

From Obedience and Shame to Freedom and Belonging: Transforming Patriarchal Paradigms of Child-Rearing in the Age of Global Warming

By Miki Kashtan

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Abstract

The core question I address in this article is: What will it take to reclaim our fundamental relatedness with all things alive, surrender our attempts to control nature, and find a way of living that averts or mitigates the worst possible catastrophes awaiting us while it's still possible? I draw on Humberto Maturana's investigations of the "biology of love" and on the growing field of matriarchal studies. I argue that our prospects for survival require turning around millennia of patriarchy and putting, again, love and human needs at the center. We can only do this if we find ways for children to conserve a biology of love rather than a patriarchal biology of dominance and submission. I highlight the principles of mothering, natural authority, gift economy and need orientation, nonviolence, and self-trust that both bodies of literature point to. I look at how patriarchy started and reproduces itself *despite* humanity having evolved in the biology of love. Using the metaphor of cancer, I show patriarchy to be a *system* rather than any set of *traits*, a system that is parasitic on invisible gifting and that routinely utilizes coercion and shaming in child-rearing, thereby separating freedom from safety and compromising the lives of all of us. It ends with a call to integration of past and present at systemic, community, and individual levels, including proposing dramatic changes in childrearing practices that prioritize freedom and belonging to put love and needs at the center of human life again.

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“We will remain *homo sapiens-amans* only if we want to” – Humberto Maturana Romesin and Gerda Verden-Zöller¹

We are at a crossroads as a species. For several thousand years, patriarchy brought suffering mostly to our own species.² First, to the few cultures affected by it, then, gradually, through conquest, to more and more cultures, until its domination of the world was consolidated in the last 100 years and non-patriarchal cultures have become almost extinct. For most of its existence, the exponential onslaught of patriarchy hadn’t reached the hockey stick part of its curve.³ As a result, only people in indigenous cultures and a very few within patriarchal cultures saw and were vocal about our culture being on an exponential crash course in its fight to control nature, and that it would eventually crumble, with devastating consequences. It is only in the last few decades that the intrinsic unsustainability of patriarchal economics and politics has been exposed and larger numbers of people are actively engaged with it. It is only in the last decade that the effects of, specifically, global warming, are now visible enough and spoken about enough that there’s a global conversation about the question of our very survival as a species.

The nature of the crossroads is a choice that is entirely in our hands at this point: are we, collectively, going to continue on the suicidal path we’ve been on, leading us to watch all that we love die, now or within the foreseeable future, possibly within the lifetime of our own children? Or will we manage to reclaim and restore our fundamental relatedness with all things alive, surrender our attempts to control nature, and find a way of living that averts or mitigates the worst possible catastrophes while it’s still possible?

This crossroads, in other words, goes beyond analyzing or attempting to address the immediate and acute threat that global warming presents. I consider this focus rather narrow and limited in its potential for addressing the root causes and dire effects of environmental degradation in all its

¹ *The Origin of Humanness in the Biology of Love*, 142. The word “amans” comes from Latin and means “loving”. Humberto Maturana is a Chilean biologist, philosopher, and social theorist. Gerda Verden-Zöller is a psychologist who investigated the developing sense of self in infants.

² I am aware in speaking of patriarchy I am using “one of those words that, spongelike, has been caused to absorb a lot of meanings, and everyone who squeezes it may get a different flavor.” (Lorraine Bonner, personal communication, 2017.) For me, patriarchy is not about men nor is feminism, which I also speak about in this article, about women. Rather, I see patriarchy as an existing system, and feminism as a movement for change, which, at the level I hold them, are two contrasting foundational worldviews and opposing sets of agreements about how we live as humans with each other on this planet. In separating men and women from each other, and humanity from nature, patriarchy subsequently put men in positions of dominance relative to women, hence the word itself. Feminism, at least the version of it that I identify with, suggests that this separation has resulted in suffering for both men and women, and that freeing ourselves from the fundamental structures of dominance and submission would therefore benefit everyone. This would also mean, once again and in a new way, celebrating and affirming what are now subjugated aspects of being human that have been associated with women, such as care, vulnerability, and attention to relationships, thereby restoring fullness to all of us. I have much more to say about both later. For now, I wanted to contextualize my use and differentiate it from other flavors for these words.

³ This term refers to the turn upward and sharp increase that characterizes exponential functions.

forms. Even if we succeed in containing this specific challenge to our survival, without finding a way to preserve the “biology of love” where it still exists, and to restore it where it’s been almost lost, we will remain in the throes of patriarchy. Taking to heart Humberto Maturana and Gerda Verden-Zöller’s insistence that it is what children learn that drives evolution, my focus is, then, on what we can do to increase the chances that children will conserve a biology of love rather than a biology of dominance and submission, which is the essence of patriarchy.

To be clear: I am not proposing that changing parenting and educational paradigms is a solution to the *acute* issue of global warming. The conversation I am hoping to contribute to with this article is about addressing the larger question of biological and evolutionary survival of our species as what Maturana and Verden-Zöller call *homo sapiens-amans*. In short: this article is about love itself.

Love thrives in the context of freedom and belonging. Love shrinks in the context of obedience and shame. Love is intertwined with gifting, and thus withers away in transactional contexts. From this perspective, I boldly claim that our survival depends on finding ways to preserve love, and that this entails putting human needs at the center. This is a radical departure from existing paradigms of child-rearing.⁴

Still, because global warming is, indeed, an acute threat to our survival, I turn next to a necessarily brief excursion in exploring the links between patriarchy and global warming before turning to the foundational questions of what the biology of love looks like, how patriarchy started, how it reproduces itself, *despite* humanity having evolved in the biology of love, in relations of dominance and submission, and the specific significance of childrearing practices at our current juncture. My purpose in doing all this is to establish a deeper link between the core of patriarchy and our prospects for survival.

Patriarchy and Global Warming

Patriarchy is interwoven with climate change both in terms of the *effects* and in terms of the *causes* of global warming. Global warming disproportionately affects the lives of women and girls, especially low income and Global South women and girls.⁵ Global warming is also a feminist issue because the mindset and systems that created it are both directly and indirectly patriarchal.⁶

⁴ At their most pointedly violent, patriarchal paradigms of child-rearing are depicted with immense and compelling power in Alice Miller’s *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*.

⁵ See <http://feministing.com/2015/04/21/climate-justice-is-intersectional-feminism-in-action/>, with links elsewhere. Also the UN report “Global Gender and Environment Outlook.” UN Environment, Nairobi, Kenya 2016. This report, put together by a large international team, mentions patriarchy in only one context: the capacity of women to re-assume female roles after being involved in military action. Overall, its focus is on gender disparities rather than on the *system* called patriarchy and its underlying assumptions. To be clear: I welcome any efforts to close the gender gap and attend to the lives of women and children; and I see such efforts as different in essence from what I am talking about here: the role that our fundamental approach to life, nature, and each other plays in environmental degradation.

⁶ This analysis is similar to the one put forth by Cynthia Enloe and Cynthia Cockburn in Cynthia Cockburn, “ Militarism, Patriarchy and Peace Movements”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14(4), Dec. 2012, 550-557. They suggest that racism, what they call “unrestrained capitalism”, and state authoritarianism all fuel militarization in a manner similar to patriarchy, yet, “Many prominent critics of militarism seem quite comfortable with analyzing these three militarizing dynamics. But they shrink from

Directly, because patriarchy is, at point of inception, based in separation from and control over nature.⁷ Indirectly, because capitalism, one of patriarchy's core offspring, is based on maximizing profits with complete disregard for what are seen as "externalities."⁸

Even though patriarchy is so central to global warming, much of the thinking about how to slow down or halt this impending disaster remains fully immersed within it.⁹ The majority of proposals, for example, focus on some combination of technological innovation, market incentives, and political or legal enforcements – all methods that are inherently patriarchal, either by being directly coercive or by being transactional.¹⁰ Nor is there any sense I get of this being an explicit and conscious choice, a form of bridge-building based on assessment of where the world is that sees this path as a strategic next step while, in parallel, attending to the deeper causes. Rather, I believe that this link remains invisible to many analysts.

