

# REALISTIC LIVING

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everyday living we were experiencing the burning through of the Spirit states spoken about in the old way of talking. Mathews gave the illustration of a piece of paper, representing our lives, having a lighted match beneath it. First the paper begins to brown, and then it flames. Spirit is like that; it browns and flames the ordinary paper of our everyday lives. This is not supernatural imagery. There is no heavenly realm. Spirit experience happens here and now. The depth dimension of this one reality burns through the more superficial aspects of this one realm.

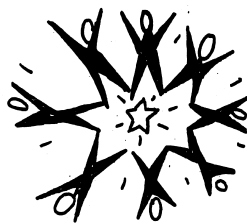
A lecture on this topic appears in the book of Mathews' talks, *Bending History*, that John Epps and others pulled together. On page 164 begins a talk entitled "The Recovery of the Other World." I count this talk one of the most important talks in that book.

The significance of these insights I picture as a historical chart that lives in my mind. Sometime in the nineteenth century humanity began an awakening to the cultural death of a metaphor that had been used and had been found useful for as long as human memory can reach. I picture this now obsolete metaphor as a double-deck chart. The top deck is named "mythic thinking" and the lower deck is named "empirical thinking." This old metaphor was operative throughout recorded history and long before history was recorded. In primitive tribal societies this metaphor was not seen as a metaphor. Though not described with words like "myth" "empirical," "upper" or "lower," the two-space metaphor was operative.

Let us picture a tribal society that had not yet discovered the male role in the origin of new human lives. All they could see was the wonder of new human life emerging from the womb of woman. They used this ordinary experience as a metaphor for Reality as a whole. They envisioned the story of the whole cosmos as a great womb from which all ordinary things emerged. They also viewed this same cosmic womb as a great tomb into which all things returned. Between womb and tomb we humans dwell in the arms of this cosmic Mother whose breasts feed us. We are her children. We owe everything to her. We return to her in our deaths. The myth of the Great Goddess was born. There is evidence for the presence of this myth reaching back at least 25,000 years.

## The Secular Religious Revolution

a memoir by  
Gene Marshall



The most important historical development in the last 200 years was not the splitting of the atom or the invention of the internal combustion engine or the spread of the computer chip, but the advent of a new religious mode.

The most illuminating person that I have known personally, my mentor for 24 years, Joseph W. Mathews, first called this history-changing event "the advent of the secular religious." The four-day course that he and we who were his colleagues taught to thousands of clergy began with a lecture on the cultural revolution. The heart of that lecture was on what we called "the secular revolution." In that talk we spelled out how the ancient two-story metaphorical thinking is being replaced by living in one and only one realm of reality. In that talk we also noted how the imagery of angels and demons was being replaced by imagery about historically unfolding relationships. We opened that course for religious leaders with this talk because we claimed that this revolution in religious sensibilities set the context for the renewal of Christianity and every other religion that one might want to renew.

Later, Mathews claimed that we had stumbled upon an even deeper perception of the secular religious revolution. He called it the discovery of **the other world in the midst of this world**. He illustrated how in the midst of our ordinary,

And this means that the double-realm metaphor reaches back at least 25,000 years. Perhaps this Old Religious Mode is 100,000 years old. I am asking us to stretch our imaginations back that far in order to underline how astonishing it is for a metaphor that old to die. We live in a culture that can no longer honestly believe in the presence of a mythic world of gods and goddesses, or Goddess or God or devils and angels or gremlins and fairies. That once taken-for-granted realm of reality is no longer taken for granted.

All gods and goddesses are GONE. Everything we have meant by religion is GONE. In that sense, religion is GONE, gone forever. Indeed, myth as we once understood myth is GONE.

But that is not the most amazing part of what has happened to us. We are not left with the world of our senses that has been so thoroughly explored by our sciences. In the midst of this empirical, yet mind-made world, the other world of Spirit has burned through. Another religious metaphor has appeared that has taken the place of the older one. And this new metaphor enables our minds to translate the religious insights of past ages into something we can point to in our lives today.

For example, Moses, so the story goes, saw an ordinary bush burn with an ethereal flame. But he did not have our secular religious metaphor to think with. His mind appropriated this experience as a Divine Being speaking to him. He attempted to find a name for this Divine Being, but all his two-story mind could fathom was that the "Divinity" has no name comprehensible to the human. Some unfathomable I AM THAT I AM was speaking to him in imperatives that his consciousness was already brooding upon. He heard speech that said "Let my people go."

Even though we don't talk with Divine Beings anymore (unless we are crazy), we can grasp what Moses was talking about when he tells us about his talk with WHOMEVER. (Please note that it does not matter that this story about Moses has been elaborated by his descendants. Using mere historical empirical thinking, it is difficult to prove that Moses even existed. But in our memory the Moses figure, whether literary or empirical, still lives as a source of insight into the way WHATEVER interacts with humans.) We can experience and may have experienced many times some ordinary something burning with surprising heat. And like Moses, we may have felt called to atypical living in which we surprised ourselves with our own daring that we may have resisted but did anyway. We may still count such moments as the most important events of our lives.

I have only begun to scratch the surface of what

it means to practice a religious practice within this New Religious Mode in which the Spirit Depth of this one world burns through the surface experiences of that world. This way of seeing makes the ordinary extraordinary. Indeed, there is no dualism of ordinary and extraordinary anymore. There is just one REALITY. All our empirical scientific knowledge about that REALITY is only a tiny scratch of order we have imposed upon that extraordinary LAND OF MYSTERY that is ONE, not two or three or many.

In a sense, even an old world hero like Thomas Aquinas might rejoice with us in our New Religious Mode. Clearly, he was a double-deck thinker of great sophistication, stacking the myths of Biblical and Christian thought on top of a foundation of Aristotelian empiricism. He integrated for his culture a way of holding in one life the coming age of science with the Christian treasure chest. Yet one can sense in some of his writing that he was not a strict literalist about his upper-deck talk. He knew that he was "supposing" this mythic world. He may not have realized with our clarity the difference between empirical science and mythic talk. He just had no qualms about being dualistic, for he trusted that the ONE REALITY supported both his empirical thought and his mythic thought and he knew that thought was capable of pointing beyond itself to a REALITY that could not be thought in a literal sense.

The literalization of the second story realm took place after the scientific revolution. Before that revolution, the second story world of mythic talk was just a way of talking about primal matters. Humanity had no other way to talk about those matters. The two-story thinking of Aquinas, Luther, Wesley, Jesus, Moses, Teresa, Hildegard, was not a form of ignorance or contempt for nature or anything we would reject as inherently corrupt. It was just a way of talking. Like ancient Greek or Latin or some other no-longer-living language, the two-story metaphorical system of thought was good for its time. The remarkable thing is that its time is over. We don't need it. We certainly cannot retain it in the literalized form that conservative religious communities now believe. Nevertheless, we are so influenced by the literalized version of this old metaphor that it is difficult for us to imagine a time in which it served humanity quite well.

What is hateful toward nature is the literalized two-story metaphor. Having been literalized it is no longer a genuine metaphor for speaking about Spirit reality; it is a rigid belief in a realm of Reality that is above and better than this ordinary realm of

reality. Life and death and suffering and sex and joy and emotion and politics and economics and the Earth itself are thereby made secondary to an illusory realm that is used as a substitute for life in the here and now. This was not how the great figures of Christian history understood things. To them it was heresy to hold ordinary life in contempt. The transcendent realm was for them imminent in the ordinary realm. Though Jesus spoke of his Papa in Heaven, Heaven for him was taking place here and now. Heaven can come on Earth. "Look," Jesus says, "it is happening here and now. The blind see, the deaf hear, and the cripples are walking their lives." No saying of Jesus needs to imply a literalized two-story worldview. All Jesus' sayings can be translated out of his taken-for-granted two-story metaphorical talk and put plainly to us in our own metaphorical language. We can understand that in his way he was witnessing to the burning through of the ordinary by the extraordinary that is nothing more nor less than the depth of the ordinary itself.

*Oh Mystery without a name whom I will personally address as my dependable parent, may your ever living Presence come to pass on Earth as it is in the profound essence of every ordinary aspect of our lives.*

### Christian Theology after the Death of Myth



When we no longer have gods or goddesses in a spirit realm next door, what becomes of theology? Is all "Theo" or "Thea" dead and all thought about "Theo" or "Thea" meaningless? Clearly, "God" is no longer an idea in a metaphysical system that makes sense of our lives. Also, "God" is no longer a Big Person in a super story about the origin of Everything. And, "God" is no longer an "object" in which we can or cannot believe. In the best of current Christian theology the word "God" or "Goddess" has become shorthand for a devotion toward what we might term "The Final Experience."

*In that light, we can define "theology" as the reflection of a community of people devoted to this Final Experience and its implications.*

Describing this Final Experience is not so easy. It requires story and poetry and some wildness of mind. I will begin with a story about the Big Bang beginning in the cosmology preferred by most physicists. "What was before the Big Bang?" any intelligent child might ask. And the answer we

imaginative story tellers might give is this: "Before the Big Bang was the Infinite Silence." By Infinite Silence we mean a Silence in which there is no noise, no sound, no vibration of any kind. And this means no light, for light is a sort of vibration, an electromagnetic vibration received by the eyes. So before the Big Bang there was Absolute Darkness as well as Infinite Silence.

We can experience this Infinite Silence in the living Now of our lives. The best of meditative practice accesses this Silence. In this Silence we can watch our meager minds do their continuing busyness. We can watch our emotional flows come and go. We can watch our watching enigmatic consciousness watch ourselves watching.

