerning the ‘natural’—thus sacred and therefore immutable—condition of rural or tribal peoples:

... many white practitioners of ... magic are shameless in their misuse and romanticization of the rituals and mythology of preindustrial societies. A lot of these people used magic simply because they didn’t have any other resources. ... A group ritual to draw off sickness can generate a strong feeling of community and compassion, but a Navajo mother whose kid is dying would probably rather have more doctors on the reservation. From our privileged place as well-fed, white Americans, it’s easy to ignore the factors that drive Amazon Indians to work in the sawmills or tempt native women in New Guinea to go live in Christian missionary compounds.<sup>117</sup>

Even though nature provides us with some very interesting and useful models of ‘divine’ organization, and clearly contains many powerful forces that we may discount only at our peril, it is important to remember that the truest and deepest part of ourselves—that part which either contains or reflects the complexities of numinosity—is beyond the cycle of reproduction and survival, and is therefore fundamentally not of nature.

## **Wicca and Fundamentalism**

Many New Age practitioners define themselves at least partially by what they believe they are not. Particularly among Wiccans, this definition by exclusivity revolves around their dislike for and denial of any similarity with ‘fundamentalism.’ Technically, fundamentalism is any religious belief system that takes its root myths literally, confusing metaphorically valid ‘truths’ with empirically verifiable ‘facts.’ But in the context of the religious developments of the last century-and-a-half, especially in North America, Fundamentalism displays a much more complex character. Grounded in the great revival movements of the previous century, Fundamentalism arose from the encounter of the older consensual orthodoxy with the challenges of critical scholarship and cultural pluralism.<sup>118</sup> Its most salient features are an emphasis on group membership and internal state, as against ritual or formal roles,<sup>119</sup> and a reliance on powerful subjective experiences as a way of countering the natural appeal of religions grounded in family and community.<sup>120</sup> Fundamentalism is also known for the importance which is made of the boundary between purity and pollution—exemplified by the well-known and

sometimes obsessive vociferousness with which polluting persons or ideas are shunned or cast out.<sup>121</sup> The typical Fundamentalist church is independent and belongs to no formal or organized denomination. This separation from the other churches as well as a distinct way of living and believing that sets its members apart from the world results in a refusal to cooperate with others even in the best of causes. As a result, ‘compromise’ and ‘accommodation’ are among the most dreaded worlds in the Fundamentalist vocabulary.<sup>122</sup>

Unfortunately, although these patterns are most obvious among the more extreme Fundamentalists, the predilections and perceptions that fuel such sectarian movements are actually widespread in everyday life. The very idealism of many New Age seekers, coupled with the widespread desire for openness, can easily become distorted into very similar behaviour. Although in its most extreme form these patterns make people vulnerable to exploitation and even to violence, the less intense and less obvious manifestations that occur in everyday life can generate belief and behaviour which is qualitatively very similar to Fundamentalism. Arthur Deikman is one of the founders of transpersonal psychology, and writes about the prevalence and dangers of this kind of low-level activity in our popular culture. He offers a checklist of commonplace behaviours that we may recognize all too well:

- 1) Speaking of adversaries or outsiders (e.g., conservatives, liberals, Yuppies, blue-collar, rich, poor) as if they were all the same; characterizing them by negative traits only; attributing unflattering motives to them but not to oneself.
- 2) Lacking interest and information concerning the actual statements and actions of opponents or outsiders.
- 3) Failing to consider the possible validity of an adversary's point of view.
- 4) Not taking a critical look at one's own position.
- 5) Disapproving or rejecting a member of one's group for departing from the group position, devaluing the dissident, regarding him or her as an annoyance or a problem.
- 6) Feeling self righteous.<sup>123</sup>

If, in fact, one lives in a religious or spiritual environment based on the myth of absolute evil pitted against absolute good, it is almost impossible to avoid identifying with absolute good and projecting absolute evil onto all those who are in opposition or disagreement.<sup>124</sup>

In order to protect their terrain and unequivocally establish themselves in their own minds as the only line of defense against the depredations of the outside world, Fundamentalists tend to line people up in two camps, the supportive and the destructive.<sup>125</sup> Criticism from outside the group is ignored or held up as an example of the intractable wickedness of non-believers. Within the organization, however, opprobrium and reproach are commonplace, but flow strictly from the top down. Typically, even the mildest form of criticism of the leadership by members is strongly sanctioned as a ‘tendency to invalidate’ or a ‘failure to empower’ the movement itself. This characteristic is so marked that even in organizations which claim to be totally egalitarian, hierarchies can be identified by observing the direction in which criticism is allowed to flow. This condition of being at war with the

world without as well as within results in an organization that is at once separatist and secretive ... seems loving yet employs fear.<sup>126</sup> Having created their own world with their own rules, Fundamentalists of all stripes are rarely willing to associate with those others who do not abide by these rules, and little regard is shown for offensive remarks made in the name of the faith.<sup>127</sup>

It has become a commonplace observation, especially in the wake of the financial and sexual scandals that have recently erupted within Christian Fundamentalist organizations, that those behaviour patterns condemned by Fundamentalist leaders are often the very vices most prevalent in their own lives. Charges of venality and hypocrisy notwithstanding, this may be seen as an example of a fundamental law of preservation of energy which operates in the realm of psychological and spiritual functioning as well as in physics. Behaviour patterns or belief systems seen as the exclusive characteristics of another religion, group, race, or sex, are very likely to be (often unsophisticated and coarse) versions of that which, in spite of all efforts at internal expulsion and repression, looms largest in the psyche of the claimant. Greed, neediness, the urge to violence, the ecstasy of deconstructing, even sexuality itself, are ascribed to the 'other' who may then be rejected as evil, apostate, criminal, an object of fear, an enemy. Of course, some criticism — particularly self-criticism — is essential, especially in the formation of a new religious movement, and not all criticism of others is projection. But religious organizations or their leaders who expend a significant amount of energy faulting 'other' religions for having a poor ethical, social, or spiritual track-record are particularly suspect. Leaders or members who will not engage in self-criticism nor accept responsibility for their own shortcomings typically seek scapegoats to shoulder this burden, and anyone who can be identified as 'other' than themselves becomes a target of blame and rage.<sup>128</sup>

The social effects which result from this nearly universal tendency to project onto others of all that is immature, weak, confused, or just plain wrong within ourselves, can be very unfortunate. But without an organized system for internal evaluation of ideas and behaviour which acknowledges that even the most pious, ascetic, or charismatic visionary can have psychological inconsistencies and frailties, it can be very difficult for a new religious movement to develop a coherent theological system. Maslow warns us that this is particularly problematic in organizations that emphasize immanence and encourage inspiration from the divinity within:

The possibility that the inner voices, the 'revelations,' may be mistaken, a lesson from history that should come through loud and clear, is denied, and there is then no way of finding out whether the voices within are the voices of good or evil. ... Spontaneity (the impulses from our best self) get confused with impulsivity and acting out (the impulses from our sick self), and there is then no way to tell the difference.<sup>129</sup>

This situation becomes further exacerbated when projection and a lack of self-criticism is combined with an anti-authoritarian belief system which rejects

hierarchies in favour of egalitarian social structure—a common pattern in New Age organizations. Very small or very short-lived groups can function, often quite adequately, without leadership hierarchies. But in the larger and more diverse associations that comprise new religious movements, the choice is rather between overt and covert leadership.

Covert leaders often insist on some version of the consensus method of decision-making, knowing (often only intuitively) that in all those societies which practice consensus as against majority rule, such as the Plains Indians, the Quakers, and certain Japanese corporate bodies, consensus functions as a more-or-less subtle method of intimidation; bringing everyone present into at least nominal agreement with the will of those in charge. This can have a beneficial effect if those wielding authority are mature, compassionate, attentive to the opinions of others and responsive to the long-term needs of the organization. Unfortunately, those who have narcissistic leadership pathologies can easily do great harm to organizations that practice consensus without firm and responsible (and overt) leadership. These same principles may be seen as operating within the psyche as well. When a person, particularly one who believes that all ‘enemies’ of spiritual progress have been safely projected away, practices consensus among his or her interior voices, all hopes of achieving anything resembling enlightenment may be condemned to brutalization by strong and unprincipled forces within.

### **Sex, Religion, and Politics**

Starhawk is familiar with the Wiccan rule of three-fold return, and warns against the use of malign magic.<sup>130</sup> She clearly explains how a spell has a greater effect on the sender than on the intended receiver,<sup>131</sup> how difficult it is to actually harm another, and how easy it is to harm one’s self in the process.<sup>132</sup> But once again, Starhawk’s warnings are limited to personal issues. The use of magic to stop those who threaten the safety of others is not evil, anymore than it is evil to destroy a cancer.<sup>133</sup> Interestingly enough, nearly all the examples Starhawk gives of threatened safety are of a sexual nature, and many of them are fairly revealing of her personal shadow material. To Starhawk, for instance, San Francisco’s topless bars and sex shows are a form of relentless sexual assault.<sup>134</sup> Although Starhawk encourages love, and calls it “the creative force of the universe,” she quickly distinguishes between the sacred self-love made manifested through empowered awareness, and the “sexless charity” of the Bible, or worse—and this is most revealing —“indiscriminate sexual desire.”<sup>135</sup>

Starhawk insists that sexuality is sacred, but clearly some forms of sex are to be more revered than others. Her statement about “women who love other women” attaining “a very special power”<sup>136</sup> has developed over the intervening years into the doctrine of a special state of sexual grace for gayness, quite similar to that conferred on virginity by the Early Christians. In fact, the status enjoyed by lesbians (and to a lesser extent by gay men) in



Starhawk's community is not unlike that of the celibate clergy of the Roman Church. The commitment to this crypto-Catholic state of purity from contamination by coitus is such that until last year not a single heterosexual man was ever initiated into Starhawk's Reclaiming Collective, the lone man now so distinguished being Starhawk's new husband, David. In light of these observations we may profit from a closer look at the implications of the sexual politics implicit in *The Spiral Dance*.