To my sensibility, patriarchy is linked with global warming because, at its core, patriarchy is about the attempt to control nature and subjugate it to the short-term aspirations of a smaller and smaller minority of humans who control massive amounts of money, and thus direct claims on the gifts of nature and of people. For as long as they can continue to extract profits, that small group of individuals will likely continue to engage in practices that lead to rapidly escalating depletion and degradation of the earth's stores of energy and minerals even as disparities in access to resources increase, making whatever benefits exist from the new products and services available to smaller segments of the population.¹¹ The short term results are climate disruptions and increasing violence, hatred, massive inequalities, and war. The medium to long-term results are threats to our capacity to attend to the most basic needs of all people: food, clothing, shelter, health, and education, and, ultimately, irreversible damage to the biosphere.

examining the workings of patriarchy?" (p. 553). One of the reasons they identify for this challenge is men's fear of challenging their own behaviors *as men*: "They are afraid that if they take feminist ideas about patriarchy seriously they'll be thought to be 'soft' by those men they most want to be taken seriously by. A lot of men have learned to be frightened of being feminized in the eyes of other men." (p. 554)

⁷ See <http://www.equalisea.org/blog/patriarchyandclimatechange?rq=patriarchy%20and%20climate%20change> and "Ecofeminism: Toward global justice and planetary health", *Society and Nature*, 2 (1993), 1-35. The latter authors cite the scientific revolution, patriarchal religions, and other factors, all of which are directly or indirectly the result of patriarchy.

⁸ Naomi Klein. "Let Them Drown", *London Review of Books*, June 2, 2016, Vol. 38 No. 11. www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown.

⁹ "... climate change and first world overconsumption are produced by masculinist ideology, and will not be solved by masculinist techno-science approaches." What Greta Gaard here calls "masculinist ideology" is similar to what I am referring to as patriarchy. Gaard also focuses on a "shift from *women as individuals* to *gender as a system structuring power relations*" as an explanatory lens, once again paralleling my critique here. (Quotes from "Ecofeminism and Climate Change" in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 49 (2015): 20-33.)

¹⁰ While the idea that there may have existed societies that were truly based on the gift economy is far from the mainstream, even the mainstream of feminism, it is commonly accepted by scholars such as Heide Goettner-Abendroth (see her edited collection *Societies of Peace. Matriarchies Past, Present and Future*, Inanna Press, York University, Toronto/Canada 2009), Genevieve Vaughan (see *For-Giving, A Feminist Critique of Exchange*), and others. Within the inherently unprovable nature of prehistoric research, I have chosen to accept their sensibilities and arguments. See the next section for more details.

¹¹ See <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/apr/08/global-inequality-may-be-much-worse-than-we-think> for a staggering analysis of increasing income inequality between countries on top of growing inequality within countries that's more commonly reported.

Because patriarchy is what feeds the very capacity to act with such inexplicable lack of care for the whole and for the future, attending to its core operating principles remains imperative even as the specific acute manifestations remain urgent. As such, it is astonishing and painful (though hardly surprising!) for me to see just how marginal the engagement with the deeper links between patriarchy and potential climate catastrophes appear in today's discussions.

Ultimately, I don't see any way of fully turning around the march to destruction without focusing on connection in all its dimensions: self, others, nature, and life itself. Connection with self manifests as full freedom; connection with others manifests as belonging; connection with nature manifests as trust in natural abundance; and connection with all of life manifests as care for the whole. Conversely, the loss of connection that came from and/or brought about patriarchy manifests, respectively, as obedience, shame, scarcity, and narrow self-interest.

Thus I believe that it is only when we find ways to both restore and pass on love, and the full experience of connection that love signifies, that our species and with it all life can continue to thrive on this one and beautiful planet.

Our Origins: Love, Needs, and the Mothering Principle

All phenomenological or descriptive theory depends not upon a theory's ability to explain facts from premises or theoretical postulates, but rather upon its self-evidence, upon its capacity to produce an experience of recognition in the reader. Since the theory itself begins with a social-spiritual understanding of the very thing that the theory is addressing and talking about, the only claim to validity that it can make upon the reader is the extent to which the reader can recognize it as adequate to fully reveal what is being described.¹²

The framework I am putting here is just such a theory: it's fundamentally unprovable. Yet, four strands of human intellectual endeavors converge on it: archeological/anthropological, biological, psychological, and social-theoretical. Archeologically, an entire field has sprung into academic existence since the pioneering work of archeologist Marija Gimbutas' (1921-94) on the matriarchal societies¹³ of what she calls Old Europe. These societies flourished all over Europe for a few thousand years, well into the agricultural revolution, until they were transformed into patriarchal societies over the course of three waves of progressively more violent invasions by nomadic pastoralist Indo-Europeans she dubbed Kurgans based on their burial sites.¹⁴ The Kurgans,

¹² Gabel, Peter. A Spiritual Way of Seeing *Tikkun* 28(2): 17. This raises issues about the possible acceptance of theories that some of us would deem harmful. These issues are beyond the scope of this article.

¹³ To my mind, the use of the word matriarchal is unfortunate, because it conjures up a mirror image of patriarchal, thus implying to the novice reader a society in which women rule and men are oppressed. In actual fact, this term, for those who use it, pivots on a different and earlier meaning of the term "arche" in Greek: rather than "rule", it connotes "beginning" or "source", leading to a reading of the word matriarchal as "originating with the mother" rather than "ruled by the mother." (See *The Rule of Mars*, ed. by Cristina Biaggi, for more discussion of this usage.) For myself, I vastly prefer the term matricentric: putting the mother and mothering at the center. Still, given that there is an established tradition, and out of respect for the scholarship of many researchers, I use this term, despite my personal sense of its limitations, for the remainder of this article.

¹⁴ I return later to the very complex question of how the Kurgans themselves might have converted from the egalitarian, matriarchal model that Gimbutas' followers believe was the way of life for 97% of our existence as homo sapiens before patriarchy.

according to her carefully examined engagement with artifacts, literature, language, and several other disciplines, gradually bred themselves into the European culture by forcibly taking control of the women, killing or enslaving the men, and overall destroying the peaceful, egalitarian, women-centered and goddess-worshipping, gift-based, highly complex, and even urbanized cultures that she identified. In their stead, they established the foundation of patriarchy in Europe. In parallel, as she and others continued to investigate and discover, either the Kurgans or other similar groups also migrated eastward all the way to the Indus region, where similarly matriarchal societies existed. Other parts of the world remained partly or wholly matriarchal until the massive worldwide project of European colonization disrupted just about any semblance of egalitarian structures and imposed the order of patriarchy – dominance and submission – on most of the rest of the world.¹⁵

In addition to explorations of prehistoric matriarchal societies, some small pockets of fully or partially matriarchal societies continue to exist and struggle against the continued encroachment of patriarchy. Those “include the Mosuo in China, near Tibet (see Goettner-Abendroth 1999, pp, 31-41) and the women-centered society of Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico, among others.”¹⁶

While exquisitely researched and meticulously documented, the field of matriarchal studies, begun by author and independent scholar Heide Goettner-Abendroth, is contested by both archeologists and others. As Marija Gimbutas herself said: “A serious and continuous obstacle in the study of ancient societies is the indolent assumption that they must have resembled our own... the existence of ‘a different world’ is the hardest thing to admit.”¹⁷

What do such societies look like? This is where the idea of a “biology of love” meets the “maternal gift economy” of social theorist Genevieve Vaughan and my own explorations over years of learning, teaching, writing, and working with people within the framework of putting needs at the center. In different ways, these frameworks describe what I believe most of us know, somewhere deep inside, is our true human legacy: love and embeddedness within the family of life.

¹⁵ *The Rule of Mars* contains documentation of the shift to patriarchy, while *Societies of Peace* contains accounts of the extant societies that are still considered matriarchal by the authors of the book.

¹⁶ The Iroquois culture is one such example. Writes Barbara Alice Mann, a Bear Clan Seneca Indian and professor at Toledo University: “Iroquoian economic theory starts from the premise of plenty, as opposed to the European premise of scarcity. And, it was a sustaining economy as opposed to the European raiding economy (impoverishing someone else for your own gain). Second, Iroquoian economics was a spiritual system. Third, sharing and cooperation were (and remain) paramount social values.” Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women, the Gantowisas*, (Peter Lang Publishing, New York, NY 2002-2004) (p. 202)

¹⁷ Quoted from Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, p. 324, in Joan Marler, *The Myth of Universal Patriarchy: A Critical Response to Cynthia Eller's Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*, p. 177. Marler adds: “there is absolutely no evidence whatever of competition between households or male domination in pre-Indo-European Neolithic cultures. The assumption that competition and struggles for power are forever ubiquitous is the primary source of such interpretations when no other evidence exists. This is a prime example of ‘presentism’ (the projection of contemporary conditions and expectations onto the past).” (p. 179.) An interesting twist of why, in addition to being steeped in patriarchy, the notion of original matrilineality was dropped, is offered by Nicholas J. Allen et al: “Matrilineality was observed widely around the world in early anthropological research, and it was a common assumption that it was universally first, then shifting to patrilineal arrangements. This common shared assumption was then repudiated once Marx and Engels accepted it into their work. It is a political rather than scientific shift. Without access to this information, evolutionary researchers ended up assuming that common features that we have now have always been part of humanity, fixed as human nature instead of seeing the divergence from primates early on and later changes to patriarchy.” (Nicholas J. Allen et al., eds. *Early Human Kinship: From Sex to Social Reproduction*, 2008, Wiley-Blackwell)