And we can also experience now the Absolute Darkness. St. John of the Cross wrote well of the Dark Night of the Soul, but nowhere have I seen this Darkness described better than in a talk by A. H. Almaas entitled "The Guest Arrives only at Night." (*Diamond Heart, Book Five: Inexhaustible Mystery*, Chapter 2: Shambhala 2011) This Guest is Almaas' poetic term for God, and this Guest arrives in the heart, not the mind. The heart is his symbol for the core of our consciousness, which heart is commonly filled with many supposed possessions. We possess friends, a lover perhaps, a house, a car, a piece of the planet, good health perhaps, money enough perhaps, a good reputation perhaps, a good education perhaps, and so on. Our heart is full of possessions. But in truth we possess nothing. Do we possess the air we breath? Do we possess the wife, the husband, the lover we live with? No, we may have air, wife, husband or lover, but we do not possess them. They are gifts given for the limited time of their presence with us. The deep truth is that we possess nothing. Everything we imagine we possess is just a gift, given for the time being. We are poor, completely poor. Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is, how shall we say it, "The Final Experience of the Guest that Arrives only at Night."

So when the heart is emptied of all our supposed possessions, when this "Night of no possessions" is present, the Guest comes. What is this Experience like? Here is Almaas' description of this Final Experience.

As the Guest begins to reveal itself in the cavity of the heart, we see an amazing brilliance, pure luminosity like lightning that bedazzles you. As it approaches, the brilliance reveals a luminous blackness so absolutely black that it is the most luminous thing you can ever experience. The night of poverty suddenly changes to a luminous

night, a radiant vastness so dark it is absolutely black, but so purely black it is luminous. We behold an immense majesty, an emptiness so void it is total transparency. Yet its beauty dazzles, its power intoxicates, and its intensity totally annihilates. To know it further, we can only reappear as the world, for there is no farther to go back. It is like arriving at the edge of the world, and there is nowhere else to go. Our inner gaze simply switches to outward witnessing, the silent stillness witnessing all manifestation unfolding as its own bedazzling radiance.

This Guest in our poverty-stricken heart is the beginning point for my Christian Theology. I will not speak for the theology of Judaism or Islam, but I recommend that those who practice those religions give attention to the possibility that this Guest is Yahweh and Allah. I find that this Guest is also the I AM THAT I AM of Moses, the Friend of Abraham, the Wrestling Partner of Jacob, the Rock, the Foundation, the Shepherd, the Great Goddess of antiquity, and so on.

It is plain to me that the God and "Abba" of Jesus is this Guest of which Almaas speaks. This is nowhere more clear than in the beatitudes. Here are some of those sayings only slightly reworded: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall share in the richest Experience. Blessed are those that mourn the loss of all idols, for they shall find comfort in the Unassailable Experience. Blessed are the meek (the absolutely vulnerable to what is Real), for they shall receive the whole cosmos. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for authenticity, for they shall taste, eat, and drink the Truly Filling Experience. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall experience clearly the Guest that arrives only in the Black Night of a fully emptied heart.

And if we still want to use the poetry of "I and Thou" we can. Our prayer, our dialogue with the Final Shining Blackness, is not a manipulation of some Big Brother in the high sky to satisfy the wants of our petty ego. Rather our prayer, our dialogue with the Shining Blackness is our initiative to step beyond ego into a Freedom of living that begins with what is Real and moves creatively into the historical manifestations of that Blackness with whom we consort in the solitary moments of our deep prayer.

Christian theology is our devoted reflection about what it means to live in this luminous Blackness and from this Ground of seeing to recast our religious practices, our social vision, and the daily living of our entire lives.

## Cross and Resurrection

an Easter meditation  
by Gene Marshall



The essence of the Christian illumination is transmitted through the symbols of Cross and Resurrection. Here is the deal; you can die now and live the rest of your life in resurrection, or you can resist death until death takes you. This is an either-or choice. Either you give up your life in order to find your true life, or you cling onto what you think is your life and never truly live.

### Dying Now

The symbol of the cross requires some interpretation. We may not have to endure a horrific death of pain and shame. We do not have to sell all our goods and live the rest of our lives like a bum or street urchin. We do not have to join a monastery. We do not have to quit enjoying our food, sleep, fresh air, exercise, play, and love making. This death we are challenged to die in order to live fully, is an inward death. It is a death to who we think we are. It is a death to any and every substitute "me" that needs to be gotten out the way in order for the real "Me" to flourish. And it is a death to what we think Reality is, for my perspective on Reality is fashioned from the viewpoint of my substitute "me."

The "me" we think we are is a "me" we have created over a lifetime. We can picture our personality as a complex set of object relations: me-mommy, me-daddy, me-pretty, me-sweet, me-polite, me-sex, me-smart, me-stupid, me-athlete, me-nerd.

The inward object relation of "me-mother" is not about my real mother in my current life (or in my past life); "me-mother" is just a building block in the foundational layer of my personality. When we say of someone who is 40 years old that they are still attached with an umbilical cord to their mother, we are pointing to something inward in that person, an attachment to an object relation that was built into their psyche when they were one, two, or three years old. This object-relation is what that person must die to in order to be their real independent self in their current life. Such a death may feel like a sacrifice, but it is actually a release from slavery to something in the past that gives rigidity to current living.

But, and this is an important BUT, this death to a false me feels like death. It feels like a sacrifice of something or everything that I currently hold dear. It feels like losing what I fear to lose by actually

terminating my existence on this Earth. It feels like death because it is a sacrifice of who I think I am.

To understand this, we have to look carefully at who we think we are. We can find clues to who we think we are by looking carefully into what we actually treasure about ourselves, about our lives. Do we treasure our athletic ability? Do we treasure our good looks? Do we treasure the reputation we have built up over the years? Do we treasure other people's opinions of us? Do we treasure our moral quality, our politeness, our generosity, our sweet disposition, our successful actions? Do we treasure being a man or a woman or black or brown or tan or yellow or pink or white? Do we treasure being so and so's daughter or son? Do we treasure being so and so's mother or father? Do we treasure being a citizen of our nation? Or state? Or city? Do we treasure being so and so's friend? Do we treasure having good health? Do we treasure having money? Do we treasure the security that we will have food on the table tomorrow, a place to live, a special group of comforts, a library of books, some great writing on our computer? Some or many of these treasures likely define who we think we are. Do we think that clinging to any of these things is clinging to our real life? If so, we have some dying to do in order to find our true lives.

Such dying may feel like a sacrifice, but it is not a sacrifice of anything but a false view of who we are. Instead of seeing this "death" as a sacrifice, we could view it as the unburdening of ourselves from a tangle of lies and falseness that is driving us into anxiety, compulsions, despair, and some downright stupid and malicious living. Such dying is a deliverance from slavery, a liberation from tyranny, a healing, a new birth. No, we don't have to enter again into our mother's womb to be born. And we don't have to wait for our "heavenly reward." We can die now and LIVE now the life of resurrection.

### **Resurrection Now**

So what is this resurrection life like? What is this great treasure that is so great that we can willingly sell every other treasure in order to buy this golden LIFE? In a word, this great treasure is all about following the Truth. Following the Jesus Messiah is following the Truth. Embracing the Jesus Messiah is embracing the Truth. Trusting the Jesus Messiah is trusting the Truth. Loving the Jesus Messiah is loving the Truth, the full Truth and nothing but the Truth. This Truth is not something imposed upon us by Jesus or by some ecclesiastical body or by some philosopher or by some religious teacher or by me or by you. This Truth is the Truth that was the Truth before Jesus was born, the Truth that was the Truth before humanity evolved, the Truth that

was the Truth before the Big Bang banged.

So what is this Truth? Well let's not be too quick here. This Truth cannot be put into words, though libraries have been filled attempting to indicate it or hint towards this Truth. We can know this Truth in a deep and personal way, but we cannot contain it in our heads. This Truth is not a possession we can use to control things. This Truth is THAT which controls us, births us, kills us, supports us, limits us, terrifies us, challenges us, calls us, excites us. And when we accept this Truth, it can fill us with peace beyond our comprehension and with joy unspeakable.

This Truth is mysterious, enigmatic, and everlastingly expanding in its implications. Nevertheless, this Truth is approachable by anyone at any time. Indeed, this Truth approaches us even when we are attempting to flee from it. The Resurrection is experiencing Now the Truth that is already our actual BE-ing in this Wondrous Land of Mystery. This Truth is our embeddedness within the enigmatic flow of consciousness that carries us into a deep, forgiving, generous, firm, outgoing love for all Be-ings, including ourselves. Our actual Resurrected BE-ing has also been characterized as peace beyond all understanding, joy unspeakable, finding our bliss, finding our courageous heart, our indefeatable strength, our LIFE in the Eternal Now, and more. A thousand sermons could not finish describing what these phrases are pointing to. And we need those sermons. We need to compare notes with one another, witness to one another, rejoice with one another, encourage one another on this endless journey into BE-ing our true BE-ing.

But, and this is the BUT we do not want to hear, we have to die to our false self in order for this true SELF to consciously appear and flourish in our actual living. So what has to die? We cannot die to the mere fact of having a personality. Personality is a complex maze of object relations that seem to tell us who we are and what Reality is. This inward construction was put together by our own consciousness as a means of surviving and functioning in the world of challenges that we have faced. That complex collection of mentally constructed me-ness is still valuable in real but limited ways.