Starhawk clearly states at the beginning of her book that the Goddess contains all opposites and that her veneration serves to resolve these antitheses in the consciousness of our culture. Dourey agrees, but he states his opinion more in the form of a challenge to any religious movement which claims, as Starhawk's does, to effect this resolution: "any significant form of consciousness, especially religious, which is not capable of deifying both opposites in any polarity, including that of male and female, is one-sided and so pathologizing."<sup>137</sup> One-sided pathologies are, of course, common in the history of religion. Hatred of the feminine energy by new religious movements such as the Puritans in 17th century New England gave their movement a kind of fierce energy in the beginning, but by the 1690s (specifically in and around Salem, Mass.) that same hatred had drained the movement of its vitality and destroyed its soul. The Puritans are mainly remembered today for their tight-lipped acrimony and self-destructive violence. Hatred of the masculine has provided many women-only spiritual organizations in our time with equally fierce energy, even though such hatred scarcely seems compatible with their veneration of the Goddess—as she who resolves opposites—not to mention the likely long-range consequences of such behaviour (yet another lesson from history 'that should come through loud and clear'). Ironically, most of the objections to the masculine expressed by these women's organizations are distinctly 'Dionysian' in character, ignoring the historical fact that the Dionysian rites were first and foremost women's rites, and that disregard of Dionysos is clearly associated in ancient history and literature with the repression of the feminine dimension of classical society and religion.

Still, history also teaches us that issues involving sex and gender are notoriously difficult to deal with in the context of religion. The belief that sexuality is unwholesome, and that our bodies and their pleasures are evil, has been so much a part of the historical dynamic of religion, morality, power, and control in our culture that the nominal invocation of a Goddess is unlikely to achieve resolution overnight. Furthermore, there is so much mythology, mysticism, and fear bound up in the simple act of human coupling that it is easy to see how those who seek power can abuse it,<sup>138</sup> especially in the context of a religious movement with a powerful political mission. The ever-acerbic Pat Califia has stated that the insistence on sexual separatism expressed by many of these women's groups often sounds to her like the "superstitious fear of contamination or pollution."<sup>139</sup> Mary Douglas's remarks

on sexual taboo in tribal society are not far off this mark. According to Douglas, ritual uncleanness is “that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained,”<sup>140</sup> and “pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications.”<sup>141</sup>

Durkheim tells us that, among tribal peoples, magic is not notable for binding its supporters into a moral community.<sup>142</sup> It is more likely to be used to protect society from the stress that is concomitant with change in magical status, a change between what is sacred and what is not (e.g., an individual’s status as profane before marriage and sacred afterwards).<sup>143</sup> These stresses may be caused by magical dangers that are often built in, even generated, by the magical system itself. Closed feedback loops of this sort typically generate the kind of elaborations in the area of ritual purity that can degenerate into conditions found in some forms of Orthodox Judaism and Brahmin Hinduism, where only the wealthy can be truly ‘clean.’ Unless magic is part of a larger religious system, its practitioners are unlikely to notice effects like this, as Durkheim further notes, since magic seeks “technical and utilitarian ends, it does not waste its time in pure speculation.”<sup>144</sup>

This situation is further confused by the fact that in many tribal societies one must abstain from all contact with both the most holy things in a culture’s religious system as well as with impure things.<sup>145</sup> If the persons, objects, or ideas which must be avoided are rarely encountered (another culture’s food products, or infrequently exhibited ceremonial regalia) the restrictive rules would scarcely impinge on an average person, but contact with sex and sexuality are completely unavoidable in day-to-day life. Douglas reports that cultures that exhibit complex legal subtlety in their definition of marriage, divorce, and other aspects of sexual and familial contact are usually able to organize their social institutions without burdensome beliefs in sexual pollution.<sup>146</sup> Quite a contrary condition obtains in cultures which officially ignore sexuality out of a sense of prudery and embarrassment, or whose sexual and marital practices are passing through a period of change. For example:

... when the principle of male dominance is applied to the ordering of social life but is contradicted by other principles such as that of female independence, or the inherent right of women as the weaker sex to be more protected from violence than men, then sex pollution is likely to flourish.<sup>147</sup>

Tribal cultures may have an easier time dealing with these issues because, according to Lévi-Strauss, the primitive mind has a tendency to notice only *surface* differences, to see things strictly in terms of opposites with little differentiation beyond duality.<sup>148</sup> This tendency to only skim the nominal surface, to create ideas rather than to learn by observation, to conceive rather than to experience, is not limited to early humanity, but is an unfortunate characteristic of much New Age ideation. In some cases this spiritual

superficiality takes the relatively harmless form of a hierarchy based on decoration, where a person who is wearing feathered third-world designer clothing and standing on a buffalo skin is assumed to have more refined sensibilities and more important ideas than the casually dressed members of her audience. At worst, however, it has resulted in the use of occult jargon to sanitize some particularly otiose ideas, including the widely-held belief that our society's attitudes toward such subjects as race, sexual preference, or the ecology are objectively inferior to other those of other cultures distant or past. Once again, the indomitable Ms. Califia:

It is intellectually dishonest to pretend that hunter-and-gatherer cultures were great places to be queer or female. In our bitterness with the homophobia and sexism of twentieth-century America, it's too easy to fantasize that people with less technology were completely free of these ills. Small tribal societies had different rules to govern social sex roles and pleasure-seeking behaviour, but those rules were fiercely enforced. Today we probably have more equality between the sexes, more civil rights for sexual minorities, and more knowledge of ecology than you'll find in any group of people that makes a living with fishing nets and blowguns or slash-and-burn agriculture.<sup>149</sup>

The superficial attitude prevalent in much of the New Age condemnatory preachiness against the violence in our society closely parallels the Victorian disposition towards sexuality, i.e., self-righteous condemnation coupled with unadmitted fascination. An even more pernicious idea which enjoys wide circulation is that feminist pronouncement concerning the nature of relationships between men and women are not to be subjected to criticism by the hard-won insights of psychology and sociology:

There are many reasons why, among some feminist writers such as Brownmiller,<sup>150</sup> there is a vested interest in keeping all considerations of rape as unpsychological as possible. Prominent among these is the fact that insofar as feminism is a socio-political movement, it is founded upon a root fantasy of progress toward general social well-being through the gradual elimination of social ills—in the present case that of rape. ... The contention of Brownmiller that “the rape fantasy exists in women as a man-made iceberg,” and that it “can be destroyed—by feminism,” is the product of a moralizing, collective and concretistic perspective ... and must be alien to any true attempt at a psychological exploration of the phenomenology of rape.<sup>151</sup>

## **Sex and Gender**

This tendency to differentiate into clear-cut opposites based on nominal or surface distinctions most directly impinges on the religious practices of the New Age, and particularly on Wicca, in the case of the nearly universal confusion between sex and gender. Sex is a concrete and straightforward issue concerning reproductive plumbing. One is either a man or a woman, and even radical surgical intervention can make only superficial alterations thereto. Gender, on the other hand, divides the archetypal (or the dimensions of the eternal sacred, if you prefer) into the masculine and the feminine solely

on the basis that those elements which are closer to the surface, most often, in most men, are termed ‘masculine,’ and those closest to the surface, most often, in most women, are likewise termed ‘feminine.’ In this sense, ‘Goddesses’ represent the feminine gender—various aspects of the divine feminine which exist in all of us regardless of our sex. Obviously the masculine and the feminine are not contained exclusively within men and women respectively. Everything men do is not necessarily masculine in character, no more than all the behaviour emitted by women is automatically feminine. Furthermore, matrolatry, the worship of the divine feminine, has never been the exclusive province of women at any time in human history. The literary notion that has become so popular in New Age fiction since the mid-1970s—that Goddesses were once served by priestesses and worshipped by women, and that Gods were served by priests and worshipped by men—has no foundation in any historical information available to us. It is true that the cult of Mithras was exclusively a men’s religion, and that all ancient Greek communities celebrated the Thesmophoria, a women’s festival dedicated to Demeter and Dionysos; but these certainly represented the exceptions rather than the rule.

The close study of classical pagan religion reveals further contradictions to the (again superficial) New Age ideas that equate Goddess worship with gynocentricity, matrifocality, and ecological awareness. By the time of Pericles, two competing paths of religious activity had developed in the classical world. One path involved the veneration and appeasement of the Olympian Deities and Heroes; its ceremonies were considered a civic duty and involved the running of races, the singing of hymns, and the sacrifice of animals large and small. These activities generally took place in public, and in the daytime. The other path was represented by the great Mystery Religions of antiquity. The Deities of these religions were telluric and chthonic: they lived not on mountain tops but on or within the earth. Their ceremonies were usually private, most often nocturnal, and involved initiation into the secret teachings that were purported to lay behind the public myths and legends.

The deities of the Olympian religions were sky-oriented, had enormous power over the lives of humans, distributed material rewards and punishments in an outrageously arbitrary fashion, were fond of competition and conflict, considered warfare to be the height of nobility, and were extraordinarily sore losers. To our modern sensibilities, these Olympian deities must be considered androcentric and patriarchal—regardless of whether they are Gods or Goddesses. On the other hand, the chthonic and telluric deities of the Mystery Religions were earth-centered, ruled over birth and death, had powers that mainly operated in the world of plants and animals, blessed those humans who accepted their teachings with artistic inspiration (or madness), considered initiation to be the height of nobility, and were constantly at odds with the Olympians. By modern standards, the deities of the Mystery Religions are gynocentric and matrifocal—in spite of the fact that some of

them are Gods. Dionysos is an excellent example of a matrifocal deity who happens to be male.