The Biology of Love

Among his many accomplishments, Maturana has been a pioneer in terms of reshaping our understanding of how evolution works. Instead of natural selection as its driver, he posits the framework of “genetic drift” that results in natural selection as the outcome of an ongoing recursive relationship of mutual constitution between organism and environment within the context of epigenetic changes of mutual adaptation.¹⁸ Based on this framework, Maturana and psychologist Gerda Verden-Zöller argue, in *The Origins of Humanness in the Biology of Love* (henceforth “*Biology of Love*” in footnotes), “that human beings belong to an evolutionary history in which daily life was based on cooperation and not domination and submission ... [and in which] the basic emotion or mood was love and not competition and aggression.” Lest there be any doubt in the matter, they add that “this is a biological claim, not a philosophical one.”¹⁹ In this, humans evolved separately from chimpanzees, forming a different lineage despite how close we are genetically, because we have conserved the loving nature of mother-child relationship into adulthood, a period of life in which for other mammals the prevalent mood is one of dominance-submission relationships.²⁰

In speaking of a biology of love, and in describing what early societies would have looked like, Maturana and Verden-Zöller’s work immediately invokes and connects with the descriptions of matriarchal societies provided by Goettner-Abendroth, Vaughan, and their colleagues. As a result, I am drawing on both strands in providing a composite and incomplete portrait of such a society as it existed before patriarchy, or exists now, in an environment partially tainted by patriarchy.²¹

Mothering. The mothering relationship is central, revered, and paradigmatic *beyond* the narrow and progressively narrowing scope we currently associate with it in patriarchal capitalist societies.

¹⁸ See *Biology of Love*. After years of ongoing discomfort with seeing the congruence between crude Darwinian concepts and capitalism, it’s a breath of fresh air to encounter an alternative approach to evolution that is profoundly relational while remaining consistent with genetic theory. In that sense, the theory itself supports and is supported by the project of reclaiming our earlier orientation to life and nature and integrating it with modern science.

¹⁹ *Biology of Love*, 50. This argument is biological in that even though it is by necessity speculative, as is any argument about matters that happened millions of years ago, it is nonetheless made in *biological* (rather than philosophical) categories that explain, for example, how language and our specific human intelligence evolved within a context of love extending through neoteny beyond childhood, in part through dramatic changes in female sexual development which allowed for extended non-reproductive sexuality, love, and play, as well as the changes in the human hand compared to other primates. Much of this different path of evolution already separated us from the lineage that gave rise to chimpanzees as early as about three million years ago. The details of the argument go far beyond the scope of an article such as this one. As an additional window into the intuitive truth of this startling claim is that although we *developed* dominance-submission relationships, they are inconsistent with our biology fully understood, and a result we suffer within them, to the point of physical illness. See also the next footnote.

²⁰ One of the puzzles that their theory addresses is how it is that a lineage that has evolved in the biology of love finds itself mired in war and aggression so much of the time. Again, the explanation is biological: it is within our genetic makeup to be able to act in dominance-submission relationships; it is possible, because biology is not about genes determining outcome. Rather, genes provide the range of possible behavior, and the “manner of living” that is conserved from generation to generation is what determines behavior through epigenetics and ongoing interaction between organism and medium. Clearly, that this is a biological argument, doesn’t mean that it’s not controversial.

²¹ In what follows, I am synthesizing and making links by drawing on the following sources without making ongoing and specific attribution except when directly quoting: *Biology of Love*, Vaughan’s *The Gift in the Heart of Language*, Goettner-Abendroth’s *Societies of Peace*, and *Matriarchal Societies*, and her website: <http://www.hagia.de/en/matriarchy.html>.

Mothering, in its quintessential form, is about an orientation towards the needs of the other, a gifting without expectation of receiving. For this reason, Vaughan has coined the term “motherer” to denote anyone who is in this kind of relationship with a child, so as to uncouple this form of relating from the weight of its gendered and limiting context.²²

Cooperation. Matriarchal societies as are *not* societies in which women rule men. Rather, these were and are societies with no stratification: not between men and women, not between classes, and not between adults and children. Instead, through cooperation and ongoing gifting, everyone’s needs were included in the mix of decisions about resource allocation and social life.²³

Natural authority. Whereas in relations of dominance and submission the person or group in authority maintain their position through the internalization of obedience and shame as well as through outright coercion, in matriarchal societies, no coercion is necessary. Authority emerges naturally. It rests on the kin relationships and arrangements of matrilineality and matrilocality. It is augmented by experience and the capacity to integrate differences, and is generally in the hands of the clan mother, whose views are respected rather than obeyed.²⁴

Gift economy and need orientation. Probably the most difficult to imagine for our modern, exchange-oriented framework is the reality of the prevalence and primacy of the gift in matriarchal societies. Gifting arises from an orientation to everyone’s needs rather than to self-interest or abstract principles. This orientation exists in all mammals, including the most modern humans in patriarchal capitalist societies, as the core aspect of mothering in the early years of life. Its continuation into adult life is directly an outcome of the biology of love with its core concept of neoteny, the extension of childhood features into adulthood. The gift economy is facilitated by the fact that the basic goods are generally managed by the women collectively for the benefit of all, including the men. The gift economy is generally a subsistence economy. When accumulation happens at all, it is seasonal and collective.

Nonviolence. Truly matriarchal societies, characterized by matrilineality, matrilocality, and gift economy, are fundamentally peaceful and stable. As Gimbutas and others have documented, the Old European societies were thriving in balanced relationship with nature and each other for an unimaginably long period for modern human sensibilities: at least many hundreds, possibly up to several thousand years. Similarly, despite extreme conditions imposed by colonial settlers in the

²² For Vaughan, this relationship is the key source of the gift orientation, since infants cannot survive without the gift of mothering. For Maturana and Verden-Zöller, it is a paradigmatic relationship yet they see the presence of the biology of love in all relationships, including in particular those of mating for extended periods of time in great intimacy.

²³ The flavor of cooperation that Maturana and Verden-Zöller describe stands in the most dramatic contrast to what we are familiar with under conditions of patriarchy when they describe cooperation as happening “in the domain of mutual acceptance in a co-participation that is invited, not demanded,” and “its realization occurs in play ... in the enjoyment of actually doing things together.” (*Biology of Love*, 56.)

²⁴ There is, needless to say, huge variety between different societies in how the clan mothers come to occupy this authority, and yet, at the same time, apparently a tremendous amount of similarity in the eventual outcome. The Mosuo in China, for example, operate in such a way that the clan selects its matriarch together based on the simple criterion of “the person who cares the most for everyone.” (Goettner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Societies*, 108.) To any of us steeped in imposed authority, it may be extremely difficult to envision a world in which, truly, there are mechanisms that sustain the entire society and deal effectively with conflict and trauma most of the time.

US, the Iroquois government, entirely based on nonviolent and cooperative principles, has been in continuous operation since being consciously adopted about a thousand years ago.

Self trust. Any child growing up surrounded by direct love and nurturance and witnessing ongoing love, pleasure, stable intimacy, and play grows up free of relational trauma.²⁵ Drawing on interpersonal neurobiology, Vaughan then concludes that “the most important early interpersonal experiences for infants are those of receiving goods and services, because these are crucial for the infants’ survival. Thus the patterns of giving and receiving are necessarily the basic shapers of ‘our neural architecture’ across cultures.”²⁶ They are directly the recipients of the unilateral and unconditional giving from their mothers and others. Their childhood experience of love, community, and the gift economy blends with and continues into their adult life. Even the shock of learning about exchange²⁷ is spared them. “The care given by the motherer is incorporated into the physiology of the child’s brain” without the interference of coercion or shaming. As a result, all people, both women and men, are naturally trusting of self and other, relaxed, and life-loving.

In short, as Goettner-Abendroth sums this portrait up: “matriarchal values show how life can be organized in such a way that it is based on needs, is non-violent and peaceful.”²⁸

Given the overwhelming prevalence of patriarchal cultures in the world today, it is quite understandable that so many are skeptical about there having, indeed, been the kind of past that I just described. The march of patriarchy both continues to destroy such cultures²⁹ and continues to shape the cultural story within which we live, a story that posits the universal superiority and inevitability of patriarchy.

In the process of writing this article and receiving comments from readers, I discovered, first hand and in small measure, just how difficult it is to exit the patriarchy vortex *enough* to truly imagine the possibility that something entirely else is possible and in fact existed. My readers have all been friends and colleagues, all of whom are completely sympathetic to the transformation I am calling for, none of whom are supporters of patriarchy in any way. “Too rosy” is the characterization of it that most sums up their incredulity. To this I want to say the following.