I could not get through my day without my personality; nevertheless, this personality-me is not ME. It is a fabrication, a substitution, a useful lie that has served me in many limited ways. Now, as I inquire into BE-ing my true BE-ing, I must die in my identification with that personality in order to experience my true BE-ing and identify with that BE-ing. Such new identification is very different



from the old identification. In fact, to even call this new SELF an “identification” may mislead us. The old identification required some effort in order to be it. Indeed, it required some defense in order to continue being it. But the “identification” with my true BE-ing requires no effort, and this true BE-ing cannot be and need not be defended. True BE-ing just IS, empowered by the Mysterious Reality that posits it as my inescapable BE-ing.

I may have spent most of my life trying to escape this inescapable BE-ing, but no escape is possible. So, I have been under strain, the strain of trying to be what I am not. This strain can become deep frustration, for trying to be what I cannot be is a losing game. Indeed, as I become aware of the impossibility of becoming the me that I want to be but cannot be, frustration becomes despair. I can become so hopeless that I am inclined to suicide. This inclination to suicide is a self talk that says, “If I cannot be who I think I am, then I do not want to live at all.”

So what is it like to get off this path to suicidal despair? It means surrendering who I think I am into being the BE-ing that is inescapably being sustained in BE-ing. And this is the meaning of resurrection. Having died to falseness, I am resurrected to Truth.

Now this Truth includes the limitations of my body, its health and sickness, its vitality and weaknesses, its abilities and inabilities, its survivals and its inevitable death. Resurrection is resurrection of the body and of all that the body is. It means a new attitude toward the body. It does not mean rejection of the body. It does not mean demeaning the body as a tragic “Earth suit” in which my “divine spark” is trapped. It means a thorough-going acceptance and love of the body and all that the body is and is not. Resurrection means a full acceptance of emotions, sex, intimate life, eating, sleeping, playing, laughing, rest, and creaturely pleasures as well as awe-filled joy.

Resurrection means an acceptance of the finite nature of all these bodily dynamics. Resurrection includes the end of all possessiveness. Resurrection may enjoy a lover, but not possess a lover. Resurrection may enjoy a house, but not possess a house. Resurrection may enjoy the whole Earth, but not possess any piece of it. Resurrection may enjoy ecstatic states but not possess ecstatic states. The Resurrected life possesses nothing; it is a life that has already died to everything. “Blessed are the poor in Spirit” (i.e. those who possess nothing), for theirs is the opportunity to enjoy everything as a gift. Possessiveness is a rejection of my true BE-ing. My true BE-ing is thoroughly detached from everything, but nevertheless engaged in everything.

Only such detached and engaged BE-ing is a love of the Truth.

And Truth is not a bunch of ideas in our heads. Truth is simply what IS, a Mysteriousness that our heads may move toward but can never possess. Loving the Truth is a matter of the heart, not the mind. Moving toward the Truth includes a realization of the various falsenesses that Truth reveals. We are not talking about a thoroughgoing relativism that claims that every opinion or perspective is as good as any other. Yes, there are many perspectives and all of them are limited, but the Truth IS and this mysterious ISNESS judges all perspectives and reveals that some perspectives are better than others.

So, if the Resurrection means loving and following the Truth, then Resurrection is nothing more and nothing less than embracing the scientific knowledge of our times, the contemplative wisdom of our times, and the pull-togethers that work for our times. And this passion for Truth is not something alien to us. It is the real “Me” that flourishes when every false “me” of my own creation has been killed. Paul put it this way, “We were crucified with Christ.” That is, every object-relation those disciples had projected upon this amazing Jesus person was killed along with Jesus in his disgraceful and seemingly absurd death. The holiness of our own beings, the same holiness that characterized the life of Jesus, was released in us when Jesus was rejected by a humanity still trapped in their false selves. These disciples saw “what prophets and kings longed to see, but did not see.” We can also see that in order to be raised up to Truthful living, we must die to everything that might define our lives other than this one thing – living the Truth as the Truth actually comes to us in the ordinary, yet extraordinary, everyday events of our lives.

**If following Jesus is simply following the Truth  
why practice a Jesus Messiah religious practice  
rather than some other religious practice?**

We cannot escape this question. When we notice the perversions into which Christian practitioners have sunk, we can clearly see that these practitioners are not following the Truth as outlined above. Therefore, practicing Christianity entails rebuilding Christian practice from A to Z. Why not just start over with some new religion? Why not just join in the Jewish Paganism of Starhawk or the Almaas-informed Buddhism of Jack Kornfield, or any of the other promising religious experiments going on? If following the Truth is the real deal, what need have we for Jesus, Cross, Resurrection, Sin, Faith, Love, Freedom,

Holy Spirit, God Almighty, monotheism, humility, gratitude, compassion, worship, study, communal covenant, justice-loving social action, and the other topics that the most sincere Christians attempt to find meaningful?

A helpful religious practice is one that helps you follow the Truth. If you cannot create or find a Christian practice that helps you to do that, then you need to abandon Christian practice and try something else. Many are doing that, and I affirm them in their choice to do so.

But let us consider the possibility that the Christian heritage has carried some important awarenesses of what following the Truth is like – awarenesses that may be more dim in other heritages. For example, some who propose new religions or other-than-Christian religions tend to be weak on topics like sin, justice, and law. I will briefly say what I mean by this:

The vision of Death and Resurrection presupposes a very deep malady from which humans must be delivered. This malady is not a flaw in our human nature; it is best described as a temptation built into human consciousness that makes it almost inevitable that a human being will substitute some human-made sense of Reality for the Reality that IS. This is the “original sin.” Sin is not a flaw in human nature, but a mistake made by human consciousness and perpetuated from generation to generation by human societies. We can be delivered from this mistake by Death and Resurrection, but the historical fact of a widespread entanglement in this mistake is an important part of the Truth that the resurrected person is called upon to creatively deal with.

The fact of sin is part of the Truth. Living the Truth will mean being opposed by (and sometimes violently opposed by) those who tolerate no challenge to their self-made sense of reality. “Sin” is very deep, a very profound part of our lives. It not only appears in the other people with whom we must deal, it appears in our own still unsanctified life. Our deliverance from sin is always in a state of incompleteness. The victory over sin has been won, but this victory must still be realized by each person in each moment and each society in each era of its history.

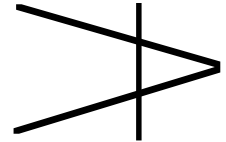
This brings us to the topic of justice and law. Judaism and Christianity have been strong on the need for witness and action relative to social justice as a means of restraining this deep mistake of sin that humans tend to embody. Law is not a means of deliverance from sin, but it is a means of restraining the consequences of sin so that the ongoing work of deliverance can continue.

Relative to the decision to embrace a Christian

practice, this “news” about sin and law and justice may not be encouraging to many people. For in addition to straightening out some very perverted Christian traditions, we are volunteering to take on creative responsibility for planet-wide justice in this sick and dangerous period of history. Someone needs to do this. “But why me?” said Moses and very long list of others.

As Jesus put it to his sleepy disciples after his prayerful night before his onrushing day of horrific crucifixion, “Up, let us be going.”

## Training School and Research Symposium



This twice-annual Journal is part of a larger pattern of events. Primary among these events is our annual Leadership Training School and Research Symposium. These gatherings are aimed at cultivating a meaningful, appropriate, and lively form of Christian practice for Century 21. We invite readers of this Journal to join us for these events this summer. **Post-Patriarchal Christianity** will be our topic for the August 19-21 **Leadership Training School** and carry over into the August 22-24 **Research Symposium**.

The Great Goddess sensibilities in the history of human veneration reach back at least 25,000 years and these sensibilities have the power to reach beyond the death of patriarchy for millennia to come. Patriarchy is a mere newcomer, less than 6,000 years old. But patriarchy has been the cultural, economic, and political backdrop in which Christianity and all the other classical religions were born and expanded to worldwide impact.

In addition to examining the depth of the radical feminist address to Christianity, our Training School this August will examine the 20th Century Theological Revolution led by such theologians as Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and H. Richard Niebuhr, all of whom retained some elements of patriarchal hangover. Can the awakening that so many of us experienced under their guidance be integrated with a fresh appropriation of radical feminist sensibilities?

We see this topic as an opportunity for both women and men to explore more deeply their personal lives and their religious practices. We will divide into Men's and Women's Circles for part of our time together.

The Research Symposium will explore our theological edge, our small group practice, and our social action vision and strategies.

E-mail us at [jgmarshall@cableone.net](mailto:jgmarshall@cableone.net) for detailed information and a registration form.

## ART ON THE HUMANNESS SCALE

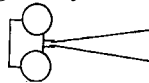
reviews by Joyce Marshall

## NOVEL

*Uncertain Ground*  
by Carolyn Osborn

Having grown up in Texas in the 50s, I particularly appreciate this novel, which follows 21-year-old Celia through a month of her life in Galveston in 1953. Celia tells her story 30 years later, when she can reflect more clearly on the innocence of the times and bring out of the shadows the issues of sex, "out of wedlock" pregnancy, and homosexuality.

## MOVIES



**Made in Dagenham.** This 2010 film is based on the story of how women workers in a Ford plant in Britain in 1968 stood up to Ford, the men in their own union, and the British Labour Party to get equal pay. Top notch actors Sally Hawkins, Bob Hoskins, Miranda Richardson and Rosamund Pike make this inspiring story a greater pleasure. I cheered all the way through. At the end are short videos of some of the actual women, then and now. In the U.S. (where women, depending on our color, get from 52 to 77 cents compared to a dollar for men) the struggle is far from over. Republicans don't want to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would add teeth to measures for equal pay. This film demonstrates the power, playfulness, skill, and intensity of women working together.