Patriarchal Goddesses do exist, Athena herself being the most obvious example. It is more instructive than ironic to note that the two most popular deities among today's radical feminists, Artemis/Diana and Innana, are prime examples of Goddesses of the patriarchy. Even more illuminating are the initiatory rites of the Goddess Cybele, called The Great Mother, in which sexual self-mutilation was practiced by devotees in order to make themselves truly children of the Mother Goddess—by forever denying their adult sexuality.<sup>152</sup> Douglas' even more sinister reference to the physical control of anomalies like night-crowing cocks comes to mind: "If their necks are promptly wrung, they do not live to contradict the definition of a cock as a bird that crows at dawn."<sup>153</sup>

Robbins refers to fundamentally dualistic religious organizations such as these as 'unilevel,' and characterizes them as typically 'definitive' and overly literal in their interpretation of scripture or language.<sup>154</sup> These religious movements often begin by stressing healing, subsequently move on to offer the 'dominant cultural motifs' of financial success and material rewards, and finally take on distinctly political goals:

Some unilevel dualist groups explicitly combine religious and political themes and thus represent 'civil religion sects,' which tend to develop absolutist quasi-theocratic ideologies and to form authoritarian communal enclaves intended to be exemplary models of a future perfect society.<sup>155</sup>

It may be useful at this point to distinguish between 'religious movements' and 'religions' *per se*. Technically speaking, a 'religion' is primarily concerned with 'the means of ultimate transformation.'<sup>156</sup> The purpose of a religion is to work toward a transformation of one's self, society, and the universe into a final condition of alignment with some version of absolute reality. Religions typically supply their membership with the means to accomplish this transformation, through a system of belief or practice. In spite of the fact that many religions engage in political and social action, a religion is not just a reform movement. A 'religious movement,' on the other hand, is more likely to stress social or personal reform, often through the presentation of interesting or even entertaining ideas and activities.<sup>157</sup>

## **Religion and the Millennium**

In studying the millenarian behaviour of religious movements in emerging nations, Bryan Wilson has provided us with several categories of 'responses to the world' that typify the various forms of social/political ideas and activities practiced by these organizations worldwide. Two categories are particularly interesting to our present topic: the 'thaumaturgical' and the 'manipulationist.' The thaumaturgical response concerns itself with highly

specific evils—which are dealt with by primarily magical means—as local effects, not as universal phenomena. Miracles and oracles, rather than any universal principles of life, are presented as the means of salvation.<sup>158</sup> The manipulationist response seeks only a transformed set of relationships as a way of coping with evil. The ‘scarce goods of the world’—health, wealth, status, and success—constitute a saved condition that is neither transcendent nor other-worldly.<sup>159</sup> Typically, the manipulationists believe that they are called on by their deities to change their own perceptions as well as those of their societies, and the thaumaturgists believe that their deities will grant them specific dispensations and work specific miracles.<sup>160</sup> Wilson notes that manipulationist sects tend to flourish in advanced societies while the thaumaturgical movements appeal to the poorer and less well educated of simpler cultures.<sup>161</sup> Modern religious movements which operate within an ‘advanced’ society, but who have as their target population those who are poorly educated and who are actually marginalized or perceive themselves to be so, have many characteristics in common with both of these responses.

Not unlike several other of Wilson’s categories of response, both the thaumaturgical and the manipulative rely on the charismatic leadership of messianic or prophetic figures. Unfortunately, the prophet, as a self-styled agent of change, often achieves a level of social transformation that is more radical and in a direction quite different from anything that was originally intended. In fact, the political courses which the typical prophet advocates, based as they are on a super-empirical point of reference, are noted by Wilson to ultimately be courses of failure<sup>162</sup>—a failure which is usually much harder on the prophet’s followers, the existing secular leadership which initially supports the prophet, and the culture in general, than they often are on the prophet’s own person. The ability of religious leaders to shift domains of reference at will—or at their convenience—between the transcendent and the mundane is too well-known to be ignored, and it is for this reason that many modern people have become uncomfortable with too close an overlap between religion and politics.<sup>163</sup>

Wilson also notes that, because of the other-worldly naïveté of many prophetic leaders and the diversity of the groups and organizations which often arise to espouse a political cause, religious movements are often easily infiltrated by those who would exploit the movement for personal economic gain or for more extreme revolutionary ends than were ever conceived by the movement’s originators.<sup>164</sup> Jungian scholars of the archetypal, as well as many of the great ceremonial magicians of the past, have repeatedly warned us against complacency in the face of the often irresistible energies manifested by revolutionary extremists. The darker elements of the psyche, such as the Rebel, the Victim, and the Martyr, may manifest enormous authority in the mundane world, but one of the defining aspects of shadow archetypes is that their power cannot be shared—it cannot be used to build a community or a

religious movement—but can only accrue to the individual wielding the shadow energy.

Non-religious political organizations must rely on historic or economic theories to validate their agendas, but religious movements can reinterpret or simply invent mythologies for the purpose. Anthropologists have long maintained that religious ritual and practice existed prior to mythology, and that myths themselves were frequently invented later merely to sanction rituals.<sup>165</sup> Of course the myths we have received from antiquity have already passed through the process of refinement and augmentation described above. ‘New’ myths—stories told in the style of myth and represented as rediscovered or reinterpreted mythology—usually only serve to expose the narrator’s own pathological material (Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tales, particularly the original *Little Mermaid*, are an excellent example of this well-known effect), but if we are not knowledgeable about our own culture’s mythology, we are often unable to evaluate the relevancy or harm in any new material which claims mythological status. The strength of what Ellwood terms the cultural ‘great traditions’ of a society will normally serve as a protection against too blatant a rewriting of a culture’s root myths, but popular or folk religions are often largely separated from the major institutions of society, and so are particularly vulnerable to politically-inspired mythological revisionism. Furthermore, when folk or popular religious movements—which are typically dependent on nonliterary information and thus especially susceptible to the occasional thaumaturge or messianic figure—become liberated from the grip of the broader cultural institutions, they frequently inflate and flourish to fill all the voids, as the evangelical tradition has been doing since the mid-19th century.<sup>166</sup>

Demagogues have always found the link between politics and religion to be a fertile field. The emotional play between hope and fear have a wide and extensive range, particularly in any portion of the population who can be convinced of the efficacy of magical practice. Among tribal people, the use of magic is hardly ever associated with activities whose outcome is certain, and thus well under the control of rational methods.<sup>167</sup> Magic is rather found where the element of danger is either obvious (in hunting expeditions or sea voyages), or where danger can be implied (in the performance of an acrobat or stage magician), or induced (by an irresponsible thaumaturge). Whitmont speaks of a repressed—but no less living—‘magical stratum’ of the psyche which is highly responsive to group emotions, fears, and panic; which tends to confuse wish or fear with reality and is obsessed with an urge to control and direct.<sup>168</sup> As we have previously noted, magic works most effectively in the inner world of psychic awareness, and Malinowski warns against its use in situations where the mundane must be reliably manipulated:

Magic is based on specific experience of emotional states in which man observes not nature but himself, in which the truth is revealed not by reason but by the play of emotions upon the human organism. Science is founded on

the conviction that experience, effort, and reason are valid; magic on the belief that hope cannot fail nor desire deceive. The theories of knowledge are dictated by logic, those of magic by the association of ideas under the influence of desire.<sup>169</sup>

We should ideally build our political principles on spiritual foundations, but we court serious difficulties if we try to derive our spirituality from a system of belief that is essentially political in nature. For one thing, being attuned to one's inner voice or higher self may well lead to spontaneous acts that defy the logic of ideological consistency, and as a result, political ideologies will always place a ceiling on the height to which one's consciousness may be raised. In addition, when there's too tight a fit between politics and religion, it takes a saint to not give in to utter self-righteousness; and judging from the amount of self-righteousness at the interface between Wiccan spirituality and feminist politics, saints are clearly in short supply.

### **Magic and Scholarship**

According to Robbins, an alternative to 'unilevel' religious organizations, with their susceptibility to exploitation for personal gain or political extravagance, would be the 'multilevel' groups in which spiritual systems and teachings encompass various levels of meanings. The devotees of multilevel religious organizations understand the essential differences between the spiritual and the mundane and know that, even though the phenomenal world may be illusory, they "cannot therefore levitate or walk through walls, or immediately get rich or heal ulcers."<sup>170</sup> These members tend to have, as well, a better understanding of the subtleties involved in the mechanisms by which the spiritual domain affects both the psychological and the material world. The well-known tendency of every person, society, or religion to fall toward an extreme of behaviour or belief<sup>171</sup> is balanced in the spiritual realm by myths or religious images that supply creative and compensating impulses to the unconsciousness that help to overcome the characteristic one-sidedness of unilevel belief systems.<sup>172</sup> In turn, this (often quite dynamic) internal balancing act truly seems to help the individual or group achieve a level of harmony with the divine; on the one hand making it easier to develop a coherent (and thus complex) ethical system, and on the other to come to an understanding of how magic actually works.

As a method of causing change in the psychological or spiritual realms by means of manipulations performed in the physical world, the practice of magic from time immemorial has been surrounded by strict conditions, exact remembrance of litany, unimpeachable performance standards, and unswerving adherence to observances and restrictions—if any of these is neglected, magic will fail to work.<sup>173</sup> However, many well-meaning instructors of today, in order to make magical practice seem easier to the beginner and thus accessible to all, have promoted the relaxation of principles and the



removal of restrictions. In fact, some abatement of the extravagant standards set by such turn-of-the-century ceremonial magicians as the Hermetic order of the Golden Dawn or the *Ordo Templi Orientis* is clearly beneficial, especially in order to accommodate the practice of folk magic so prevalent today. But a near-complete neglect of magical standards only produces magical results that regularly defy evaluation and would only be acceptable to the ‘broad if dim spectrum of hope’ that characterizes the free-floating optimism of the New Age. Even worse, this relaxation of standards inevitably leads to the concomitant neglect of those scholarly principles that traditionally ground a magician in the mythology, history, and other ‘great traditions’ of a culture. Low standards of scholarship serve to blur the distinctions between fiction and fact, between polemic and research, between hypothesis and conclusion. The resulting literature is often easy to read and entertaining, and many find the ideas expressed to be ‘empowering’ and to improve self-confidence, but the very acts of simplifying and revising effectively seals the seeker off from any understanding of the subtleties and inner meanings of mythology and cultural history which are so important to serious magical practice.