First, a huge disclaimer. I am not a researcher and I am not working with primary sources. My own entry point, is decades of reading and thinking and applying insights to my own work with individuals, groups, and organizations. I take apart, I synthesize, and I piece together ideas and

²⁵ This does not mean there is no trauma in matriarchal societies; only that trauma is fundamentally caused by external events that are part of the natural flow of life, and is thus neither prevalent nor relational. It’s easy to imagine that the relational ease that the biology of love signifies makes healing from trauma far easier than in any modern culture I can think of.

²⁶ Vaughan, “Homo Donans Materno”. Vaughan, who is passionate about loving, nurturing, and touching infants, uses these “mechanical” words precisely because she is contrasting things with the exchange economy. As Vaughan points out, in patriarchal societies this early imprint clashes with what comes later in life, and contributes to our incapacity to recognize the gift economy and to value it.

²⁷ See my forthcoming article “Deserving, Gifting, and Needs” in *Canadian Woman Studies* for a description of my nephew’s distress when he discovered exchange for the first time, specifically related to adults being with him.

²⁸ <http://www.hagia.de/en/matriarchy/why-the-term-matriarchy.html>

²⁹ Most recently, I heard, via personal communication, that the Juchitan culture in Mexico is disintegrating.

findings from many different fields. I am academically trained, and I rely heavily on intuition and feeling. In this article in particular, I am relying on a body of work that is contested and at times actively silenced. There is nothing more threatening for patriarchy than the debunking of the myth of patriarchy, or at least dominance and submission, somehow being built into our nature. All this notwithstanding, I want to clearly state that I take responsibility for my own conclusions and urge readers to consult with the sources before passing judgment on what I say here.

Second, to say that a society is peaceful is not to say that it is conflict free. Conflict, in a trust-based society, is neither avoided nor fought. Rather, it is metabolized in a variety of ways within a restorative paradigm that is always primarily focused on maintaining the overall well-being of the community, which way more often than not would mean engaging with anyone whose behavior may be harmful to the group in a variety of ways rather than punitively. Shaming or coercive measures are used in rare circumstances when the overall mechanisms of digesting what happens are not sufficient to contain potential harm. As I discuss later, I don't believe that patriarchy invented either. It simply shifted what were mechanisms for extreme situations into the norm.

The Shift to Patriarchy

"The overthrow of mother right was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children."

(Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884)

Any theory that aims to explain human life has the task of accounting for what doesn't directly fall within it. The "selfish gene" or the "homo economicus" theories, for example, which foreground self-interest and competition, are forever bound to explain away the persistent presence of care, of connection, and of giving behavior. Similarly, those of us who accept the matriarchal (thus egalitarian, peaceful, stable) lens that explains the archeological, biological, and mythological findings are left with the task of explaining why we have violence, domination, and social division.

The core task is to make sense of the prevalence of patriarchy in dynamic terms – as a series of events that happened – rather than in a static set of assumptions about human nature. We need to come up with plausible explanations for how matriarchal societies, based in the biology of love, turned globally into a "patriarchal culture [which] consists in a manner of living centered in appropriation, domination and submission, mistrust and control, sexual and racial discrimination, and war." (*Biology of Love*, p.87.)

Heide Goettner-Abendroth, as part of her inexhaustible drive to document the existence of matriarchal societies, both in the past and in the present, has also investigated the transitions to patriarchy around the world. Her main instruction to anyone who wants to understand this fundamental human wound which negatively affects children, women, and men all over the world, is to stick with the details and the specificity rather than looking for one grand theory that explains it. In other words, the shift to patriarchy happened for different reasons, in different ways, in the different places in the world where it happened. From a certain point on, it was indeed inevitable, because of the superior capacity of domination-based cultures to conquer and disrupt the

functioning of cultures that don't engage in war. It has been, tragically, a persistent feature of patriarchal cultures that they push outward for more land, more natural resources, more labor power, and/or more markets. As a result, once patriarchy established itself strongly in Europe, it was, indeed, inevitable that it would become a worldwide phenomenon through colonization and conquests.³⁰

Since the purpose of this article is to offer paths forward towards a renewed and sustained biology of love and gift economy through changing how we are with children, by necessity the exploration I am doing here of the shift is cursory and only touches on some key features of what is an intricate and complex set of phenomena, rather than a single phenomenon. My hope is that doing this can shed some light on how patriarchy operates and reproduces itself, where our vulnerabilities to it are, why it came to be associated with a father-ruler, and why it causes so much harm and suffering.

Maturana and Verden-Zöller propose a possible scenario in which the cultural change that resulted in patriarchal pastoral culture "might have taken place in a spontaneous not-intended dynamics." (89) Just as much as the biology of love, from their perspective, was a gradual unfolding through conservation of the features that supported it, so it is that the shift away from the biology of love that patriarchal culture signifies could have happened in a similar manner.³¹ Goettner-Abendroth and others in the same field, on the other hand, maintain that patriarchy doesn't develop through spontaneous unfolding; that there is always a local, specific reason that is external to the spontaneous unfolding of the culture such as climatic change, persistent natural disaster, or invasion.³²

The difference is not trivial. In the imaginary scenario that Maturana and Verden-Zöller develop, the seed of patriarchal function begins with an act of appropriation that appears almost randomly, without a specific explanation or unique cause. The imagined appropriation they describe is one of humans interfering with wolves' access to their natural food previously shared with humans: herds that both the humans and the wolves are following. Such an act of "appropriation [then] brings

³⁰ This is the point where the complexity of worldwide patriarchy goes just beyond what can be adequately covered in this paper. For example, the claim that patriarchy existed in the Americas before Columbus is not universally accepted. While societies such as the Aztec and the Incas clearly included war as part of their "menu", much remains more nuanced than definitive. Once again, it appears that the *assumption* of universal patriarchy may be interfering with a detailed scrutiny of the actual arrangement; the degree of freedom for men and for women; and the relationship with nature. From my cursory review, it appears that the conquerors moved the needle rapidly and systematically towards a much more hermetically patriarchal set of agreements that accorded with their own views about women. This was consistent with the European project everywhere they went, and is a core practice of patriarchy whenever it comes in contact with any new culture in the process of establishing small or large empires, depending on their capacities and resources. Still, the choice of Europe in this point of the story was not accidental: it was the establishment of patriarchy in Europe that had the most far-reaching consequences for the world; not anywhere else.

³¹ And not before it did, because the love dependence that has become built into us required enough technological and linguistic capacity such that cooperation without love would be possible in times of necessity, or any drifts in the direction of patriarchal function would not be conserved into newer generations.

³² See Heide Goettner-Abendroth, "Notes on the Rise and Development of Patriarchy", in Cristina Biaggi (ed.): *The Rule of Mars*. Goettner-Abendroth reviews a number of common hypotheses and rejects them. For example, the claim that it was the recognition of paternity that led to men taking over, is problematic for two reasons. One is that paternity can only be reliably established when women have already been isolated and controlled, which only happens *after* patriarchy is fully established. The other is that paternity is often known and deemed unimportant in matriarchal societies.

with it the loss of trust in the formerly accepted natural coherences of the world.” (90) In other words: the move is from chance action (possibly beginning in only one family) to a change in experience (based on reinterpreting reality): the new frame of protecting animals from wolves replaces the previous reverence for the abundance of nature to provide for both.

In Goettner-Abendroth’s account, on the other hand, it’s specific events that change the experience and result in different choices leading to different actions. In other words, it’s stress and trauma on a large scale that interfere with the spontaneous unfolding of trusting relationships and love. The scale has to be large enough to overwhelm the capacity of a group or culture to metabolize stressful events within its finite resources and resilience. In the case of the “Kurgan” culture that Gimbutas identified, the possible causes could be the flooding of the black sea³³ and/or the desertification of large swaths of land on which many groups depended for their survival. Both of these events pushed large numbers and groups of people outside the bounds of their previous modes of subsistence, thereby creating both trauma and a clash between survival and their manner of living.³⁴

It is almost impossible, I believe, for our modern minds to grasp the calamity of what these waves of invasions from the Kurgans westward signified, because we no longer have the lived sensibility of what it’s like to live in a peaceful, life-loving, egalitarian culture in unity with nature and each other. I continue to contemplate this description of it and to extrapolate to the present to be able to grasp the loss and begin to mourn it, on behalf of all of humanity:

“when [the Kurgans’] barrow-type graves appeared in Europe for the first time (primarily containing males with weapons), nearly 700 major habitation sites, representing a rich fabric of cultural and technological developments, disintegrated after flourishing undisturbed for many hundreds of years.” (Marler 179)

Patriarchy as Cancer

For me, clearly a non-expert in the field, both accounts of what led to the initial conversion and the subsequent calamity seem to be plausible clues into possible trajectories of human social evolution. To make sense of them, I have found it immensely helpful to use a metaphor from an entirely different world that is, unfortunately, painfully familiar to me: the world of cancer.³⁵

Like the appearance of patriarchy, how we come to have cancer is both a persistent mystery and a field rife with multiple theories and explanations. The key “players” in the emergence of a cancerous tumor are individual cells, terrains, and the immune system. The potential culprits in

³³ See Ryan et al, “An Abrupt Drowning of the Black Sea Shelf”, *Marine Geology*, 138 (1997) 119-126, where evidence is provided of a major, cataclysmic flooding of the Black Sea, which is now believed to be the source of mythological accounts such as that of Noah’s ark in the bible (not the only one in the region).