**Rabbit Hole** is one of the best films I have seen. It depicts a suburban couple who have lost their four-year-old son. He was hit by a car as he ran after his dog. It has been eight months and the wife and husband are finding themselves in conflict about how to work through their grief. Her mother and sister, their friends, the young man who was driving the car, and people in the therapy group they attend also struggle with the complications of the death of a child. I like the simple honesty of the scenes, which show how loss does not necessarily draw people together, but does raise the stress in their lives. Such an event demands change and it is never certain what direction that change will take. Little decisions and acts determine if and how healing will take place. I can't say more without ruining your experience of the film. Fine script, fine direction, fine acting by Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhart, and Dianne Wiest.

**True Grit.** Learning of her father's murder at the hands of outlaw Tom Chaney and noting that nothing is being done about it, 14-year-old Mattie Ross decides to take the law into her own hands

and seek eye-for-an-eye justice. She hires "Rooster" Cogburn for his tracking services, and they set off into dangerous Indian Territory to hunt for Chaney. Mattie is one fine model of true grit. She sleeps with the dead without sentimentality, drives hard and smart bargains for what she needs, perseveres, moves to plan B when plan A doesn't work, looks evil in the face without wavering and kills it without regret, and takes her losses without complaint. She seeks help from those who share her true grit. I wondered if a remake of this film was needed, but Joel and Ethan Coen have created a gorgeous, humorous, and inspiring version of this old western.

**Winter's Bone,** set in the Ozarks, is another story about a gritty young girl. Ree, a 17-year-old, is responsible for her family (including her two young siblings) in the face of her father's disappearance and her mother's mental illness. Turns out her "crank-cooking" (the modern moonshine: meth) dad has bolted on his bond and the family faces foreclosure, sending Ree on a quest for daddy to avoid a more complete plunge into poverty. This is not an e-mail/cell phone search but an old-fashioned door to door, up-hill-and-down search, from one shabby shack and trailer with busted cars and rusted fences to another. Most of the folks are related, at least distantly, and some of the relatives turn out to be the most dangerous. Ree's obstacles are more complicated than Mattie's in **True Grit**, her cause more righteous, and her quiet determination no less compelling. The film is an Ozarks version of aspects of the book, *Deer Hunting with Jesus*, reviewed in this journal. An unforgettable film.

**The King's Speech.** George VI (the present Queen Elizabeth's father) never wanted to be king. The throne was to pass to his brother Edward, but many of you probably remember that Edward renounced the throne to marry divorced Wallis Simpson. George VI's stutter would not have been such a problem, but radio and newsreels were just becoming common and England was entering into war with Germany. The people wanted to hear firmness, clarity and resolve from their king, not stammering and tortured silences. The film is about the relationship between the king and a speech therapist whom his wife hired to help him. That Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush play the king and the therapist makes this a worthy film to see. Also, Helena Bonham Carter, who has more recently played villainesses, here exemplifies mercy and tact as the woman who became the much-loved Queen Mother of our lifetimes, dying in 2002 at 101. As the men have a struggle of wills, she tries to smooth things (and raise her girls,



Elizabeth and Margaret). In the wider sphere, Hitler takes power, war comes closer, and the dreaded day approaches when Bertie, as George VI, will have to speak to the world and declare war. His therapist coaches him through the speech. It has a powerful impact, and the two remain friends for the rest of their lives.

**Another Year** and another film by one of my favorite filmmakers, Britisher Mike Leigh, a person who understands the human comedy, allowing us to laugh as we groan inside at characters not unlike ourselves. Tom and Gerri (yes, people make fun of their cartoon names) are a quietly happily married couple, intelligent and alert to the world. Like many of us, they garden and recycle and wonder if it does any good as they bemoan the corporate control of the world. They have a 30-year-old son, Joe. But the movie is mostly about Mary, Gerri's friend, a receptionist at the office where Gerri is a counselor. Mary (played superbly by Lesley Manville) hangs out a lot at Tom and Gerri's. Hoping to find freedom, she buys a car, but no one who drinks like she does has any business with a car. She thinks a man is the answer to her search for happiness, but she has no sense of who is a possible partner for her. Along the way of her growing awakening we meet other characters, the most wondrous of whom is Tom's nephew, who shows up late and seethingly angry at his mother's funeral. Leigh does not shy away from embarrassing scenes, causing us to squirm at situations like those most of us have endured at one time or another. This is the opposite of an action film, and what a treat that is!

**The Fighter** tells the real-life story of junior welterweight boxer Micky Ward, of Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1995 HBO produced a documentary, *High on Crack Street: Lost Lives in Lowell*, that chronicled the plights of three crack addicts. One of its subjects was Micky's older half-brother, Dicky Eklund (played by Christian Bale, who won an Oscar for this performance). Dicky was also a boxer. He had "gone the distance" with Sugar Ray Leonard in 1978 but has turned into a self-destructing wreck. The wonder of the film is Micky's relationship with his family: his brother, who is his trainer; his dominating mother (Melissa Leo won an Academy Award for this role), who is his manager; her second husband; and Micky's six sisters (who still live at home and behave like a Greek chorus backing up whatever Mom says). Then there is Charlene, his new love, who is as tough as his mother and trying to get Micky away from this crazy bunch. This film deserved its acclaim.

**Into the Wild.** After graduating from Emory University in 1992, Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire savings account to charity and made his way to Alaska to live in the wilderness. He also abandoned his identity (becoming Alexander Supertramp) so he could not be traced by his family (parents and a sister). His body was found at a remote campsite, along with his diary, letters, notes, and a handful of books about survival. To create the book *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer used this material and interviews with Christopher's family and the people he encountered along the way to Alaska. Sean Penn created this fascinating 2007 movie from the book. I found myself moving from admiration to frustration as I watched this young man proceed on his journey.

**Pirate Radio.** To overcome a British ban on pop music in the 50s and 60s, pirate radio stations were set up on ships anchored offshore to give the mainland a steady stream of rock. The most famous of these pirates was Radio Caroline, the inspiration for this film. One of the oddballs who make up this crew of disc jockeys is played by the inimitable Philip Seymour Hoffman. On shore, Kenneth Branagh plays Sir Alistair Dormandy, a member of Parliament determined to (literally) sink the pirates. Full of fun and good music, this one fits today's mood of rebellion of the common people.

**Temple Grandin** (Claire Danes) has Asperger's Syndrome and/or autism. Asperger's is a milder form of autism, where the subject has better communication skills like speech, but is still unable to connect with our view of normal behavior. When visiting her aunt, Temple grows to love life on the ranch, working with the animals and inventing an automatic gate that can be opened with the pull of a brass rod. She is very smart and detail-oriented, but college life is tough for Temple, who builds a machine that calms her but horrifies other students (it's a version of a cattle hold). She manages to make it through, and gets her master's degree and then a doctorate in animal husbandry. Temple runs into obstacles – cattlemen who don't want her around studying such "silliness" as what the cows' mooing means – plus, she is a woman. She designs a more humane way to send cattle through a medicinal dip and then goes about rethinking the way cattle are slaughtered. She stubbornly finds her way in a man's world and makes changes in many aspects of the treatment of cattle. Claire Danes doesn't just do a good job of acting this role, she "becomes" Temple Grandin. Amazing.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*review by Alan Richard*

**Agora** is a Spanish production shot entirely in English. Although it was widely praised and won 7 Goyas (the Spanish Oscars), you probably never got a chance to see it. The filmmakers were unable to find a distributor in the United States due to opposition from conservative Catholic and Protestant fundamentalist groups. So it was screened in only a handful of theaters. It is available now on DVD.

**Agora** is set in Alexandria, Egypt during the late fourth and early fifth centuries of the common era. At the beginning of this period, the Alexandrian academy was the most prestigious center of higher learning in the known world. Hypatia, its president, was regarded as the greatest living mathematician and astronomer. She was also a woman, notable at a time when women rarely held positions of power in public institutions. The city of Alexandria was religiously diverse, with the largest Jewish community in the known world, an ancient pagan community, and one of the earliest urban Christian communities. Twenty years later, the academy was gone, its books burned and its artifacts shattered. Hypatia had been skinned alive by a mob of Christian fanatics after the Christian Patriarch Cyril accused her of witchcraft. The Roman Procurator Orestes, her student, had fled the city in fear for his life after Cyril chastised him for accepting teaching and counsel from a woman. The city's pagans were either dead or had converted to Christianity. Its Jewish community was wiped out. The academy's buildings now housed stables for cattle and sheep.

How could so much change so quickly? In **Agora**, director Alejandro Amenabar (*The Sea Inside*) addresses this question, and in the process asks larger questions about belief and questioning. The self-destruction of Alexandria is viewed through the eyes of Hypatia (Rachel Weisz), Orestes (Oscar Isaac), her student, spurned suitor, and eventually Alexandrian procurator, and Davus (Max Minghella), her intelligent but unappreciated personal slave, who eventually becomes a member of a thuggish Christian order. As events in Alexandria and the empire shake the foundations of the protagonists' sense of themselves and their world, Hypatia remains focused on her pursuit of truth, obsessed with seeking an answer to puzzling anomalies in the Ptolemaic astronomical model and in the process confronting the possibility that reality is not an "intelligent design." The script, by Amenabar and Mateo Gil, is thoughtful and nuanced with no side in the growing religious conflict emerging as entirely innocent or evil. It delivers the action and intrigue we associate with

the traditional Hollywood toga epic along with the sophisticated ideas that we do not. Xave Gimenez's lush cinematography brings fourth century Alexandria alive before our eyes and gives us a sense of both the insignificance of the things we regard as important, and the vast importance of the smallest moments. The acting is superb all around, but the standout performances belong to Weisz as Hypatia and Minghella as Davus. The heart of the film lies in the relationship between these two characters.