Although several women-only or women-dominated cults are known to have existed in the ancient world,<sup>174</sup> Starhawk does not specifically refer to any of them, but presents instead a view of early deities completely different from all the known pantheons of Pagan antiquity. A familiar element of classical mythology will occasionally cross the reader’s path, only to be swept away by some rhetorical equation that ignores or contradicts the myth’s substance. In fact, Starhawk’s view of Wicca is based on a revisionary mythology that has as its point of departure the belief in a pre-literate, pre-historic, pan-European, Goddess-worshipping matriarchate. The elements of this ‘new mythology’ have their roots in the mid-19th century and were first suggested by the Swiss jurist, J.J. Bachofen. In his major work, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, published in 1861, the author advances the following propositions:

1) that in the beginning humanity lived in a state of sexual promiscuity; 2) that such promiscuity excluded all certainty as regards paternity, that lineage, therefore could be reckoned only through the female line—according to mother right— and that originally this was the case among all the peoples of antiquity; 3) that consequently women were treated with a high degree of consideration and respect ... enhanced to the complete rule of women (gynecocracy) ...<sup>175</sup>

In 1884, Frederick Engels published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, in which he paid tribute to Bachofen and those other “pioneer anthropologists” who earlier in the century had “discovered that primitive society was different from civilized society in every major respect. ... they were opposite socioeconomic systems.”<sup>176</sup> Engels sites a study of extended family relationships among the Seneca Indians of upper New York

State by Lewis Morgan, the American ethnologist, and deduces that not only was it typical of all American Indians and the “aborigines of India and Australia,” but that it also implied widespread sexual license, egalitarian social organization, and a cooperative economic system, among all primitive peoples everywhere.<sup>177</sup> Unfortunately, over the centuries the “collective nature of production and appropriation” gave way to individual confiscation of both resources and property (including women and their ‘product,’ children) thus ending this universal pre-historic Socialist matriarchate.<sup>178</sup> Although James Frazer makes no mention of economic implications, he finds no fault with the central theory of Bachofen, Engels, Morgan and John McLennen — that savage society was the diametric opposite of their own Victorian world, and that primitive humanity must therefore have been universally promiscuous, non-monogamous, incestuous, and matrilineal. In fact, Frazer added an interesting twist to this idea that would be picked up later and developed by writers like Robert Graves. If the King must die, the Queen must survive him; and if the King represents the God, the Queen must be the representative of an equivalent Goddess who therefore holds a higher place in the pantheon of the people than a chief God. In his 1948 book, *The White Goddess*, Graves takes the matrilineal theories of Bachofen and the matriarchal theories of Engels and Frazer one step further and claims that primitive society was matrilineal as well.

In spite of the fact that none of these theories could stand up to modern professional criticism, and that virtually all of the evidence cited by these writers has ‘subsequently failed to be collected in the field,’ their ideas have shown a remarkably tenacious hold on the romantic vision of our age. Belief in a pre-historic paradise of sexual freedom, economic equality, and women’s rule was tentatively endorsed by Joseph Campbell and has spun off several entertaining reconstructions of history from mythology including the wonderful historical romances of Mary Renault, some entertaining ‘armchair anthropology’ like *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* by Charles Leland, *Witch Cults of Western Europe* and *God of the Witches* by Margaret Murray (ironically, Murray’s Witches were anything but Goddess-worshippers), and several popular works of cultural criticism such as *The Time Falling Bodies Take To Light* by William Thompson, and *When God Was a Woman* by Merlin Stone. Most of these works, unfortunately, seem reluctant to distinguish between a scholarly hypothesis and an established conclusion.

According to Starhawk, modern Witchcraft is a direct descendent of the worship of a Great Mother Goddess that extends back well into the Paleolithic, complete with animal-costumed shamans and naked priestesses.<sup>179</sup> Under the matriarchal leadership of this Stone Age priestesshood and its descendants, Goddess-worshipping culture attained many of the positive accomplishments of humanity, from music and poetry to mathematics and medicine, only to have their great civilizations swept away in the Early Bronze Age by male-dominated, God-worshipping warrior cultures.<sup>180</sup> So violent and thorough was their defeat that no trace of their existence remains

save for some highly ambiguous votive figurines and mysterious references in classical myth and fairy tales to Amazons and Faeries. Starhawk owes most of her information on how this theory could be extracted from the body of mythology to Robert Graves, and she treats his writing, as well as some of James Frazer's more marginal theories, as proven fact. But even though she quotes Graves at length, she only credits him in two footnotes,<sup>181</sup> criticizing him (and Joseph Campbell) at one point for suggesting that human sacrifice was a standard characteristic of Goddess worship.<sup>182</sup>

It is, however, the work of Margaret Murray that informs most of Starhawk's model of the unbroken lineage of Wicca from the Stone Age, through the Middle Ages, to early Modern times.<sup>183</sup> And it is Merlin Stone that provides Starhawk with the idea, not found in Graves nor even in Murray, of modern Witchcraft as the descendent of an age-old tradition of Goddess worship that was fundamentally a women-only religion.<sup>184</sup> From the various polemic writings that these theories have engendered in the last two decades, one could get the idea that not only was there no war, poverty, crime, sexism, racism, or homophobia in the pre-historic paradise of the Goddess, there were no men either. In the Canadian Film Board production, *Goddess Remembered*, the narration credits Goddess-worshipping women with things like the invention of mathematics and the construction of Stonehenge. Of course it would be more accurate to say that these achievements were made in cultures which honoured Goddesses, since we cannot possibly know whether women or men invented them.<sup>185</sup> Nevertheless, Starhawk seems willing to pass on to her readers as factual only the most favorable and optimistic theories about this hypothetical matriarchate, while rejecting any information to the contrary as the slanderous work of repressive patriarchal agencies.<sup>186</sup> She is sufficiently sophisticated, however, to counsel her readers with a footnote, acknowledging her information as derived only from artifacts and not from the accepted theories of anthropology and archeology, but this caveat is stated so equivocally that readers less sophisticated than she could easily be led to believe that lack of academic approval is due to confusion and disagreement among scholars—or to an intentional suppression of women-positive material.<sup>187</sup>

In fact, a casual reader looking at the earliest recorded religions of history, those of Egypt and Sumeria, could certainly come to the conclusion that something very much like the destruction of a pre-existing Goddess religion might have occurred. Among the 'board of directors' of the pantheons of those cultures' religions, chief Gods outnumbered Goddesses by four or five to one, and such chief Goddesses as there were tended to be passive fertility deities. If an active fertility deity existed, it was usually a fire god. And yet, if a more careful reader were to, say, take a pantheatic snapshot of the chief deities of Egypt and Sumer, as well as those of the other emerging Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures at 500 year intervals thereafter, every picture would show more Goddesses, with more temples,

more priests & priestesses, more followers, more public worship, and—most important—more positive characteristics. During the 8th century BCE, written alphabetic languages came into wide usage, and the resultant explosive proliferation of literature was almost entirely concerned with those very entertaining beings, the classical divinities. At this point in history—the Archaic and the Classical age—the number of Goddesses and Gods was about equal, but by any objective means of quantitative evaluation, Goddess worship was by far the most popular religious activity of the era. Goddess temples and shrines were larger, more plentiful, and enjoyed more attendance. Goddess festivals abounded. The premier city-state of the epoch was named after and dedicated to a Goddess, and the Parthenon, Athena’s gigantic temple complex, still dominates the modern city of Athens.

From this evidence, it is possible to conclude that matrolatry was not an exclusively pre-historic phenomenon: the worship of the divine feminine seems to have been as relatively unknown at the dawn of history and appears to have developed and expanded along with post-literate civilization. Still, this neither proves nor disproves the existence of a pre-historic matriarchate. Archaeological support for such a Goddess culture comes mainly from the writings of Marija Gimbutas and James Mellaart. In his book, *Çatal Hüyük*, Mellaart describes a society which may have flourished in ancient Anatolia in the seventh millennium BCE:

There had been no wars for a thousand years. There was an ordered pattern of society. There were no human or animal sacrifices. Vegetarianism prevailed, for domestic animals were kept for milk and wool—not for meat. There is no evidence of violent deaths ... Above all, the supreme deity in all the temples was a goddess.<sup>188</sup>

Compare this description with the following quote from Walter Rast’s *Introductory Handbook to Palestinian Archaeology*:

The villages were not large, and none of them seems to have been walled. The lack of larger public structures indicates that the communities who lived here were mostly egalitarian. ... Women, too, participated in responding to the challenges [of daily life], and there is good reason to believe that the relationships between women and men in the community were complimentary.<sup>189</sup>

Rast is not referring here to Anatolia or Minoan Crete. The villages he is describing are those of the Israelite nomads in the hill country of Palestine in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE. The author is asserting egalitarian social structuring, cooperative gender partnerships, and (by implication) peaceful relationships with the neighbors, not for Neolithic, matriarchal, Goddess-worshipping Anatolians, but for the Late Bronze age Israelites: the quintessential patriarchal tribes who *invented* monotheism, and who were poised on the brink of their genocidal destruction of the (culturally far-advanced) Goddess-worshipping peoples of Canaan. Both Rast and Mellaart (as well as Gimbutas) appear to be projecting modern social values—peace,

cooperation and egalitarianism — onto ancient cultures whose archaeological remains exist just beyond the threshold of resolution (like those Lunar details in George Leonard's crank masterpiece, *Somebody Else is on the Moon*). The characteristic that these diverse people shared is that they led incredibly primitive lives, an observation which lends a crypto-apocalyptic subtext to all such writings, modern and Victorian, that extol the virtues of primitive society.