³⁴ See *The Rule of Mars* for several overlapping accounts of these events.

³⁵ Every single one in my family of origin has had cancer, and so far two of us died, most recently my sister and closest colleague, Inbal, in 2014. As a result of dealing with my own cancer, accompanying her for seven years, and being an active member of the involuntary and strong “cancer community”, I have learned enough about cancer to be able to make the analogy.

individual cells becoming cancerous are random mutation, genetic predispositions, metabolic changes, or traumatic emotional events. The immune system is equipped with some mechanisms for attending to the emergence of cancerous cells, usually by killing them. It is only when the numbers grow sufficiently that the immune system loses its capacity to sustain the body's healthy functioning.

The transition into a cancer cell, and especially two key features of it, are strikingly reminiscent of the patriarchal mindset shift. Cancer cells are less differentiated, reverting to a more uniform state, such that, in general, the less differentiated the cells, the more aggressive the cancer. This feature resembles the pressure to conform that accompanies patriarchy in distinction from the freedom to develop individually within a context of interdependence and structural constraints that is part of the matriarchal milieu. Cancer cells also appear to lose their sense of being part of a larger whole, and become, in a manner of speech, fully preoccupied with their own survival. It is precisely this feature which leads them to multiply incessantly and indefinitely until, if the immune system doesn't intervene early enough, they cluster, form their own blood supply (never as elegant as the one originally created by nature), starve the rest of the body, and die along with it.

In case the analogy is not crystal clear: this is very much what happened with patriarchy. The separation from and attempt to control nature that comes either by a stressful event or through random variation leads to disregard of anything outside the immediate and instrumental wishes of those individuals affected by it, and by extension to domination and submission, and the endless cycles of expansion and stress on finite resources. Like cancer, patriarchy is an unsustainable life form, and will by necessity die.³⁶ The only question is what else will die: will we free ourselves from and outlive patriarchy or will it result in our demise as a species?

The analogy extends beyond what happens to cancer cells. The hybrid perspective that I subscribe to about cancer's etiology holds that cells are in ongoing intricate interrelationship with the terrain that surrounds them, and that changes to the terrain can be part of what accounts for increased appearance of cancer cells as well as for what might help them spread. This is how diet, stress levels, exposure to toxins, and other factors can contribute to cancer. A weakened terrain is less capable of sustaining all the connections necessary for cells to thrive freely, and increases the chances that more of them will become cancerous. In other words, the more stress, the more likely they are to make the core cellular-level patriarchal move of separation from the whole that is the prerequisite to unbridled expansion.

One more aspect of this analogy is the one that first got me started on exploring. It was this statement, from a research paper that came to my attention: "Cancer cells use a mutant gene to coerce neighbouring healthy tissue into helping with the disease's growth and spread, a major

³⁶ This realization about my own cancer was part of what made it spiritually possible for me to choose to use chemotherapy to kill the cancer cells even though they were, and I knew it, part of my own body.

new study reports. ... Healthy cells are persuaded to release unique growth signals which cancer cells can use to multiply but cannot secrete themselves, researchers found.”³⁷

I instantly saw this as a powerful analogy for the process of internalized oppression, without which no amount of external physical coercion will be enough to sustain patriarchal rule beyond the initial shock that an invasion or sudden and massive change in climatic conditions can generate. This is precisely why every patriarchal system controls both the upbringing of children and the stories that propagate in the culture. Both serve to bind people emotionally and cognitively to the patriarchal rulers and support it with ostensible willingness.

As if this is not enough, cancer cells also excrete the very hormone that developing fetuses excrete, which convinces the rest of the body to prioritize the tumors. Yet again, this corresponds to a feature of patriarchy in which those in positions of domination set things up in such a way that their own preferences are prioritized, as it protecting them *is* the way to protect and sustain the whole.

Knowing all this, it is no surprise to me that the incidence of cancer in prehistoric societies, as best as can be detected, is drastically smaller than in historic ones. It is as if the cellular level of humans is responding directly and mysteriously to the social conditions of our living. It is also proof, as Maturana and Verden-Zöller say, that patriarchy is physiologically unhealthy for humans who are products of the biology of love.³⁸

Patriarchy as a System

This is as good a moment as any to differentiate between sexism and patriarchy, so that we can see that under patriarchy everyone suffers, even if not in the same ways. As Maturana and Verden-Zöller remind us, “In patriarchal cultures both women and men are patriarchal, and in matristic cultures, both women and men are matristic.” (92) Despite the excruciating reality of violence and hatred against women, the relations between women and men are the *result* of patriarchy rather than its cause. While patriarchy offers some modicum of benefits to men, it also comes at huge cost to men and not only to women, a point I come back to later. Patriarchy is a system that affects relationships, institutions, mindsets, and everything else that has to do with what Maturana calls a “manner of living.”

It’s a system that runs independently of any one person’s attitudes or behaviors. And it’s the fertile ground on which new forms of domination come into being: capitalism, racism, and all the other forms of exploitation, oppression, war, and now environmental degradation, could only have appeared because patriarchy already primed us for them. Even the original forms of accumulation

³⁷ [http://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(16\)30327-0](http://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(16)30327-0) for the full research paper, and <http://www.icr.ac.uk/news-archive/cancer-cells-turn-healthy-cells-to-the-dark-side> for the news item that came to my attention.

³⁸ Beyond the overall stress level that living under patriarchy generates, patriarchy’s most potent offspring, capitalism, has unleashed the very poisons and changes in eating habits, for example, that are a key aspect of the modern epidemic of cancer.

that started when patriarchal societies were formed through conquering the Old European stable agricultural settlements were the *result* of patriarchy and not its *cause*.³⁹

As far as I know, there has never been a patriarchal society that has been stable over many generations within its environment and internally the way that matriarchal societies have been. This is because patriarchy goes against the biology of love, which is still ours, even if it's fading, and thus it needs force in order to sustain itself. This is done, variously, through outright coercion, both directly in the form of armies and police and indirectly through economic force. The leverage for the latter is provided by accumulation and appropriation of more and more resources and capacities, in the end leaving multitudes of people on the planet unable to provide for themselves directly, as we all used to do; only through getting "jobs" that allow them a meager existence in the margins of society, watching their children die or being forced into prostitution and slavery.

The level of internalization of patriarchal ways of being is also the wrenching circumstance that gives rise to the painful reality that women are the first ones to pass along patriarchal messages to both their daughters and their sons, before and alongside men. It is also all too often the case that women engage directly in cruel physical mutilations of their daughters' bodies⁴⁰ and in shunning behaviors towards children, women, and men who don't conform to patriarchal norms.

The usurpation of gifts into the exchange paradigm

Finally, this is also how it comes to happen, as Vaughan so persistently points to, that the gift economy continues without being visible, as host to the exchange economy that becomes a parasite. Specifically, three invisible forms of gifting sustain the workings and continued existence of patriarchy, most acutely in its capitalist form.

One is the gift of mothering and other labor done outside the market economy: care for children, the sick, the home, families, and communities. In the absence of such freely given care, someone would need to pay for it, and the cost of everything would go up. A second is the unfree gifting of labor that is an essential building block of profit; what Karl Marx called "surplus value". The third is the gift of nature and its silent incapacity to resist the mining and other forms of extraction; what generally goes by "externalities" in traditional business accounting.

In other words, Vaughan's claim is that the gift continues, without being valued, without even being recognized. This allows for the mythology of market freedom and success to flourish while

³⁹ Although it's clear that patriarchy would not have taken such root without accumulation already being possible through agriculture. Like many others, I used to believe that agriculture by itself gave rise to patriarchy, and I have many written pieces, including my books, that include references to this theory. I now have come around to seeing agriculture only as vulnerable to patriarchal takeover rather than as its cause; vulnerable because of relying on storage which can so easily be turned into accumulation and central power. Prior to agriculture and the presence of dry goods, everything had to be shared, or else it would perish. Once accumulation happens, abundance can turn into scarcity and fighting, which is about the future. Sadly, accumulation makes complete and total logical sense for living beings that no longer see themselves as part of the web of life, because the only logic that remains is to do whatever it takes to survive. It is the gap between accumulation and the biology of love that requires justification for accumulation and dramatically uneven distribution of resources. I come back to this later.