**Agora** teaches without lecturing, moves without manipulating, and entertains without pandering. I urge you to see it at your earliest opportunity.



## RECOMMENDED READING

*reviews by Joyce Marshall*

### MARY DALY, RADICAL FEMINISM, & RELIGION

I have reviewed books on feminism throughout the history of this journal, and our first issue (November 1984) featured an essay by Jane Chalmers McClain entitled: Humanness - The Female Factor. Happenings in my personal life and in global news have regenerated my passion for feminism. The news has daily shocks regarding the treatment of women worldwide, yet the events, much less their meaning, are virtually ignored by the mainstream media. Today, for example, I read in the New Yorker magazine that as late as 2007, a man in Palermo, Italy was sentenced to just two days in jail for murdering his wife after their children testified that she had been disrespectful to him.

One of my friends suggested that I go back and read Mary Daly. I reviewed her book, *Gyn-Ecology*, in the June 1988 journal, but that was a long time ago and I had not read her other books. So I began my re-entry into feminism by reading Mary Daly's eight books. And I was inspired. Here's what I wrote in my personal journal as I was absorbed in reading Daly: "Thanks for Mary Daly. May I go with Pure Lust and Rage. No resignation. No dependence on false hope. Wake me to my naiveté. May I never crumble in the face of 'niceness' or sentimentality or give in to the meanness of their manipulation. May I totally give up ever worrying about what anyone thinks about me or my behavior. Totally!"

Daly died last year at 81, a fierce and gloriously playful woman and a major voice in the women's movement from the 1960s. She held six graduate degrees, including three doctorates in religion, theology and philosophy. She lectured around the world, taught at Boston College, a Jesuit college, for more than 30 years, and authored eight

groundbreaking works of feminist philosophy.

Her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, was published in 1968. It made an impact upon the Catholic Church as important as Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was to the general culture. Thomas Merton said it unmasked "the latent antifeminism in so much Catholic thinking and practice." In the 1975 edition, Daly critiqued the book, chapter by chapter, and in the 1985 edition she updated further, explaining why she left the church. In it she proclaims that the "Disgust of a Wholly Disgusted Woman is Holy. This is Her Holiness, refusing to kneel before his nothingness, calling to other women to rise from their knees, laugh at his lies, acknowledge their own Powers – the Powers of Holy Crones who throw off the chains of hypocrisy, who refuse to allow our strength to be turned against us."

*Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, was published in 1973 and is a good introduction to Daly. She suggests therein that, in order to be free of idolatry, we must keep in our consciousness the fact that we have no power over the ultimately real. For feminists that means not being idolatrous about such objectives as the right to vote. Important as those rights are, she says, "the new wave of feminism desperately needs to be not only many-faceted but cosmic and ultimately religious in its vision. This means reaching outward and inward toward the God beyond and beneath the gods who have stolen our identity." In the chapter, "Beyond Christolatry," she says, "As marginal beings who have no stake in a sexist world, women – if we have the courage to keep our eyes open – have access to the knowledge that neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Mother is God, the Verb who transcends anthropomorphic symbolization." She adds that the Second Coming will mean the end of phallic morality. She heralds this as "a time for men to learn at last to listen and to hear, knowing that this is how to find their own promise, and to discover at last the way to adequate speech." And finally, "The liberation 'movements' that leave sexism unchallenged can, of themselves, only spin delusions of progress, bringing about endless, arbitrary variation within the same senescent system."

*Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, published in 1978, is, in Daly's words "primarily concerned with the mind/spirit/body pollution inflicted through patriarchal myth and language on all levels." She wondered why we had a movie about a Jesuit exorcising a young girl (The Exorcist movie was popular at the time) but none of a young girl exorcising a Jesuit. She makes it clear that our principle task is to exorcise the patriarchy within

ourselves, and goes on to categorize the depth of the horror of this system, which she calls the religion of the planet. She discusses the burning of widows in India, foot binding of Chinese females, African female genital mutilation, the massacre of witches, widespread rape, pornography, and aspects of American gynecology, psychotherapy and religion.

*Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* was published in 1984. Reading this book made me feel happy. Daly discusses "plastic passions" such as guilt, anxiety, depression, bitterness, boredom, and resignation as lacking natural Wildness. She suggests instead that the "Metamorphosing Sage rides her Rage. It is her broom, her fire-breathing, winged mare. . . . Like a horse who streaks across fields on a moonlit night." Righteous Rage melts plastic passions, "makes love, desire, and joy realistic, unsentimental." Rage moves one to action, to burn down the bastions of "bore-ocracy," flying free. She particularly warns against resignation. If you are feeling resigned, do or say Something! She notes that women are often therapeutically directed to express anger toward their mothers for childhood events, whereas women need to understand their own oppression and that of their mothers. Women often "shrink our creative powers to the depressing task of pleasing those who are boring us to death." Daly gives new meaning to many words. Here she reclaims the word Nag and suggests that a Nagster is "A woman who Takes Heart and Gives Heart. She moves to the heart of the matter. . . . She gives heart to another woman, in the sense of encouraging her to re-claim her own heart/head."

*Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*, 1987. In this humor-filled work aimed at "freeing words from the cages and prisons of patriarchal patterns," Daly continues her playful yet studious attention to words. She notes that women are "baffled and bamboozled in their victimization by the concomitant confinement of words under patriarchal rule. It is necessary, therefore, that words and women find and fight for each other . . . Spelling Out the context of oppression and Spelling the Way Out." In discussing animal familiars, she notes the insulting expressions used, such as: "bird brain," "silly goose," or "fishy" and calls such belittlement "a surface manifestation of the sadosociety's ignorance and devaluation of animals and all of nature. They point to the torture, mutilation, and massacre of animals in the name of science, the senseless hunting down and killing of Wild beasts in the name of sport, the destruction of whole tribes of animals and of all remnants of ecological

balance in the name of agribusiness." Reclaiming the word Battle-ax, instead of a quarrelsome, irritable, domineering woman, Daly defines her as "a Raging, Dreadless, Unconquerable Crone. Example: Carry Nation."

*Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage.* In 1992, Daly wrote her autobiography, whose title she explains thus: "My true Course was and is Outercourse – moving beyond the imprisoning mental, physical, emotional, spiritual walls of patriarchy, the State of Possession." This book was for me probably the most enjoyable and easiest to read of her collection. It isn't just the story of her life, but of her thinking as well. She was the only child of solid working-class Catholics in Schenectady, N.Y., who sensed at an early age that she wanted to be a philosopher, not realizing that to become one, she would break a Terrible Taboo. (She intentionally uses upper case as a mode of giving importance where she feels it is due and vice versa.) Her graduate study took her to Switzerland. (Women couldn't get a degree in philosophy in the Catholic education system.) Boston College hired her and fired her and, after student demonstrations (at that time all male students), rehired and promoted her and gave her tenure. This was not the end of problems for her at Boston College, but when asked why she stayed there, she noted it "is where I choose to Stand my Ground." In her early 40s she was the first woman to preach at Harvard Memorial Church and "turned the occasion into a Call for an Historic Exodus from patriarchal religion." Hundreds walked out. Daly never went back, deciding that "oppressive tendencies are not aberrations but the very stuff of christianity" (lower case intentional). Her vocation then became Radical Feminism, seeing the women's revolution about participation in Be-ing, an ontological movement. As outsiders, "women are especially equipped to confront the structured evil of patriarchy . . . are in a unique sense called to be the bearers of existential courage in society." She uses Paul Tillich as a springboard here. She talks of how she wanted to keep the word "God" but finally found it "hopelessly, irremediably inadequate." Daly most often contemplated the divine essence as a verb, Be-ing itself, so that worship is "not kneeling in front of a so-and-so but swirling in energy."

She talks of feeling a lot in common with the cow who Jumped over the moon in the nursery rhyme. The cow didn't know exactly where she was going, but she knew she had to do it. No matter if all the dogs in the world are laughing at her. The cow was probably fed up with domestication. If she had jumped the fence, she would have been caught and dragged back. That rumination of Daly's so

inspired me that I had a dream that night of flying. I was carrying my cat, and when we came to a steep cliff we took off, using the cat's wings (!?) and flew. Here is part of a poem I wrote about the dream:

On cat wings –  
Too far, too steep to walk  
This journey calls for flight.  
Flying high to see through the unrealities of now  
And to see the Ancient Essences  
Then to sound the courageous clarion call  
Awakening Laughter, Joy, and BE-ING  
Throughout the cosmos.

Daly says that 1975 was the year the backlash began and that the Montreal massacre in a university classroom in 1989 ushered in an age of escalating gynocide. I'm not going to list rape and battering and murder and other statistics here, but most shocking is how "business-as-usual" such things continue to be. Mary's life was a call to wake up.

*Quintessence... Realizing the Archaic Future: A Radical Elemental Feminist Manifesto.* Written in 1998, this book is also quite readable. Daly travels back and forth between her present and an imagined metapatriarchal time in the future, visiting and exchanging stories with the women there. The first sentences of the book: "The writing of this book is a Desperate Act performed in a time of ultimate battles between principalities and powers. More than ever all sensate and spiritual life on this planet and anywhere within reach is threatened with extinction." She explains the title by saying, "the Quest for Quintessence . . . means throwing one's life as far as it will go. . . The Quest for Quintessence is all that matters. It means Realizing our own inherent integrity and participating in Integrity beyond that integrity." She states that Radical Feminists are focused on one central cause: the expansion of Biophilia – the love of life – and on one central emergency: rapism on this planet as characterized by invasion, violation, degradation, objectification, and destruction of women and nature. She says, "Nothing that we do is small when it is seen in the Light of Quintessence. Size does not matter. . . In Touch with Quintessence, Elemental Women become . . . free to expand and participate in the creation of the universe."