Although it would seem reasonable that the predominance of matriarchal consciousness in a culture would be reflected in certain ways in the social, political, and economic structures of that society, no positive or beneficial relationship between matrolatry and the social order has yet to be observed in any culture studied thus far, even though many societies, pre-historic, classical, and modern, have salient features which can be associated with Goddess worship. Occasional references and allusions can be found in early literature to the existence of a previous religion, and many of these include hymns and prayers addressed to a Moon Goddess or the Great Mother. Likewise, a multitude of sacred objects have been found throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East portraying the female form. Whether these represented Goddesses, priestesses of a Goddess, cultic prostitutes, or were talismans used in sympathetic magic to stimulate the reproductive processes of nature, cannot easily be determined. When looked at with the eyes of the rational intellect their meaning can only be dimly discerned, but if we regard them as symbols, referring to psychological, instead of historic facts, they present themselves to us with unmistakable clarity.<sup>190</sup> Colegrave agrees:

The fragmentary relics—the myths, symbols and images—of Great Mother cultures may be entirely inadequate as evidence or clues to the existence and nature of pre-patriarchal socio-economic structures, but they can be most revealing about the psychological state, or stage of consciousness which inspired them.<sup>191</sup>

## **Psychology and the Uroboric State**

In psychological terms, the Great Mother rules over the level of consciousness that precedes the emergence of polarity in human thought. Because it has no experience of subject/object boundaries, this stage of psychic development identifies with the suffering and celebrations of nature and sexuality, but although the deity who personifies this primordial state is often thought of as female, it is also equally male, in that it contains the underdeveloped seeds of both the masculine and feminine principles.<sup>192</sup> Starhawk calls this deity The Goddess, but other cultures have thought of it as the Big Snake, the Great Turtle, the Abyss or Chasm, or the Worm Uroboros:

The Uroboros represents the collective unconscious, the abyss or chaos in which all life begins. It expresses simultaneously the infancy of the child and the infancy of humanity, a stage before the birth of the masculine and feminine principles, of Yin and Yang. Within it, female and male still rest together in incestuous embrace.<sup>193</sup>

The Uroboric is the symbol of the united primordial parents. Contained within this primal state are the feminine (as both maternal protection and devouring mother), and the masculine (as both killing aggression and active support for the development of consciousness); both manifesting a transformative character (with a tendency to amplification and change), as well as a conservative nature (which tends to protect, preserve, and prevent change). In this primal plenitude are found all the forces which later split into good and evil, light and dark, spiritual and material, male and female, indeed into all the opposites that generate all of creation while simultaneously dividing and destroying individuals and community.<sup>194</sup> The Great Maternal Matrix that gives birth to the world is also the symbol of all that threatens the development of consciousness, the force which seeks to fetter human progress. In Babylon she is represented as the Old Woman of the Waters who was responsible for the Great Flood which drowned the world. In Sumerian mythology she is Tiamat, the image of blind primitive chaos against which all the intelligent and organizing Gods must struggle.<sup>195</sup>

Because the matriarchate of the Uroboros embraces both the masculine and feminine, both good and evil, in an undifferentiated unity, her overthrow is the precondition for the separation and development of consciousness. In the incestuous embrace of the Maternal, humanity would have always remained an unwitting prisoner of nature, and never developed into her conscious collaborator. We may fantasize that before the overthrow of the Great Mother:

... there may have been greater peace, greater equality between the sexes and greater harmony between people and nature, but there was little freedom of choice, little understanding, little control and little individuality. There may have been no oppression of one sex by the other but there was also no real possibility of relationship. There may have been an instinctive obedience to the ways of nature but there could have been no conscious knowledge of human and natural laws. For relationship with nature, either external nature or nature of the psyche, as well as relationship between individuals depends on a sense of otherness, an ability to recognize separateness as well as unity.<sup>196</sup>

Both mystics and addicts alike face an enticing danger in the temptation to wed themselves to this chaotic abyss and blot out all memory in its embrace.<sup>197</sup> Lost in the great maternal matrix of undifferentiated oneness, bereft of both history nor memory, we are not only unable to produce art (which Hesiod tells us is generated by the Muses and their mother Mnemosyne, who have charge of the endless cycles of memory and forgetfulness from which all art is born), but we are also unable to develop structured morality or an ethical system. If Everything is Everything, and

nothing is any better or worse than anything else, what does it matter if the behaviour of a person, group, or culture is less than ideal?

Robbins helps us focus on this issue by bringing to our attention three stages of consciousness which differ in their relationship to the rational process: the ‘pre-rational’ or subconscious stage, which includes ‘archaic,’ ‘magical,’ and ‘mythic’ levels of consciousness; the stage of ‘rational self-consciousness’ which describes our current condition as an evolutionary midpoint; and the ‘trans-rational’ or superconscious ‘psychic,’ ‘subtle,’ and ‘causal’ state, which is that to which we are striving to evolve. It is a seductive fallacy of the pre-rational Uroboric that would convince us to annihilate the simple dichotomies of rational/irrational, secular/religious, or scientific/intuitive worldviews in our confusion between an infantile pre-rational orientation and an advanced trans-rational perspective.<sup>198</sup> In order for humanity to have effected the move from the primal condition of unmitigated unity to our present state of self-awareness, with all its polarities and subject/object boundaries, it was necessary to make use of the ‘masculine’ tendencies of the psyche toward awareness by means of differentiation. Unfortunately, our culture now suffers from the debilitating effects of the patriarchal consciousness that was engendered by these tendencies. Fortunately, thanks in large part to contemporary feminist thought, for the first time in the history of our culture we are aware of these injurious consequences. We also have access to the psychological insight which, according to Dourley, “could contribute to contemporary feminist thought and strategy by providing the resources for the corrosion of patriarchal consciousness while avoiding the ‘tar baby effect,’ understood as the difficulty of engaging patriarchalism without becoming part of it.”<sup>199</sup>

New religious movements are chiefly characterized by their search for the capacity to find spiritual meaning autonomously, rather than have meaning conferred by an external, paternalistic authority.<sup>200</sup> If this is the case, the antithesis of patriarchy in the context of religious inquiry may be *autonomy*, not matriarchy, and thus the masculine ‘animus,’ that contra-sexual element of the psyche—the psychological equivalent of the Gods of a religion’s pantheon—may serve to foster an autonomous individuality which in turn can help to insure that we will not become patriarchal in our response to patriarchalism. A culture-wide negative image of the masculine fostered by the shortcomings of a patriarchal environment can be most effectively overcome by the recovery of a supportive animus as the basis of an individual’s sense of worth and of a society’s creative response to surrounding cultural pathology. If this recovery of a sustaining animus were impaired or denied, as Starhawk seems to be doing by de-emphasizing veneration of the masculine divine, it is difficult to see how our response to patriarchy can avoid simply cloning it, since without the support of the animus our response, particularly the response of women, for whom the animus functions as the doorway to the unconscious, must be limited to

consciousness, and limitation to consciousness is the essence of the patriarchal.<sup>201</sup> The strategy, so common in New Age ‘women’s spirituality’ organizations, of discouraging the veneration of the divine masculine and thus removing women from the support of the animus may well serve to guarantee the victory of patriarchalism and the defeat of feminist aspirations where these aspirations are more than simply extending the (many, obvious) benefits of the patriarchy to wider circles of women. It is easy to believe that such apparently self-defeating strategies are grounded in an insidious wish to appropriate patriarchal consciousness for women, rather than working to undermine it on a cultural basis as it effects both sexes.<sup>202</sup>

Just as the masculine tendency to organize information by means of differentiation allowed humanity to escape the mystical ocean of sameness that is the pre-rational domain of the Uroboros, the feminine disposition to integration may enable us to move in the direction of the trans-rational stage of spiritual evolution. Colegrave makes a firm distinction between what she calls ‘matriarchal consciousness’ (the pre-rational), and ‘feminist consciousness’ (the path to the trans-rational). If a religious movement concentrates on the deconstruction of every trace of the masculine in our culture, rather than on the exploration of the feminine, the results are likely to be regression rather than evolution, since it is clearly more difficult to do the (essentially feminine) work necessary to integrate the divided soul of humanity than to undo thousands of years of (masculine) differentiation and sink back into the (matriarchal) “bog in which all differences are submerged, all identities lost.”<sup>203</sup>

### **Alchemy, Androgyny, and the Sacred Marriage**

The ultimate goal of all magic and alchemy, perhaps of all religion, is this healing of the fragmented psyche, the stilling of desire not by having its needs banished or repressed by ascetic practices, but by having all desires satisfied by the joys of a completely integrated state. The alchemists referred to this conjoined condition as ‘androgyny,’ and stressed the importance of our passions and needs as vital indicators of those parts of ourselves whose denial inhibits rather than promotes self-development and self-understanding. Puritanical repression in the past has led to outbreaks of uncontrolled hedonism, which have inevitably generated more repression; but androgyny represents a third state of being which is characterized by neither freedom nor control, but by freedom *and* control. Unfortunately, the ‘either-or’ stage cannot be leapfrogged: “a premature lunge at androgyny is more likely to lead to regression to the Great Mother stage of psychological containment and undifferentiation” than it is to an evolved state of self-realization that is both differentiated and integrated.<sup>204</sup> The magical ritual that provides containment for the attainment of this androgynous ‘third stage’ is called the *hieros gamos*, or ‘sacred marriage.’ This ‘marriage’ must be understood not as a system of rules that organize and control the relationship between the



sexes, but in the psychological sense of the union of the masculine and feminine principles within.<sup>205</sup> This alchemical wedding, far from being a restraint to freedom, becomes a method of modeling integrated self-knowledge within the psyche as the first stage in the development of a new paradigm for the relationship of spirit and matter, of humanity and nature, of good and evil, of women and men. If the differences and distinctions which were originally necessary to achieve consciousness are allowed to continue to pit half of the human race against the other half, we will never be able to perform the sacred marriage in which the masculine way of organizing and initiating and the feminine way of harmonizing are united in a system of mutuality in which both are valued equally.