⁴⁰ E.g. clitoridectomies, which women perform and even justify.

what sustains it remains invisible and often actively devalued. “The parasite [exchange economy] denies that the host [gift economy] is the alternative, and makes it appear that the parasite itself is necessary for the host’s very existence.”⁴¹

Why do men rule women?

If patriarchy is not specifically about men, why is it that this shift invariably results in men ruling women and not the other way around? Goettner-Abendroth’s account provides a possible explanation that encompasses the sheer volume of this tragedy that befell us rather than making it appear predetermined based on innate biological features. Her analysis is specifically about Europe, and as such it cannot be extrapolated to other parts of the world, especially since patriarchy unfolded differently in different locations, and in some places the shift was only partially complete by the time Europeans arrived. Goettner-Abendroth’s research has uncovered matriarchal societies that at least in part survived patriarchy in all continents except Europe.⁴²

Goettner-Abendroth picks up and modifies DeMeo’s argument⁴³ about desertification and the possible flooding, showing, point by point, how it could be possible for large groups of early humans to be driven to more and more desperate measures in their distress. First, after already having been settled for a long time, they returned to reliance on hunting for food to supplement the diminishing capacity of women to sustain the group through growing food. Then, to the extent that they failed, they left the women and children, as was customary, so as to reduce the burden on the women and sustain the future of their society. This likely led to the disintegration of the clans in their inability to feed even themselves. By this time, the position of women declined dramatically although patriarchy had not been established yet. With or without women, groups of men continued to migrate from the steppes, because even with the resumption of hunting, they could not feed themselves properly. Progressively more desperate, they would finally reach the urban and garden societies of eastern Europe, only to recognize that there was no place for them to settle peacefully because of population density. Their choice was the hardest they could make. They could either return to the steppes and desert that could not sustain them, or they could cross a line, for the first time in human history in that part of the world, and use their hunting weapons against other humans in an act of war. As Goettner-Abendroth says: “It is not a special form of culture that tends toward brutality and brings forth war by itself, but the necessity to survive that generates such effects.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Genevieve Vaughan, *The Gift in the Heart of Language*, 63. Manfred Max Neef, in *From the Outside Looking in*, recounts an incident in which he confronted a group of business and government people in a Latin American country who were complaining about the weight of carrying the indigenous peoples who were a majority in that country and whom they saw as lazy. When pressed, they had to admit that if those same indigenous people were to vanish, their entire society would crumble, whereas if their own stratum of society were to disappear, the indigenous people would manage quite well on their own in their traditional ways undisturbed.

⁴² Goettner-Abendroth suggests that in order to understand the shift to patriarchy and how a small group of men came to rule entire societies, it is imperative to apply extraordinary rigor and examine each step of the way with care in order to expose and remove any unconscious assumptions about the inevitability or superiority of patriarchy so as to see the specifics as they unfolded uniquely.

⁴³ James DeMeo, “The Saharasian Origins of Patriarchal Authoritarian Culture”, in Biaggi, ed. *The Rule of Mars*.

⁴⁴ “Notes on the Rise and Development of Patriarchy”, p. 37 in *The Rule of Mars*. This entire section summarizes and integrates material from pp. 35-37 of this article. I found Goettner-Abendroth’s analysis meticulous, un-hyped, and compelling. It is also

From this moment on, European history is a history of unceasing trauma. As a group of first nations people told Anne Cameron: “if a generation of people got pushed to killin’ other people, it took four generations of peace to get people’s heads fixed afterward. And we hadn’t had them four generations.”⁴⁵ Although these words are from a different continent, there is no doubt in me that the trauma of having killed other humans, under conditions already of such severe distress, affected the killers and their progeny for generations to come. Since, as Gimbutas documented, the invaders intermingled, albeit forcibly, with the stunned and grieving victims, trauma began to pass from generation to generation and war became the norm, ultimately carried forth to all continents through European expansion.⁴⁶

With the increasing waves of invasion, the capacity to absorb them peacefully diminished rapidly. Where villages and cities were not destroyed,

“the vanquished culture became the second class in a new ‘two class state’. This state consisted of a small group of rulers who belonged to a foreign people, and a large group of suppressed subjects, the indigenous peoples. At this point, and only then, patriarchy begins, because the first structure of domination has been invented. Simultaneously, patriarchal consciousness begins. It is based on two axioms: ‘All power comes from weapons’ and ‘War is the father of everything.’”⁴⁷

The short answer, then, to why it was men that became the carriers and symbols of the new social order is that it was men who killed, conquered, and dominated. And it was women who had to be dominated in the conquered areas, because they were the center of life and power: unless they lost their power, they remained capable of organizing resistance to the new rulers.⁴⁸ This is how patriarchy deepened its commitment to separation until it became a negation of life, of mothering and of children, and by extension of gifting and connection. From then on, it became imperative for the new rulers to be in control of women and of their procreative abilities, a process that took an extremely long time and has never been fully completed.

Even as resistance to the encroachment of patriarchy and the diminishment of the biology of love has continued, patriarchy has expanded, and with it trauma, instability, and progressive destruction of life. At the same time, at the level of storytelling, patriarchy has been immensely successful in hiding its inherent and necessary violence by othering larger and larger groups of

complementary to other analyses, e.g. Gerda Lerner’s focus on population growth. Given that my main point is elsewhere, about children’s upbringing, it is simply strong enough for me to rest here.

⁴⁵ Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman*.

⁴⁶ The analysis about how the Kurgans resorted to war is entirely Goettner-Abendroth’s, the link with trauma to the invaders and future generations is my own conjecture.

⁴⁷ Goettner-Abendroth, “Patriarchy”, 37.

⁴⁸ As indeed women continued to do. Even as late as the 15th and 16th centuries, the struggles against the emerging new order of capitalism and the new forms of domination it threatened to bring, included women in key positions of organizing and leading. See *Caliban and the Witch* for details. Capitalism, the latest economic version of patriarchy, demoted women even further for a long time, and it took centuries before women recovered from the witch hunts and the diminishment in their productive participation and social status to create modern feminism.

people and inventing what theologian Walter Wink calls “the myth of redemptive violence”.⁴⁹ At times by conquest, and at other times by forcing neighboring groups to become warlike in their attempts to resist conquest, thereby shifting internally towards war and dominance, patriarchy continued to absorb more and more of humanity.⁵⁰

Given the immense powers amassed by current patriarchal global ruling elites – military, technological, and cultural – what possibility is there to turn around the tide when the levels of violence, hatred, and catastrophic migrations; depletion and/or degradation of air, water, food, soil, and minerals; impoverishment and economic instability; and climate turmoil are all reaching the hockey stick point? For Goettner-Abendroth, as for many others, the answer is only one: reclaim, through education, the matriarchal values and social organization, localize into small groups, and dramatically reduce consumption.

While I agree with Goettner-Abendroth in abstract principle, the path towards such a future does not appear straightforward to me, especially given the unspeakable cumulative and intergenerational trauma we all carry after 7,000 years or so of patriarchy. I turn next to making sense of this trauma before finally taking on the incredibly daunting task of delineating a path forward.

Life under Patriarchy: when Extremes Become the Norm

I want to repeat again that while there’s a large body of research that points in the overall direction of what I am saying here in this article, we don’t actually *know* any of it in any way remotely resembling knowing that prime numbers don’t divide in anything except themselves and one. There is an irreducible element of conjecture in any theory about any aspect of reality, and the closer the domain of study is to our social and psychological life, the greater the degree of conjecture.⁵¹

In this section, I am taking this fundamental unknowability one step further, because I am making my own conjectures. Although, as always, I am basing them on years of careful observation, reading, and experimenting, it is still the case that in this section I am doing it with far less reliance on other sources than before.

In my understanding, then, there are three mechanisms that existed before patriarchy and moved from being activated in extreme conditions to being activated either all the time or often: fight/flight/freeze, coercion, and shame. The order I chose is not accidental. The first is the oldest in terms of evolution, while the last is the most closely related, specifically, to human evolution

⁴⁹ See *The Powers that Be*. Wink maintains that the classical domination story, which he does not specifically associate with patriarchy per se, is that violence is the way that the good overcomes evil. No distinction between good and evil existed prior to patriarchy.

⁵⁰ This happened because women would lose their status and shift from bearers of life to those who need to be protected, along with children.