*Amazon Grace: Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big,* 2005. In her final book, Daly addresses the seeming incapacity to See and Name and Feel Deeply the connections among ecological and other horrors accelerating this past decade. She claims that people are not just stupid, but are possessed and stultified by the State of Denial –

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Big Time. Equating patriarchy with the State of Denial, she answers the question, "How can we begin the process of undenying?" thus: Take one step at a time – any step, and she goes on to give an example. State the simple fact that "the expression 'war on terrorism' is nonsensical. War IS terrorism." I would love to quote the entirety of chapter five, which begins with a quote from Susan B. Anthony praying for some "terrific shock to startle the women of this nation into self-respect which will compel them to see the abject degradation of their present position; which will force them to break their yoke of bondage, and give them faith in themselves." Daly notes that it is not the shock of the "outrages of fatherland, no matter how hideous and destructive" that will answer Susan's prayer, but the shock "of encountering and Realizing Be-ing" (by which she means "Ultimate/Intimate Reality") which will "naturally compel a woman to see the grotesque inappropriateness of her degraded position and that of all women. . . She is driven to break out, and she is enabled to do this because she has begun to Dis-cover Faith in herSelf." The chapter ends with Daly's definition of patriarchy and her howling response to those who claim that the term patriarchy is passé, dated. If you are looking for one book to read, this one is perhaps the most inspiring.

I was sorry to learn that Mary Daly died last year. Following are excerpts from the many memorial words to her:

"She was a great trained philosopher, theologian, and poet, and she used all of those tools to demolish patriarchy – or any idea that domination is natural – in its most defended place, which is religion." – Gloria Steinem.

"It's unusual, it seems to me, that the most intellectually courageous feminist philosopher who pushed the furthest through patriarchal premises and assumptions in philosophy did that work when the movement in feminist philosophy and spirituality was so young. She was among the very first – and who has gone as far since then? . . . Farewell to a vast presence in our landscape of possibility. She's one with the universe now." – Charlene Spretnak

"She was by far the most intelligent person I ever got to learn from up close. She was especially generous and caring as a teacher. It was what she was born to do. She wouldn't let you get away with any sloppy thinking. It was fun, difficult and amazing, all at the same time." – A Student

"I was bedazzled and I wanted to be near her, as she blazed like fire, as she filled me with courage and gave me those New Words. . . I read her books

and worlds moved. She was a giant, a wave rider, a resistance fighter – battle scarred, but not weary, filled with life. She lived for the eons. . . She will live forever." – A Student

Daly would like to say: "I urge you to Sin. . . But not against these itty-bitty religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism – or their secular derivatives, Marxism, Maoism, Freudianism and Jungianism – which are all derivatives of the big religion of patriarchy. Sin against the infrastructure itself!"

She once wrote: "There are and will be those who think I have gone overboard. Let them rest assured that this assessment is correct, probably beyond their wildest imagination, and that I will continue to do so."

Though I did not have the opportunity of knowing her personally, I am deeply grateful for Mary Daly. May her words and spirit encourage us to also BE THE SORT OF EMBARRASSING AND POSITIVELY REVOLTING HAGS WHO WOULD DO SUCH AN INAPPROPRIATE ACT AS TO CALL UP OUR COURAGE, GENEROSITY, FAITH, AND HOPE, BOND WITH OTHER FURIOUS FEMALES, AND CHOOSE NOW TO OBLITERATE PATRIARCHY!

### OTHER FEMINIST VOICES

*Of Woman Born*

*Motherhood as Experience & Institution*

by Adrienne Rich

Norton, 1986



If you want one book that tells the whole story of patriarchy, feminism, and religion in a relatively short readable form, poet Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* is hard to beat.

Let's begin with Chapter III, "The Kingdom of the Fathers." Here is her opening: "For the first time in history, a pervasive recognition is developing that the patriarchal system cannot answer for itself; that it is not inevitable; that it is transitory; and that the cross-cultural, global domination of women by men can no longer be either denied or defended." She goes on: "When we acknowledge this, we tear open the relationship at the core of all power-relationships. . . the sexual understructure of social and political forms." And finally: "For the first time we are in a position to look around us at the Kingdom of the Fathers and take its measure. What we see is the one system which recorded civilization has never actively challenged, and which has been so universal as to seem a law of nature." To explain her title of *Motherhood*, she notes that "Patriarchy could not survive without motherhood and heterosexuality in their institutional forms:



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therefore they have to be treated as axioms, as 'nature' itself, not open to question." She demonstrates: "In the American colonies an ordinary family consisted of from twelve to twenty-five children. An 'old maid,' who might be all of twenty-five years of age, was treated with reproach if not derision; she had no way of surviving economically, and was usually compelled to board with her kin and help with the household and children. No other 'calling' was open to her."

This isn't too far from 1952 when I graduated from high school as valedictorian and was sent to college only as "insurance" in case something happened to the husband it was assumed I would 'catch' and whose children I would bear. Rich's experience of that time was mine: "I had no idea of what I wanted, what I could or could not choose. I only knew that to have a child was to assume adult womanhood."

Rich's love for her three sons is clear throughout the book, but she directly faces the powerlessness that women face as mothers in the cultural context of patriarchy. As she says, "The woman's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected." (Note events in the U.S. Congress as well as around the world if you doubt that.) At the core of feminist issues is the hatred men have for women, which is clearly documented worldwide. Rich suggests that "it is the adolescent ego that is still so uncertain of itself that it perceives the female as threatening." She notes that it isn't a matter of chronological age but "an aspect of male sexuality, which in a great many (probably a majority) of men, continues into middle life and beyond." She says patriarchy is always trying to "kill the dragon" in negating women. It is the adolescent aspect of the male who wants woman for emotional sustenance while also fearing castration and death at her hands. Rich says that this fear is the dragon to be slain.

Rich says, "Few women growing up in patriarchal society can feel mothered enough; the power of our mothers, whatever their love for us and their struggles on our behalf, is too restricted." After all, it is the mother who is expected to teach the female her proper role in patriarchy. The bequest we can give to our daughters (meaning all young women) is the quality of our lives, "however embattled and unprotected. Because a woman who can believe in herself, who is a fighter, and who continues to struggle to create livable space around her, is demonstrating to her daughter" (all daughters) "that these possibilities exist."

*Feminism & Religion*

by Rita M. Gross  
Beacon, 1996

Rita Gross was born in Wisconsin, grew up  
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Protestant, studied the role of Australian Aborigine women for her doctorate, practiced Judaism for a decade, and then became a Buddhist scholar and practitioner, pioneering in issues concerning Buddhism and gender. She taught comparative religion at the University of Wisconsin. Her teaching creds serve her well in this book, in which she defines feminism, religion, and religious studies and briefly tells the history of the interaction between feminism and religion. Then she addresses four central issues, probably the major one being: are the world's major religions reformable or are they inherently sexist? To me the key chapters are the last two. In Chapter 5, "Has It Always Been That Way?," she looks at the scholarship regarding the ancient past. In Chapter 6, "What Next? – Post-Patriarchal Religion," she surveys feminist visions for the future.

Gross sometimes wears a T-shirt that proclaims: "Feminism is the radical proposition that women are human beings." She finds this necessary because "neither conventional scholarship nor lifestyles really take the humanity of women seriously." By feminism, she means "a critical and reconstructive stance vis-à-vis the institutions and values of one's own culture, religion, and academic environment." After laying out the data on the depth of patriarchy and sexism in traditional religions, Gross says the question for a religious feminist is what to do next. She tells what some feminists have done to reform their religion and what others have done to create or recapture the Goddess traditions.

In her look at prehistoric times she examines the scholarship about the long period before male dominance and the possible causes for the emergence of patriarchy. She tries to give a balanced view on varied hypotheses. When she moves to What Next? she critiques varied feminist visions of the future, giving a good bit of space to Mary Daly (reviewed above). Starhawk is the best-known woman who has experimented with the feminist spirituality movement. Gross quotes Starhawk as saying, "We do not *believe* in the Goddess – we connect with Her; through the moon, the stars, the ocean, the earth, through trees, animals, through other human beings, through ourselves." Charlene Spretnak, also quoted, emphasizes the importance of connection in religious practice: "If a person is born with a mind that does not readily perceive connectedness with other people and is raised in a culture that does not encourage such perceptions, he will probably go through life seeing only separations, struggling with the frustrations of this worldview and

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accepting its corollaries as truth."

This book is a very good place to start in rethinking your religion at this time. It objectively lays out the situation we are in and what others are doing. Then it leaves you with your decision.

*Changing of the Gods*

*Feminism & the End of Traditional Religions*

by Naomi R. Goldenberg

Beacon, 1979



This book by Goldenberg, a psychologist of religion, is a classic in the field. She demonstrates clearly and succinctly why strategies such as changing gender-biased language and opening the ordained priesthood to women will not change a church that has developed along patriarchal and misogynist lines rather than follow the example of Jesus in his teaching equality of men and women in the eyes of God.