To most of its followers, traditional Wicca represents an opportunity to perform this sacred marriage and thus to create the conjoined state of androgyny that many believe has the potential to heal, not only our fragmented psyches, but the dangerously disordered relationship between us and our planet. To do so would require a more coherent theological system than Wicca has yet been able, in its few short decades of existence, to produce, but progress is being made and hopes are high. The development of such a system, however, requires a level of inclusiveness and a capacity for integration that seems noticeably absent from Starhawk's teachings.

In her final vision of a Goddess-blessed future, Starhawk sheds a great deal of light on her own inner processes. In Starhawk's San Francisco of tomorrow, "no one goes hungry, no one is left to die alone, I can walk the dark streets without fearing violence, the air is clean, life has returned to the waters of the Bay, we are at peace, everyone has work to do."<sup>206</sup> Starhawk apparently wants the political power to create a world that is completely safe, not only safe from violence, but safe from any fear of violence. Starhawk wants life to return to a level of security that she projects on a millennia-old Civilization of the Goddess, but seems more likely based on her own vision of the lost paradise of her orderly, peaceful, and protected upper-middle class childhood, in which life is expected to always continue as it has been, a comforting illusion of sameness, psychic stability, and permanence. Starhawk is clearly unfamiliar with Bronislaw Malinowski's warning that magical systems must be defended against the 'association of ideas under the influence of desire' and the 'belief that hope cannot fail nor desire deceive.'

Starhawk's lightly politicized version of the 'peaceful kingdom' of Rousseau, with its denial of violence (of the fact that we eat each other in order to live) is more than reminiscent of the Protestant vision of a Heaven of smug ascetic bliss—where there is no eating and thus no violence, no dissatisfaction and thus no conflict, no gender and thus no sacred marriage—and has proved to be very appealing to that portion of our culture which is fixated on those twin obsessions of the Protestant spirit of capitalism, personal safety and material gain. She stresses the need for the satisfaction of

material needs, ignoring the (genuine) ancient wisdom that warns against allowing our imaginary needs to become greater than our imaginations can fulfill, lest we condemn ourselves to poverty.<sup>207</sup> Starhawk continually capitalizes the word ‘Self’ in her writing, invoking the style by which the Jungians connote the inner self or soul, and Gestaltists indicate the Higher Self or divine being. But Starhawk’s ‘Self’ derives more from the utilitarian ethic of the human potential movement than to either Jung or Perls. “Work for yourself and you will see that Self is everywhere.”<sup>208</sup> Starhawk repeats this admonition several times in the book, identifying it as traditional Craft wisdom. She actively encourages enlightened self-interest, casually assuming that it will become ‘something sacred’ through ‘awareness.’<sup>209</sup>

Neither Starhawk’s studied other-world naïveté, her eagerness to wield powerful archetypal shadow energies (particularly those of the Martyr and the Victim) while militantly insisting that all the darkness surrounding the mythology of the Witch is the result of patriarchal slander, her willingness to use kaleidoscopic shifts in organizational emphasis and a rigid insistence on consensus decision-making as methods of intimidation, nor her reluctance to protect devotees from domination by those drawn to her movement for material gain or the satisfaction of narcissistic leadership pathologies, are any more or less than what two decades of study by sociologists have led us to expect from charismatic leaders of new religious movements. But it is the noticeable deficiency within Starhawk’s religious movement of any organized system of internal evaluation, especially one which would acknowledge how inevitable psychological inconsistencies and frailties can effect the visionary insights of even the most idealistic and charismatic leader, that makes it very difficult for her movement to develop a coherent theological system.

Witchcraft was already thriving in Britain and America, and especially in California, for some time before the advent of Starhawk—a fact that may come as a surprise to the many people whose first contact with the Craft came through reading *The Spiral Dance*. Both Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca from England and San Francisco’s own NROOGD had been well established in the Bay Area for over a decade when Starhawk arrived from Los Angeles in the mid-70s. She interacted extensively with all these traditions and drew upon them heavily for her book. Doreen Valiente’s ‘Charge of the Goddess,’ for example, appears almost word-for-word,<sup>210</sup> but the footnote reference denies any knowledge of its provenance.<sup>211</sup> Likewise, Starhawk quotes at length and in detail from an element of Gardnerian initiatory lore, but she carefully excises all its well-known references to erotic flagellation, and refers to this body of work only as a “traditional Craft myth.”<sup>212</sup> From the beginning of the book onward, she makes extensive use of NROOGD liturgy and practice without ever crediting her source.

A careful reading of *The Spiral Dance* makes it plain that Starhawk was fascinated by the Witchcraft scene she found flourishing in the Bay Area

in the mid-1970s. Although she may have found California Wicca's unabashed eroticism and Rabelaisian joviality too coarse for her taste, and its rigorous code of ethics too restrictive for her political program, Starhawk clearly had no objections to befriending the superstars of the movement, like Aidan Kelly of NROOGD, Victor Anderson of the Faeri tradition, and Tom DeLong ('Gwydion,' the pagan bard), adapting the theology and structure of their religion and producing a politicized, bowdlerized, and emasculated version of the Craft. *The Spiral Dance*—the book used by an entire generation of readers seeking a connection to modern Witchcraft—uses the language, ritual, music, and fashion of Wicca in order to sacralize Starhawk's political agenda, an essentially secular system of beliefs which in many ways belie the ethical, egalitarian, sexual, historical, and spiritual principles of traditional Neopagan Witchcraft.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Robbins, *CULTS, CONVERTS AND CHARISMA: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (London: Sage, 1988), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> “And so the God is the proud stag who haunts the heart of the deepest forest, that of the Self. He is the stallion, swift as thought, whose crescent hooves leave lunar marks even as they strike sparks of solar fire. He is the goat Pan, lust and fear, the animal emotions that are also the fostering powers of human life; and He is the moon-bull, with its crescent horns, its strength, and its hooves that thunder over the earth.”—Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) p. 100. *I have intentionally restricted the scope of this paper to the original edition, on the grounds that it is still the most available and the most universally read version of the book. I am aware that Starhawk has revised many of her political and psychological opinions in her subsequent books and in the 10th Anniversary Edition of The Spiral Dance (HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), but these revision, particularly of the passages quoted herein, are of a superficial and equivocal nature, and a commentary on the complex issues raised by these and other revisions would be more appropriate as the subject for a different kind of paper.*

<sup>3</sup> Starhawk, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> “To Witches...all things—plants, animals, stones, and stars—are alive, are on some level conscious beings. All things are divine, are manifestations of the Goddess.”—Starhawk, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> “Witchcraft holds to the truth of paradox and sees each view as equally valid.”—Starhawk, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> “The Craft has always valued the dark as well as the light: Both Goddess and God have aspects in which they are imaged as black, and these are aspects of power and wonder, not horror.”—Starhawk, p. 106.

<sup>7</sup> Starhawk, p. 26; p. 26; p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> “The nature of the Goddess is never single. Whenever she appears she embodies both poles of duality — life in death, death in life. She has a thousand names, a thousand aspects. ... She is the light and the darkness ... who makes manifest *all* possibilities.”—Starhawk, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> “The Goddess does not rule the world; She is the world.”—Starhawk, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> “The Goddess is not separate from the world—She *is* the world, and all things in it: moon, sun, earth, star, stone, seed, flowing river, wind, wave, leaf and branch, bud and blossom, fang and claw, woman and man. In Witchcraft, flesh and spirit are one.”—Starhawk, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> “The Goddess does not exclude the male; She contains him.”—Starhawk, p. 10.

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- <sup>12</sup> "...the dark, waning aspect of the God is not evil—it is a vital part of the natural cycle."—Starhawk, p. 29.
- <sup>13</sup> "The God embodies the power of feeling ... of undisguised emotion ... he is untamed. But untamed feelings are very different from enacted violence. The God ... remains within the orbit of the Goddess; his power is always directed toward the service of life."—Starhawk, p. 97.
- <sup>14</sup> "The Horned God represents powerful, positive male qualities that derive from deeper sources than the stereotypes and the violence and emotional crippling of men in our society. If a man had been created in the Horned God's image, he would be free to be wild without being cruel, angry without being violent, sexual without being coercive, spiritual without being unsexed, and able to truly love."—Starhawk, p. 95.
- <sup>15</sup> Starhawk, p. 38.
- <sup>16</sup> "The God does not perpetrate acts of sadomasochism of the Goddess nor preach to Her the 'power of sexual surrender.' It is He that surrenders, to the power of his own feeling."—Starhawk, p. 100.
- <sup>17</sup> Starhawk, p. 97.
- <sup>18</sup> "... women and men ... celebrate the mysteries of the Triple Goddess of birth, love, and death, and of her Consort, the Hunter, who Lord of the Dance of Life ..."—Starhawk, p. 2.
- <sup>19</sup> "In a world where the endlessly transforming, erotic dance of God and goddess weaves radiant through all things, we who step to their rhythm are enraptured with wonder and mystery of being."—Starhawk, p. 33.
- <sup>20</sup> "... in the long run, a female-only model of the universe would prove to be as constricting and oppressive, to women as well as men, as the patriarchal model has been. One of the tasks of religion is to guide us in relationship to both that which is like ourselves, and that which is unlike ourselves. Sex is the most basic of differences; we cannot become whole by pretending difference does not exist, or by denying either male or female."—Starhawk, p. 27.
- <sup>21</sup> "The men invoked the Horned God, and [the women] took turns invoking the Goddess and directing the cone of power. I became more relaxed in the role of leader."—Starhawk, p. 40.
- <sup>22</sup> "The Female is seen as the life-giving force, the power of manifestation, of energy flowing into the world to become form. The Male is seen as the death force, in a positive, not a negative form."—Starhawk, p. 27.
- <sup>23</sup> Starhawk, pp. 55-57.
- <sup>24</sup> "For a man, the Goddess, as well as being the universal life force, is his own, hidden, female self. ... He may chase Her forever, and She will elude him, but through the attempt he will grow, until he learns to find Her within."—Starhawk, p. 85.