⁵¹ That there is conjecture built into science across the board is mostly the domain of critical epistemology and philosophy of science; not what is generally taught to aspiring scientists.

per se. I turn next to how each of them has unfolded within the trauma-laden history of patriarchy.⁵²

Fight/flight/freeze. For many years, I've been deeply troubled by the notion that we have an ancient brain that "hijacks" control out of our conscious choice and reacts in times of danger. I could not see any reason why nature would have designed us this way. Instead, it became clear to me that there are two parts to reactivity. The first is an assessment, often taking only a split second and entirely involuntary (though amazingly reversible upon reflection), that the situation we are facing is a threat, a potential danger to our survival. Once that assessment happens, I now understand, control is *transferred* to the part of the brain that is specifically designed to attend to danger situations; there's no hijacking involved; it's a smooth operation. The reason for it is to be able to make much more rapid decisions than ordinarily, based on fewer variables to consider. This means, for humans, turning off the normal mechanisms of the biology of love, most especially care for the whole, and focusing, instead, far more narrowly just on survival.⁵³

As Maturana describes it, "A baby is born in the operational trust that there is a world ready to satisfy in love and care all that he or she may require for his or her living, and is therefore not helpless." This is only a special case of the large fundamental experience of life: "Biologically, trust is the spontaneous manner of being of any living system when in comfortable congruence with the medium." (BoL, 214) In other words: in normal circumstances, the fight/flight/freeze system is not activated.

Trauma that is not metabolized properly by a living system, certainly a human being, interferes with this natural trust. It results in a higher propensity for interpreting incoming signals as danger and activating the fight/flight/freeze system. Trauma, in other words, creates and intensifies separation. This may well be why the shift to patriarchy was intertwined with so much separation. As you recall the general contours of the catastrophes that befell the Indo-Europeans prior to the invasion of Old Europe, a key aspect of it that I can imagine is that loss of trust in nature would

⁵² There are also other pertinent examples of patriarchy making extreme cases into the norm, with birth being a prime and relevant example. Clearly, "there are emergencies sometimes. But obstetrics makes those extreme situations the central focus of its practice and treats birth as if that's what it is. These life-saving emergencies are where the doctors shine in what they offer so they put themselves in the center rather than staying on the margins and in the background" alert and ready for possible emergencies. (Sarah Proechel, personal communication, 2017.)

⁵³ To reiterate: the fight/flight/freeze response has been part of our makeup and exists *within* the context of the biology of love; reserved for extreme cases. My concern here is with normalizing the extreme. An added layer of complexity that I am largely sidestepping here is the research of sex variability with regards to stress response. This research has identified a "tend-and-befriend" stress response for females, especially when they are actively engaged with their offspring. As fascinating as I find this phenomenon, I am not giving it much space in this article for two reasons. First, if Maturana is correct, then most humans now live in conditions that accentuate differences between the sexes biologically in addition to culturally. (Note, for example, that men who spend time with toddlers experience a reduction in testosterone; not only fathers. This raises the possibility that we don't actually have the possibility of studying humans who live mostly trauma-free lives under conditions of the biology of love.) The other, more directly relevant to this point, is that the issue of a fight/flight/freeze response vs. a tend-and-befriend response is in some ways secondary to the point I am making here. This is because, however much females do tend-and-befriend, it doesn't mean we don't do flight/fight/freeze. The language used most commonly for it is "being triggered" and it happens to women as well as to men. What is of issue is the fact that we are on alert for interpreting "danger" far more often as a result of patriarchal living which separates us from self and other.

follow from the collapse of all systems of support; from the encounter with harsh conditions of unexpected desert; from repeatedly having to migrate and still not finding enough for sustenance.

On the heels of this, more trauma resulted from making the choice to engage in war, and more trauma for the inhabitants of Old Europe who endured the invasions, who endured the destruction of their ways of being, who endured massive amounts of coercion for the first time.

Traumatized people are way less likely to be able to create the optimal conditions for their children to grow up in the biology of love. This is why it takes four generations to recover from killing, as the quote I used earlier from First Nations people pointed to: it's the amount of time that, under normal conditions, the trauma is fully released. Except that when the amount of trauma is of such severe magnitude and affecting so many, there are no normal conditions. Patriarchy has only continued, expanded, taken over more areas of life, spawned colonialism and capitalism, and much more. By now, thousands of years into the accelerating intergenerational trauma called patriarchy, and with the ongoing bombardment of our senses with more and more stimulation with less and less silence and darkness, we simply never fully regenerate. The result is a semi-permanent activation of the fight/flight/freeze system, and a high propensity to reach full activation.

Coercion. Matriarchal societies rely on relationship, care for the whole, gifting, and natural authority to maintain cohesion and well-being. It is a rare event when actual coercion has to be exercised, and almost impossible in the absence of rulers, armies, or other enforcement apparatus. Patriarchy, on the other hand, because it is always imposed *against* our biology, necessitates ongoing coercion, especially of children.⁵⁴ It becomes the norm, and eventually gets glorified. Obedience as a virtue is one of patriarchy's ways of traumatizing all of us, and of making it possible for itself to continue: obedience is one of the core paths to the capacity to overcome the innate human aversion to inflicting harm on others.⁵⁵

Shame. Shame evolved, no doubt, as part and parcel of humans becoming progressively more dependent on being part of a loving group in order to have well being. It's the biggest vulnerability we carry, our absolute need for the safety that comes from belonging to a group. When the behavior of an individual threatens the ongoing cohesion or functioning of the group, and only in those circumstances, that's when shame emerges as a mechanism for protecting the group from the threat of an individual taking action that might endanger the group. What patriarchy gave rise to, instead, was to mobilize, whether consciously or not, this powerful social emotion for the everyday tasks of maintaining its forced cohesion. In other words, the function of shame shifted, and now it protects the imposed order of the powerful; not the group as a whole. The same mechanism applies: inducing the horrific "feeling of an invalidated and varying fractured self-

⁵⁴ That patriarchy, or in its more common name, civilization, goes against our biology is also argued, from an entirely different and fully related angle, by Michel Odent in *The Scientification of Love*, which is about childbirth. Odent argues that the level of technology currently used at birth pushes humans towards more propensity for violence. He also calls out circumcision as a practice that leads to the creation of warriors. Like Maturana, Odent is concerned about the loss of our capacities for love and by extension our survival as a species.

⁵⁵ See Miki Kashtan, "The Freedom to Disobey"

identity... sparking a disabling sense of powerlessness, exposed vulnerability ... and a compelling urge to hide..."⁵⁶ This feeling pushes humans to abandon what they are doing to regain acceptance in the group. Except that under patriarchy shame, like coercion, becomes a primary mechanism of ongoing social control, and especially in childhood. Such repeated acts of shaming at a time when a child is most in need of the loving context that allows for unhindered individual development results in "the internalizing of an oppressive morality in the form of shame."⁵⁷

Domination and Submission: Separating Freedom from Safety

Alice Miller, a recanting psychoanalyst who spoke up, repeatedly, about what she called in one of her book titles the "hidden cruelty of child rearing", was a powerful voice in opening up the conversation about the way that we treat our children. She starts from the assumption that human babies come into this world as "a bundle of needs."⁵⁸ Unlike the legacy of patriarchy that is opposing these needs, culminating in Freud's reduction of all human needs to two insatiable drives, she sees these needs as varied, irreducible, and finite: "All children are born to grow, to develop, to live, to love, and to articulate their needs and feelings for their self-protection."⁵⁹ In matriarchal societies, those who care for the children, mothers and others, approach them from a fundamental orientation of attention to their needs, in a full and undifferentiated way: as many of the needs, as much as possible.

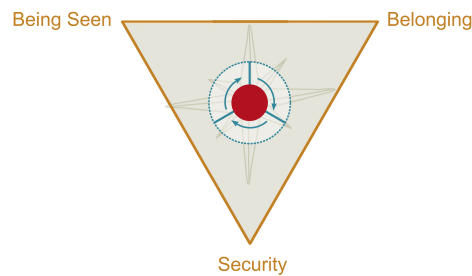
Following the discovery and articulation of my sister Arnina Kashtan, I now see one of patriarchy's core ways of interfering with individual development as taking the form of separating and opposing two sets of needs. One is the cluster of security, which also includes belonging and being seen, and the other is the cluster of freedom, which also includes truth and presence. The tragedy of socialization within the patriarchal world we live in is that the two triangles polarize. As children, our security triangle is not a given; we have to earn it by being obedient, "good", and overall following adults' ideas and instructions. This means we get a subtle and profound message that says that the price of security and belonging is loss of the freedom to be. The overwhelming majority of us accept this extremely difficult deal. We give up who we are, our truth as it lives in us moment by moment, for the hope of being seen and accepted as part of the whole. We conclude that freedom is impossible, and keep longing for it. This is patriarchy's "success": we become obedient and disconnected from ourselves. We are then more likely to internalize patriarchy's messages and pass them on to our own children. We are unlikely to challenge either specific people in positions of authority or the system of patriarchy as a whole.