Goldenberg makes a strong case against the ability of feminists to reform Judaism and Christianity, in which she, along with Mary Daly and others, sees irreducible elements of sexism. She notes that Freud exposed the patriarchy at the heart of Judaism and Christianity, which he thought should be overthrown. He felt they weakened the intellects of men. While sympathetic to Carl Jung and his emphasis on the need for myth and images, she openly takes him to task for his racism and his essentialization of the "feminine."

She also questions putting too much emphasis on "alleged ancient matriarchal societies," saying that whether an "Amazon" culture existed or not, women need images of strong, proud female personalities to strengthen the mind and will.

Goldenberg's description of modern feminist witchcraft stimulates the imagination of possibilities, even if you don't decide to participate in that tradition. She outlines 12 phenomenological qualities of feminist witchcraft. Some of them I heartily accept; others, I don't; and others raise possibilities. That describes my feeling about this book.

*Getting Off – Pornography and the End of Masculinity*

by Robert Jensen

South End Press, 2007

In his book, *Citizens of the Empire*, (reviewed in this issue) Robert Jensen notes that it was his study of feminism and work with feminists that gave him a way to understand the world – a "sensible assessment" that allowed him to be hopeful. In his book, *Getting Off*, and in his talk <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvZee1gh3N4> he calls men to go beyond masculinity to a new humanity. He shows how the multi-billion-dollar

pornography industry is a place to see the consequences of patriarchy and masculinity. Feminist Andrea Dworkin was Jensen's mentor in his research on pornography. Though she was called a man-hater by many because of her blunt critique of men's violence, he found Dworkin's compassion for men evident. In one talk she said: "I don't believe rape is inevitable or natural." (Although every day men rape thousands of women.) "Have you ever wondered why we (women) are not just in armed combat against you? It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence."

But, Jensen points out, men have to recover their own humanity. Women cannot do this for them. He has come to the conclusion that the concept of manhood and of masculinity is toxic. Being competitive, dominant, aggressive, and compelling someone to do what they would otherwise not do are ingrained in the meaning of "be a man." When you tie that to seeing sexuality as the acquisition of pleasure from a woman, you have the essence of pornography: training in the objectification of women. (Jensen uses Dworkin's definition of objectification: When a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold.) Today's pornography is becoming ever more extreme with its shockingly violent, cruel, and degrading images. I won't describe them, but you need to know something about these details and its proliferation to get the impact of it.

In his hopeful, clear-minded way, Jensen asks, "What is sex for?" allowing the reader to explore personally this deep human issue with his suggestions of wholesome possibilities.

*Intercourse*

by Andrea Dworkin

Basic Books, 1987

In this book, Dworkin extends her analysis from pornography to sexual intercourse itself. She argues that in a male supremacist society the sexual subordination depicted in pornography is central to men's and women's experiences of heterosexual intercourse, although in a later interview she said, "I think both intercourse and sexual pleasure can and will survive equality." Dworkin uses classical literature from Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, Bram Stoker, the Bible, Tolstoy, D.H. Lawrence and others to note how sexuality is understood. I particularly appreciate these three chapters: Communion, Possession, and Occupation/Collaboration.

A few quotes: "The measure of women's oppression is that we do not take intercourse . .

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and ask or say what it means. . . Instead, intercourse is a loyalty test. . . We are supposed to be loyal to the male meanings of intercourse." Dworkin refers to Victoria Woodhull, the nineteenth century advocate of the "female-first" model of intercourse, who suggested that "the only condition under which women could experience sexual freedom in intercourse . . . was in having real and absolute control in each and every act of intercourse, which would be, each and every time, chosen by the woman. . . The woman would not force or rape or physically own the man because she could not. Thus, giving the woman power over intercourse was giving her the power to be equal."

*Wildfire* Wildfire Books, 1989

*The Ship That Sailed into the Living Room:*

*Sex and Intimacy Reconsidered* Wildfire Books, 1991

both by Sonia Johnson

I ran into Sonia Johnson at the first continental Bioregional Congress in 1984 when she was running for president as the Citizens Party candidate. She was the first woman to get federal matching funds to run for president, but she had little or no support from the national media. Beginning in 1977 she campaigned indefatigably for the Equal Rights Amendment, denouncing her church's (Mormon) opposition to the amendment. This resulted in her excommunication from the church.

In *Wildfire*, Johnson notes that there was a flourishing culture oriented around women for tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousand of years, and that patriarchy is a relatively new and weak culture based on control and violence. It is now going down and taking everything with it. She sees women's most crucial task as deprogramming ourselves from patriarchy's brainwashing, including the guilt of mothers. Since women do 2/3 of the world's work, make 1/10 of its money, and own less than 1/100 of its property, our resources are keeping it going. Each woman has to figure out for herself how she gives her power to men. We need to let go of letting male partners or children be responsible for our feelings and to find our source of satisfaction within ourselves.

Soon after she parted ways with the church, her husband divorced her, the mother of four. Eventually, she began a relationship with a woman. *The Ship* book is the story of how she found that even relationships between female couples are "slave ships" (hence the title).

To read Sonia Johnson, I suggest you just loosen up, go for the ride as she does, and see where it takes you. Even if you don't come to her

conclusions, I feel confident that you will not see things quite the same, and you'll be more awake and aware of your most basic acts.

She discusses how taking care of others is a form of control. For example, "my" children must be all right in order for me to be all right. I strongly identify with her when she notes that the rescuer/victim pattern was the most difficult to break. She says that a certain kind of distance is essential to intimacy, that we need to regard our intimates as capable of handling their own affairs.

Johnson echoes other feminists in saying that women are taught to be "a good woman" who doesn't ask herself what she wants and even loses touch with what she wants. Women also learn that it is noble to suffer. She reminds us that we can be empathetic when others suffer – our children, for instance – without waiting to be happy only when they are happy.

I appreciate her suggestions about sex and they ring true with me. She sees women's natural approach to sex as arousal (connected to power), not excitement (connected to control). She suggests that you touch your lover for the joy that touch gives you at that moment without trying to stimulate or control the other. That kind of touch connects your heart with your lover. No response is required. She claims that this same style works for women in acting in the world – the power of actions that arise organically.

### AN EXCEPTIONAL MAN

*The Nature of Order*

*An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*

*Book One: The Phenomenon of Life*, 2002

*Book Two: The Process of Creating Life*, 2002

*Book Three: A Vision of a Living World*, 2005

*Book Four: the Luminous Ground*, 2004

by Christopher Alexander

The Center for Environmental Structure



I discovered Christopher Alexander around 1986. I reviewed his books, *A Pattern Language* and *The Timeless Way of Building* in the RL Journal that year. *A Pattern Language* was our guide in designing our strawbale house, built in 1997. I fell in love with him then, and these books simply increased my profound admiration for him and joy in his work.

Christopher Alexander is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an architect, a builder, and the author of many books and technical papers. He is the winner of the first medal for research ever awarded by the American Institute of Architects, and after 40 years of teaching is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. He trained in Physics and Mathematics at Cambridge and was part of the

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group of scientists who developed systems theory along with Herbert Simon. He has been investigating the interaction between science and architecture all of his life, and this beautiful four-volume work contains the results of his research.

Although many of Alexander's ideas are subtle and require thoughtful reflection, the basic thesis of these four volumes might be stated: everything that exists contains "life," and the degree to which "life" is manifest in any particular can be "objectively" determined by probing one's "subjective" world.

In **Book One** Alexander "describes a scientific view of the world in which all space-matter has perceptible degrees of life, and sets this understanding of living structure as an intellectual basis for a new architecture." (From the book jacket.) Alexander believes that "we have in us a residue of a world-picture which is essentially mechanical in nature," though we may not be aware of it, and that this view affects our actions, our morals, and our sense of beauty. "It controls the way we think when we try to make buildings and – in my view – it has made the making of beautiful building all but impossible." Tracing our mechanical thinking to Descartes, Alexander notes that Descartes himself would be horrified to learn that people in the 20th (21st) century were applying his mental process literally. Alexander is suggesting an "extended idea of truth" which is "not only objective, but is also directly linked to people's feelings. . . . Where Descartes only allowed observation to focus on the outer reality of mechanisms in the world, my method requires that we focus on the inner reality of feeling as well." Alexander identifies fifteen structural properties which tend to accompany the presence of life in nature and also in the buildings and cities we make. These properties are seen over and over in nature and in cities and streets of the past, but have all but disappeared in the deadly developments and buildings of the last one hundred years. Those living structure features make a close connection with the human self. Only "living" structure has the capacity to support human well-being.

**Book Two** "invites us to reconsider the role and importance of process and how it is living or not. . . . The lifeless buildings and environments which have become common in modern society are not merely dead, non-living structures. They are what they are precisely because of the social processes by which they have been conceived, designed, built, and paid for." When Alexander contracts to build something, he and his associates meet constantly with those who will use the structure in what he calls generative process, making step by step adaptations so that the results unfold. He says that

it is "possible to create a highly general generative sequence . . . definable and predictable in the steps that must be followed. . . . Just so, a single generative sequence for houses can generate a million unique houses, each one highly successful in meeting the special needs of special individuals and families: and each one well adapted to the particular site where it occurs, thus – at least in part – healing the land." By "feeling" he means adherence to the whole. Not a touchy-feeling thing, but serious connection with the whole which results in a wholesome feeling in the person. He notes that a feeling-guided process was typical in most human societies in Earth's history, which should give us pause in dismissing it too quickly. He sees what he calls a feeling-based process as necessary to produce "living" structure and he would have future society carried by this kind of nourishing, fun, effective process.