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<sup>25</sup> Starhawk, p. 6; p. 160.

<sup>26</sup> “Although there are many men in modern Witchcraft, ... they are less immediately attracted to the Craft than women. [the Craft] offers women a model of female strength and creative power ... but for men, it demands a giving up of traditional forms of power and traditional concepts of religion. What it offers men is more subtle and not always easy to comprehend. ... Men are not subservient or relegated to second-class spiritual citizenship in Witchcraft. [but] many men find the prospect [of interacting with strong, empowered women] disconcerting.”—Starhawk, p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> “... the ‘Chosen People Syndrome.’ When there is one Right True and Only Way—Ours”—and everybody else is wrong ... We are excused from recognizing their humanness and from treating them according to the ethics with which we treat each other. Generally, the Chosen People set about the task of purifying themselves from any contact with the carriers of evil.”—Starhawk, p. 189.

<sup>28</sup> “Women need women’s spaces, especially at this point in history when many of us are recovering from hurts inflicted by men. There is a special intensity in women’s mysteries and an unequaled intimacy in women’s covens. Women who love other women, or who live Virgin, belonging to themselves alone, attain a very special power.”—Starhawk, p. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Robert S. Ellwood and Harry B. Partin, *RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *MAGIC, SCIENCE AND RELIGION* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Robbins, p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Rieff, *THE TRIUMPH OF THE THERAPEUTIC: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 114.

<sup>38</sup> Sukie Colegrave, *UNITING HEAVEN AND EARTH* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1989), p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> John P. Dourley, *THE GODDESS, MOTHER OF THE TRINITY: A Jungian Implication* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990), p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> Ellwood & Partin, pp. 30-31.

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- <sup>41</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 52
- <sup>42</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 31.
- <sup>43</sup> Eric J. Sharp, *COMPARATIVE RELIGION: A History*, 1975; 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1986), (class notes)
- <sup>44</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 35.
- <sup>45</sup> Sharp, p. 117.
- <sup>46</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>47</sup> Robbins, p. 10.
- <sup>48</sup> Starhawk p. 23.
- <sup>49</sup> “There are many ways of running from the Shadow ... A defense strategy favored by many ‘spiritual’ people is an elaborate form of denial, an assertion that the individual has ‘gone beyond’ the shadow qualities of sexuality, anger, passion, desire, and self-interest ... adopting a posture of transcendent superiority ...”—Starhawk, p. 145.
- <sup>50</sup> “Projection is another favorite strategy. When negative qualities are sensed, it is easy to simply propel them outward and assign them to some other person or group. The special appeal of this strategy is that projection creates conflict, which is dramatic, exciting, and distracting.”—Starhawk, p. 146.
- <sup>51</sup> “Love for life in all its forms is the basic ethic of Witchcraft. Witches are bound to honor and respect all living things, and to serve the life force. ... the Craft recognizes that life feeds on life and that we must kill in order to survive ... serving the life force means working to preserve the diversity of natural life, to prevent the poisoning of the environment and the destruction of species.”—Starhawk, p. 11.
- <sup>52</sup> “Powers and abilities gained through heightened awareness must also be used responsibly, otherwise, like the Ring of Sauron (in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*) they will destroy their possessors.”—Starhawk, p. 19.
- <sup>53</sup> “The sources of inner power are unlimited. One person’s power does not diminish another’s; instead, as each covener comes into her own power, the power of the group grows stronger.”—Starhawk, p. 37.
- <sup>54</sup> “Coveners help each other best simply by not being seduced into each other’s defense strategies.”—Starhawk, p. 147.
- <sup>55</sup> “The practice of magic demands the development of what is called the magical *will*. ... Those who would practice magic must be scrupulously honest in their personal lives. ... magic works on the principle that ‘It is so because I say it is so.’ For my word to take on such force, I must be deeply and completely convinced that it is identified with truth as I know it.”—Starhawk, p. 111.

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- <sup>56</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. 46.
- <sup>57</sup> Bettelheim, p. 51.
- <sup>58</sup> Marie-Louise von Franz, *AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERPRETATION OF FAIRY TALES* (Dallas: Spring, 1970), p. 12.
- <sup>59</sup> Marie-Louise von Franz, *SHADOW AND EVIL IN FAIRY TALES* (Dallas: Spring, 1974), p. 92.
- <sup>60</sup> Dourley, p. 63.
- <sup>61</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>62</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 9.
- <sup>63</sup> Edward C. Whitmont, *RETURN OF THE GODDESS* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 134.
- <sup>64</sup> Whitmont, p. 240.
- <sup>65</sup> Leo Booth, *When God Becomes a Drug: Breaking the Chains of Religious Addiction & Abuse* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1991), p. 89.
- <sup>66</sup> Raphael Patai, *THE HEBREW GODDESS* (Tel Aviv: KTAV Publishing, 1967), p. 274.
- <sup>67</sup> Patai, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>68</sup> Patai, p. 23.
- <sup>69</sup> Patai, p. 271.
- <sup>70</sup> Stephan A. Hoeller, "The Divine Feminine in Recent World Events," *GNOSIS* 24 (1992): p. 11.
- <sup>71</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>72</sup> Booth, p. 30.
- <sup>73</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *RELIGIONS, VALUES, AND PEAK-EXPERIENCES* (New York: Viking, 1964), p. xi.
- <sup>74</sup> Malinowski, p. 83.
- <sup>75</sup> Robbins, pp. 116-17.
- <sup>76</sup> Robbins, p. 101.
- <sup>77</sup> Robbins, p. 102.



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- <sup>78</sup> Robbins, p. 119.
- <sup>79</sup> Robbins, p. 106.
- <sup>80</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 20.
- <sup>81</sup> von Franz (1970), p. 89.
- <sup>82</sup> Aidan Kelly, *CRAFTING THE ART OF MAGIC, BOOK I: A History of Modern Witchcraft, 1939-1964* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1991), p. 16-17.
- <sup>83</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 70.
- <sup>84</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *BIBLE BELIEVERS: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987), p. 3.
- <sup>85</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 13.
- <sup>86</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 33.
- <sup>87</sup> Peter L. Berger, *THE SACRED CANOPY: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 125.
- <sup>88</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>89</sup> Booth, p. 88.
- <sup>90</sup> Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, *THE FUTURE OF RELIGION: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, California UP, 1985), p. 210.
- <sup>91</sup> "... scientists are a curious case. By tradition and training they are intractably modest. Claims to spiritual perception rarely occur explicitly in their work."—Rieff, p. 256.
- <sup>92</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 14.
- <sup>93</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>94</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 7.
- <sup>95</sup> Emile Durkheim, *THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE*, trans. J. W. Swain (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915), p. 47.
- <sup>96</sup> Clifford Geertz, *THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURES*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), (class notes)
- <sup>97</sup> Stark & Bainbridge, p. 209.
- <sup>98</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 26.
- <sup>99</sup> Ellwood, p. 27.

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<sup>100</sup> Geertz, p. 127.

<sup>101</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *ALTERNATIVE ALTARS: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago UP, 1979), pp. 22-21.

<sup>102</sup> “[The Goddess] does not legitimize the rule of either sex by the other and lends no authority to rulers of temporal hierarchies. In Witchcraft, each of us must reveal our own truth.”—Starhawk, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> “During the Burning Times ... persecution was most sternly directed against coven members ... [so] covens were isolated from one another, and traditions became fragmented, teachings forgotten.”—Starhawk, p. 37.

<sup>104</sup> *By all accounts, this figure first appeared in 1952 in an inscription on the door of Gerald Gardner’s Witchcraft Museum on the Isle of Man. Recent more scholarly estimates set the figure of folk-medicine practitioners, village occultists, and the like, who perished at the hands of both the Protestant and Catholic authorities in the Inquisition as between 20,000 and 40,000. See: Ronald Hutton, The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Blackwell, 1991)

<sup>105</sup> The Inquisition was “unleashed” against the Old Religion in 1484 by the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII— “The persecution was most strongly directed against women: Of an estimated 9 million Witches executed, 80 percent were women ...”—Starhawk, p. 5. *See also:* p. 6: “... elderly, senile, the mentally ill, women whose looks weren’t pleasing or who suffered from some handicap, village beauties who bruised the wrong egos by rejecting advances ... homosexuals and freethinkers ...”

<sup>106</sup> “As a good general reference on traditional materials, and an excellent course book for Dianic Witchcraft, see Z. Budapest, *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows* (Venice, Calif.: Luna Publications, 1976)”—Starhawk, p. 72.

<sup>107</sup> Starhawk, p. 95.

<sup>108</sup> “The symbolism of the Goddess has taken on an electrifying power for modern women. The rediscovery of the ancient matrifocal civilizations has given us a deep sense of pride in woman’s ability to create and sustain culture. It has exposed the falsehoods of patriarchal history, and given us models of female strength and authority.”—Starhawk, p. 77. *Starhawk brushes aside the concerns of those who remember the turmoil that has resulted in the past when magical and mythological systems have been misappropriated for political purposes. See also:* p. 13: “The Nazis were not Goddess worshippers [since] they denigrated women.”

<sup>109</sup> “Political actions could be more effective if they were consciously understood to be energy workings.”—Starhawk, p. 130.

<sup>110</sup> “... for most women the ego is like a fragile African violet, grown in secret from a seed, carefully nursed and fertilized and sheltered from too much sun.”—Starhawk, p. 193.

<sup>111</sup> “... women cannot become whole by being yet more passive, gently and submissive than we already are. We become whole through knowing our strength and creativity, our

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aggression, our sexuality, by affirming the Self, not denying it.”—Starhawk, p. 193.

<sup>112</sup> “The Goddess liberates the energy of our anger. It is seen as sacred, and its power is purified....Anger becomes a connecting force that spurs honest confrontation and communications with others.”—Starhawk, p. 81.

<sup>113</sup> “... The Goddess inspires women to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred...our aggression as healthy, our anger as purifying, and...our power to limit and destroy when necessary, as the very force that sustains all life.”—Starhawk, p. 9. *See also:* p. 96: “... [in a patriarchal culture] men are allowed to be angry and women are not.” *Starhawk must never have lived in a Jewish household.*

<sup>114</sup> “Men in the Craft must come to terms with woman’s power...a man must also know and accept the power of his own, inner, female self...[but] many men find the prospect [of interacting with strong, empowered women] disconcerting.”—Starhawk, p. 101.

<sup>115</sup> Rieff, p. 134.

<sup>116</sup> Bryan R. Wilson, *MAGIC AND THE MILLENNIUM: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 70.

<sup>117</sup> Pat Califia, *PUBLIC SEX: The Culture of Radical Sex* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1994), p. 240.

<sup>118</sup> Ammerman, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> Ellwood, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 25.

<sup>121</sup> Ellwood, p. 25.

<sup>122</sup> Ammerman, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Arthur J. Deikman, *THE WRONG WAY HOME* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), pp. 23-24.

<sup>124</sup> Dourley, p. 30.

<sup>125</sup> S. Arterburn and J. Felton, *TOXIC FAITH: Understanding and Overcoming Religious Addiction* (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1991), p. 173.

<sup>126</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 22.

<sup>127</sup> Arterburn & Felton, pp. 147-48.

<sup>128</sup> Arterburn & Felton, pp. 153-54.

<sup>129</sup> Maslow, pp. ix-x.

<sup>130</sup> “Witchcraft strongly imbues the view that all things are interdependent and interrelated

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and therefore mutually responsible. An act that harms anyone harms us all.”—Starhawk, p. 12.

<sup>131</sup> “Spells that influence another person depend on a psychic link. ... you must be at least partly identified with that other person. You *become* the other, as well as becoming the energy you send. For this reason, ‘What you send returns on you, three times over.’ The energy you project to another affects *you* even more strongly than the other person ...”—Starhawk, p. 114.

<sup>132</sup> “No matter how much hate, envy, and rage we direct at tailgaters, business competitors, ex-lovers, and close relations, we will not esoterically affect either their physical or mental health—although we may affect our own.”—Starhawk, p. 112.

<sup>133</sup> “...to use magic for destruction is not synonymous with using it for evil. Cancer must be destroyed for healing to take place. A person who threatens the safety of others must be stopped.”—Starhawk, p. 114.

<sup>134</sup> “... the Conference on Violence and Pornography ... Three thousand women march through the streets where the topless bars and sex shows blare a constant, neon assault.”—Starhawk, p. 185.

<sup>135</sup> “Love of self for self is the creative force of the universe. [Love is *not*] the universal, sexless charity of *agape*, or indiscriminate sexual desire.”—Starhawk, p. 25.

<sup>136</sup> Starhawk, p. 189.

<sup>137</sup> Dourley, p. 50.

<sup>138</sup> Booth, p. 71.

<sup>139</sup> Califia, p. 186.

<sup>140</sup> Mary Douglas, *PURITY AND DANGER: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), p. 53.

<sup>141</sup> Douglas, p. 48.

<sup>142</sup> Durkheim, p. 45.

<sup>143</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *THE RITES OF PASSAGE*, trans. M. Vizedom & G. Caffee (Chicago UP, 1960), (class notes)

<sup>144</sup> Durkheim, p. 42.

<sup>145</sup> Durkheim, p. 410.

<sup>146</sup> Douglas, p. 170.

<sup>147</sup> Douglas, p. 169.

<sup>148</sup> Class notes.

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- <sup>149</sup> Califia, p. 240.
- <sup>150</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Wills: Men, Women And Rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975)
- <sup>151</sup> Bradley Te Paske, *Rape and Ritual* (Toronto: Inner City, 1982), pp. 18, 21.
- <sup>152</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 37.
- <sup>153</sup> Douglas, p. 52.
- <sup>154</sup> Robbins, p. 138.
- <sup>155</sup> Robbins, p. 139.
- <sup>156</sup> Class notes.
- <sup>157</sup> Ellwood & Partin, p. 8.
- <sup>158</sup> Wilson, p. 25.
- <sup>159</sup> Wilson, p. 24.
- <sup>160</sup> Wilson, p. 27.
- <sup>161</sup> Wilson, p. 71.
- <sup>162</sup> Wilson, p. 224.
- <sup>163</sup> Ammerman, p. 2.
- <sup>164</sup> Wilson, p. 68.
- <sup>165</sup> Sharp, p. 188.
- <sup>166</sup> Ellwood, p. 172.
- <sup>167</sup> Malinowski, p. 140.
- <sup>168</sup> Whitmont, p. 177.
- <sup>169</sup> Malinowski, p. 87.
- <sup>170</sup> Robbins, p. 137.
- <sup>171</sup> Rieff, p. 116.
- <sup>172</sup> Rieff, p. 129.
- <sup>173</sup> Malinowski, p. 85.

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<sup>174</sup> e.g., *the Thesmophoria*.

<sup>175</sup> Frederick Engels, *THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND THE STATE*, 1884; ed. E. Reed. (New York, Pathfinder, 1972) pp. 28-29.

<sup>176</sup> Engels, p. 9.

<sup>177</sup> Engels, pp. 44-45.

<sup>178</sup> Engels, p. 162.

<sup>179</sup> "... Witchcraft began more than 35 thousand years ago ... the Mother Goddess, the birthgiver, who brings into existence all life; and the Horned God, hunter and hunted, who eternally passes through the gates of death that new life may go on ... Male shamans dressed in skins and horns in identification with the God and the herds; but female priestesses presided naked, embodying the fertility of the Goddess."—Starhawk, p. 3.

<sup>180</sup> "Mathematics, astronomy, poetry, music, medicine, and the understanding of the workings of the human mind developed side by side with the lore of the deeper mysteries. But in other lands, cultures developed that devoted themselves to the arts of war. Wave after wave of invasion swept over Europe from the Bronze Age on. Warrior gods drove the Goddess peoples out from the fertile lowlands and fine temples, into the hills and high mountains where they became known as the Sidhe, the Picts or Pixies, the Fair Folk or Faeries."—Starhawk, p. 4.

<sup>181</sup> Starhawk, p. 29; p. 24.

<sup>182</sup> "Even well-meaning, sensitive, and thinking men—including Robert Graves who has probably been the greatest force for revival of interest in the Goddess in this century—perpetuate the myths [that, quoting Joseph Campbell] 'human sacrifice...is everywhere characteristic of the worship of the Goddess.'"—Starhawk, p. 31.

<sup>183</sup> *Starhawk quotes Murray concerning Joan of Arc's appellation as the 'Maid of Orleans:* "'Maiden' is a term of high respect in Witchcraft, and it has been suggested that the French peasantry loved Joan so greatly because she was, in truth, a leader of the Old Religion."—Starhawk, p. 5.

<sup>184</sup> Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Dial Press, 1976) is described as "One of the best recent historical sources on the Goddess."—Starhawk, p. 92.

<sup>185</sup> Kate Slater, "Full Circle," *Songs of the Dayshift Foreman* 57 (Calgary, 1994): p. 12.

<sup>186</sup> "Historical reports of matrifocal cultures most often come from their enemies and conquerors, who are likely to paint a black picture of the religious customs of their foes."—Starhawk, p. 31.

<sup>187</sup> "References are given for the purpose of indicating descriptions and illustrations of archaeological and anthropological finds that corroborate Craft oral tradition. The interpretations given here of the meanings of finds and customs illustrate Craft traditions of

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our history, and are by no means meant to be taken as academically accepted or proven. If scholars agree on anything, it is that they don't know what many of these figures meant, or how they were used.”—Starhawk, p. 15.

<sup>188</sup> James Mellaart, *ÇATAL HÜYÜK: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 70.

<sup>189</sup> Walter Rast, *Introductory Handbook to Palestinian Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992), p. 115.

<sup>190</sup> Esther M. Harding, *WOMAN'S MYSTERIES: Ancient and Modern* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 155-56.

<sup>191</sup> Colegrave, p. 26.

<sup>192</sup> Colegrave, p. 31.

<sup>193</sup> Colegrave, p. 12

<sup>194</sup> Dourley, p. 54.

<sup>195</sup> Colegrave, p. 43.

<sup>196</sup> Colegrave, p. 48.

<sup>197</sup> Dourley, p. 64.

<sup>198</sup> Robbins, p. 141.

<sup>199</sup> Dourley, p. 56.

<sup>200</sup> Robbins, p. 135.

<sup>201</sup> Dourley, p. 58.

<sup>202</sup> Dourley, pp. 59-60.

<sup>203</sup> Colegrave, p. xii.

<sup>204</sup> Colegrave, p.192.

<sup>205</sup> Colegrave, p. 196.

<sup>206</sup> Starhawk, p. 199.

<sup>207</sup> “If you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.”—Thomas O Lambdin, trans. “The Gospel of Thomas,” *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed., James M Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) p. 126, Saying 3e.

<sup>208</sup> Starhawk, p. 82.

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<sup>209</sup> “In Witchcraft, we do not fight self-interest; we follow it, but with an awareness that transmutes it into something sacred.”—Starhawk, p. 110.

<sup>210</sup> Starhawk, p. 77.

<sup>211</sup> pp. 91-92: “The Charge of the Goddess is traditional to almost all branches of Witchcraft ... No one knows when or by whom it was first composed, or even whether it is authentically ancient ...”—Starhawk, pp. 91-92. *In the tenth-anniversary edition of The Spiral Dance, Starhawk acknowledges that the Charge was written by Doreen Valiente, but does so grudgingly, without ever mentioning Gerald Gardner or Gardnerian Wicca.*

<sup>212</sup> Starhawk, p. 160.



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