**Book Three** provides a practical guide to creating great places based on his concepts of "centers," "wholeness," and "structure-preserving transformations." Page after page of photos (many in color) and diagrams give weight to Alexander's process-oriented approach to building. If you have wondered whether there is a way to reinvent our cities and suburbs away from "sprawl" and into vibrant, living places – here is how. In the preface, Alexander says it will require many people acting individually and in small groups to make that happen. At the risk of appearing naive, Alexander claims that human beings are happier in the midst of "living" structure and that we have almost forgotten what it means to be a person within the "dead" structures of the 20th-21st century environment. Unlike the dead shiny slickness of contemporary design, living places have a kind of rustic beauty, and we feel we belong. Another aspect of building with "life" is that the building form is "interwoven in some fashion with nature itself. In the best cases, it will seem, almost indistinguishably, to be part of nature, thus forming a seamless whole."

**Book Four** describes a new cosmology uniting matter and consciousness. In order for us to make the changes that will preserve and extend the beauty of the world (in the midst of trucks and prefab), we must change our world-view. As one reviewer said, Alexander gives us "an effective theoretical basis with which to combat the billboard." First he discusses the weakness of the present world-picture, listing its ten tacit assumptions. For example, tacit assumption 1 is: What is true is only the body of those facts which can be represented as lifeless mechanisms. He adds that this assumption has the offshoot



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assumption that value is subjective. He closes the book with eleven new cosmological assumptions, one of which is: Everything matters. Another: Whenever we undertake an act of construction we have the ability to make the world more alive or less alive, more harmonious or less harmonious. He says, "The idea, then, is that every part of our physical world is shadowed by this parallel domain of I-stuff, and that each part of our ordinary world, if it is given the right structure, will lift the flap or open the door, and give us a glimpse into that domain." (By "I-stuff" Alexander is hypothesizing that there is underlying all matter a "Ground" – single and personal.) He adds, "All the efforts I have made have, at their heart, just this one intention: to bring back our awe . . . and to allow us to begin again to make things in the world which can intensify this awe."

Christopher Alexander's tireless work, his brilliance, his humility, his humanity give me deep hope in a time when it is so easy to lose heart. These are books to be read slowly, savored. One reviewer suggested that this is one of the few works to be remembered 500 years hence. I suggest that it is one of the works to be read and absorbed now in order for there to be a 500 years hence for us.

### LIVING IN THIS WORLD

*Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity*  
by Robert Jensen  
City Lights Books, 2004

Robert Jensen's experience after 9/11 was much like mine – concern at the likelihood of an inappropriate massive military response which would ultimately make the U.S. (and the world) less safe. Millions around the world agreed and poured into the streets in February of 2003. The fact that this huge protest seemed to have no effect left progressives in a state of depression. This book (in Jensen's words) "is an attempt to respond to those feelings with a realistic assessment of where we are, how we got here, and what we must do to move forward with progressive political work in the United States."

A journalism professor at the University of Texas, Austin, Jensen is concise, sharply critical of our "degraded political culture" and academic institutions and concerned to "build movements that can transform people's opposition into political power." His personal, in-your-face style creates a handbook for citizenry. He dismantles prevailing political mythology and asks us to confront our personal numbing patterns. He explains how to be critical without being cynical, the difference between hope and optimism, and the need to balance confidence with humility.

As one reviewer said: This book is "a strong antidote to the poisons of conformity and despair."

*Deer Hunting With Jesus*  
*Dispatches from America's Class War*  
by Joe Bageant  
Three Rivers Press, 2007



Joe Bageant died this year. What a loss! Joe grew up in Winchester, Virginia, then left for 30 years, during which he got educated and became a middle class liberal journalist. He returned to his roots and Winchester and tells the story of his people as only a native can. He isn't talking about strangers. The characters are his relatives, his lifelong neighbors. He allows us to understand from a gut level why the working poor vote for Republicans in opposition to their own interests. What we should do about this phenomenon is, first, read this book, which is a real treat in one way because Bageant is a dream of a writer with a funny gallows-humor style. But the book is also challenging, because these folks' stories are so terribly tragic they break your heart. Second, get to know the rural poor face-to-face. Many of them have never even talked to a Democrat. Then, see to it that every one, without exception, is well-educated and has good health care.

### PRACTICAL BUDDHISM

*Natural Wakefulness*  
*Discovering the Wisdom We Were Born With*  
by Gaylon Ferguson  
Shambhala, 2009

A cultural anthropologist and a student of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Gaylon Ferguson approaches meditation (as you can tell from the title) as our natural state and he suggests practices that will allow a "natural unfolding of this innate awareness and kindness." His initial title for the book was "waking up from the nightmare of materialism." He says that "The root of materialism is the sense that we are, in some fundamental way, inadequate." The first part of the book focuses on awareness of our habitual "walk-around state of being 'asleep'" and our true nature of wakefulness. He compares our wakefulness to our physical health. We must exercise our bodies to realize our inherent well-being. And we must practice meditation to realize our inherent wakefulness. So the next part of the book has exercises for discovering that you are a natural meditator. Finally, Ferguson discusses the importance of community to support wakefulness. Along the way he includes some Q & A with students in which I found one of my favorite quotes in the book: "Just taking the posture of

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meditation, sitting up, arouses energy and confidence. It's a gesture of bravery, a silent proclamation of fearlessness: we commit ourselves to working with any state of mind that arises – sadness and excitement, boredom and joy, fear and desire. They're all welcome, fundamentally welcome."

*Touching Enlightenment*  
*Finding Realization in the Body*  
by Reginald A. Ray  
Sounds True, 2008

I discovered Reginald Ray in Tricycle magazine, a Buddhist journal. In a recent issue he told about his relationship to his teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and to the teacher's legacy. I identified with Ray's journey in following and learning from a person who "blazed with awareness" and discovering after his death that he had to find his own way to carry on that legacy. Having read all of Trungpa's books myself, I was interested in Ray's approach after he left Shambhala and Naropa University and formed Dharma Ocean Foundation. This book is a summation of that approach. The book is about the Buddhist lineage but feels like depth psychology and has a somatic emphasis. Buddhism has always emphasized the body, but it is easy to get lost in thoughts about the body. Certainly in the modern Western world we can, as Ray says, "be of the *opinion* that conceptual knowing is subordinate, but not, in fact, function in that way." The block, says Ray, is the ego, which "must be dethroned, its arrogance must be dismantled." He goes so far as to suggest that we may have to abandon "discursive thinking – disembodiment – as our primary way of orienting ourselves in the world" and express ourselves differently. We "must be willing to speak of our experience, to speak our hearts. We must speak openly about our practice and our lives, without hesitation and without excusing or justifying ourselves – where we have become lost . . . our tragedies . . . our hopes and fears – all of it." He says that thus we will make possible a new human culture.

Ray says upfront that you can't really write about spirituality, as it tempts one into the very substitution of thinking for life itself that he is writing about. Nevertheless, his writing can clarify the mind and inspire the spirit to move in daily practice toward embodied awareness. And he describes for us the path of dethroning the ego including the "good news" of chaos and the necessity of falling apart – because ultimately the ego is "like a suit of armor that is way too small." He shows us the possibility of experiencing the

vitality of life flowing through us in such a powerful way that we can feel we have found our true life beyond any preconception or idea.

*Awakening Joy*  
*10 Steps That Will Put You on the Road to Real Happiness*  
by James Baraz & Shoshana Alexander  
Bantam, 2010

This book is based on a 10-month course Buddhist teacher Baraz has taught in live classes, online, and through video and audio recordings. Alexander is a writer/editor and also Buddhist teacher, and the book is a collaborative effort. It is designed for the general public; so the Buddhist teachings are in everyday language. For example, the truth of impermanence: "If we forget that everything changes, we may start thinking, *Wow! I finally have gotten my life together! I've worked really hard to get to this point and now I have arrived.* Then when things change, we wonder, *What happened? How did I blow it?* Knowing that change is an inherent part of life allows us to fully appreciate the good times when they come, without thinking that life has been unfair to us when they go."

I like Baraz's approach to social action and burnout. He says, "When taking action comes from your heart rather than from the desire to see results, you can continue working without getting depleted, and you can derive joy rather than disappointment from the part you are playing."

Baraz freely shares stories of his own immaturities, inviting the reader to honestly face the struggles we all have and must deal with in order to awaken to joy.

### MEMOIR

*Open*  
by Andre Agassi  
Vintage, 2010



I found this tennis pro's autobiography to be totally engrossing, and I liked him all the way through. Written with the help of Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author J.R. Moehringer, the book is appropriately named. Agassi is open about the whole ball of wax: how he hated tennis from the get-go but was pushed into it by an overbearing father; how he was brash and rebellious, went for style over substance, wore wigs, used drugs. He tells the story of his lost childhood and the inside story of his life as a tennis professional/celebrity with all its ups and down. In the midst of it all, he began to grow up, to find his balance and assert his own being. He became a disciplined champion, a husband, a father, a philanthropist. He became a person willing to tell his story with exceptional candor. What a gift!

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Years ago we adopted as our philosophy of benevolence these thoughts from an *Utne Reader* which outlined **principles for the art of philanthropy** for people of ordinary means as well as the wealthy. Here are some of those principles:

- Support really good people who have a total commitment to doing good in the world and who are willing to put their asses on the line to do it.
- Seek out originality and imagination.
- Support unpopular truths.
- Fund players with a long view.
- Support people no one else is supporting.
- Support people whose work is their passion in life, not a day job.
- Fund those attacking root causes and trying to change the system.
- Trust what inspires you.

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