⁵⁶ Pp. 135-6, Harvey, O. (1997). Relationship of shame and guilt to gender and parenting practices. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 23(1), 135-146.

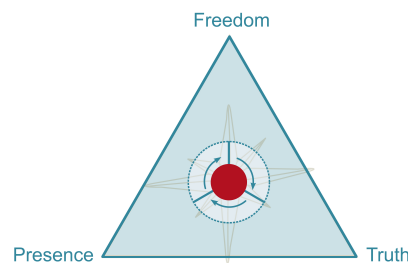
⁵⁷ Peter Davies, *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture*. Davies is summarizing here Otto Gross's understanding of patriarchal upbringing.

⁵⁸ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, 48.

⁵⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, Afterword to the Second Edition, immediately following 282.



A very small minority of us, in the same circumstance of polarization, choose freedom knowing full well that this means living without safety, belonging, or being seen. This choice is never articulated as an option, which is perhaps why only a few of us take it. Lest it seem like a way out of patriarchy’s rule, the isolation of such freedom becomes a cautionary tale that others see and would rather not emulate. In addition, this level of isolation also effectively makes it less likely to band with others to stand up to patriarchy.



In effect, whichever way we go, we come out of childhood fractured. Darcia Narvaez, a psychologist and theorist, has done extensive research on the relationship, specifically, on what upbringing is and is not consistent with the nurturing environment that is necessary for sustaining “the biology of love” that is optimal for our healthy development, an environment which she calls the “Evolved Developmental Niche” (EDN).⁶⁰ Her results show that “EDN-consistent care in early life includes longterm breastfeeding, extensive positive touch, responsiveness to child needs to avoid distress, extensive free play in the natural world with multi-aged mates, social support, and soothing birth experiences.” Her observations both in life and in her careful lab research lead her to a strong conclusion: “The caregiving environment that has been normalized by culture

⁶⁰ Darcia Narvaez, “Baselines for virtue.” In J. Annas, D. Narvaez, & N. Snow (Eds.), *Advances in virtue development: Integrating perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016.

represents an aberration in human species history, creating systematic ‘undercare’ of children, denying their evolved needs.” The suffering this induces from having to accept the unacceptable is concerning enough. The horror intensifies, though, when we also learn that “EDN-deprived people are set on a trajectory to grow into emotionally illiterate people consumed by narcissism.” This is in deep contrast to the persistent findings, starting from early European accounts of contacts with indigenous, matriarchal populations, of “a common prosocial personality that is inclusive, humble, egalitarian and generous.”

In stark terms: our upbringing primes us to compete and fight with others for the few positions of dominance, where those are even available, or to submit to others’ dominance. How? By making love absent or conditional, by shaming us, and by creating impossible choices that divide us internally. Within a patriarchal world, maintaining dominance also requires external divisions between people, starting with gender, and extending to class, race, and beyond. As Riane Eisler said: “These traditions of domination and submission in the parent-child and gender relations are the foundations on which the entire dominator pyramid rests.”⁶¹

The global war-ning: will our children conserve the biology of love?

We have reached a state where the biology of love is at risk. I am reaching full circle to the beginning, to Maturana and Verden-Zöller’s assertion that we will need to *want* to preserve it if we are to continue as loving human beings.

All the values and ways of being of matriarchal societies – as outlined in the section on the biology of love above – are now endangered.

In this tragic context, the relationship of **mothering** itself is transformed. Instead of being an organic and central part of life, patriarchy “instrumentalizes child upbringing by making it a function of designs for the future. ... [It] separates the mother and the child from the present of their living in mutual acceptance and mutual trust.” (BoL 93) Within this context, the social structures that separate home from work, fully established by the industrial revolution, result in impossible choices now foisted on women: either remove themselves from adult productive life and raise their children within a non-communal, artificially intensified dyadic relationship (if they have that option in terms of their class standing), or join the labor market and shift the child’s upbringing to a transactional context.

Cooperation, which previously was based on voluntary participation and the pleasure of doing things together, is now mostly coerced. In fact, when a parent speaks of wanting cooperation from a child, it is essentially a code word for having the child do what the parent wants. Obedience is a substitute for the co-creative energy of working together. In addition, human groups are now riddled with differences that fit into the dominance-submission frame, such that the majority of the people of the world are now involuntarily oriented for many hours every day towards doing meaningless activities that are designed to attend to some of the needs of the few. Mistrust and

⁶¹ Riane Eisler, *The Power of Partnership*, (New World Library, Novato CA 2002), 106

resentment predominate, feeding the next cycles of trauma and contributing to the perpetuation of patriarchy. The net result is that some groups' needs are systematically prioritized in social contexts rife with power differences and mistrust.

Natural authority is largely replaced with imposed, structurally reinforced authority that is obeyed rather than listened to. Within at least some structures of government and corporations, rising to more authority correlates with less rather than more care for everyone.⁶²

As stated before, the **gift economy** has gone underground in exchange economies, and **need orientation** is progressively less common as everything gets commodified. Notions of fairness are increasingly rooted in complex justifications for systematic inequality,⁶³ such that we are seduced into believing that those who have access to resources well beyond anyone's capacity to spend them and those who don't get their basic needs met both deserve their conditions. Although the principles of human rights are spoken of, the actual conditions in the world are of unimaginable and ongoing suffering. What this means is that the early imprint of gifting, which for all of us meant free receiving, clashes with the reality of exchange we later discover and makes us in some ways divided against ourselves.

Although claims of progress in peace, democracy, and human well-being are being made,⁶⁴ they are also being contested. Somewhere, we know that something is very wrong in a world where war is a constant affair somewhere or another and **Nonviolence** is elusive. Depending on how violence or nonviolence are defined, the degree of violence in the world could be seen as having unprecedented proportions, especially if global south impoverishment and the brutalization of economic dependence on meaningless jobs that do not even sustain people are included, and even more so if emotional violence is included.

Of all I learned about matriarchal societies, perhaps the most moving aspect, for me, was the sense of **self-trust** that people who are raised within the biology of love experience. Not only was it moving, it was also clear to me how necessary self-trust is for any possibility of caring action in times of challenge. Tragically, as someone who has traveled to quite a number of countries and engaged with many people both within organizations I consult with and while leading workshops in contexts of intimacy and vulnerability, I don't see much evidence that such self-trust is widely spread in the world. Most people I meet struggle with extreme self-doubt and caution, relying on anything but their own inner guidance and clarity for making choices.

If "matriarchal values show how life can be organized in such a way that it is based on needs, is non-violent and peaceful,"⁶⁵ then we could similarly say that patriarchal values, once fully

⁶² Note how the estimated percentage of CEOs who are considered psychopathic is four times as large as the estimated proportion of those considered psychopathic in the culture at large. It is my strong and unprovable belief that psychopathy is a condition born of patriarchy.

⁶³ See for example <http://thefearlessheart.org/abundance-inequality-needs-and-privilege/>

⁶⁴ A notable example is Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 2011.

⁶⁵ <http://www.hagia.de/en/matriarchy/why-the-term-matriarchy.html>

embedded within life, show us how, despite our biology, and despite 97% or more of our existence as a species, we have sadly managed to organize life in such a way that it negates life, is based on persistent violence and war, and recreates trauma and stress from generation to generation. Patriarchy, say Maturana and Verden-Zöller “interferes with the biology of love, pushing human relations away from the domain of collaboration and mutual respect toward the domain of political alliances, mutual manipulation, and mutual abuse.” (BoL, 119)

So far, we have managed to provide enough of the biology of love context to carry this biology through the generations to our present, despite the trauma of patriarchy. However, “it is always possible that the systemic conservation of aggression as a cultural manner of living may result in a path of genetic drift that facilitates the conservation of aggression as an adult manner of living.” (BoL 131)

This possibility is looming larger now. The state of globalized capitalist patriarchy in which we live “makes it almost impossible for a child to grow spontaneously in a manner centered in the biology of love.” (BoL 94) We have already lost something. If there is any path forward, all the features of the biology of love now “require to be reflected upon in order to be realized as desired aspects of the conservation of humanness. That is, we must now create a rational justification for having love as features of the child’s upbringing through the expansion of our understanding if we wish to conserve loving humanness, because love is fading away from the spontaneous world of the child.” (BoL 94)

We are reaching the end of the road.

Integrating Our Past with Our Present

Fifteen years ago, when my beloved deceased sister Inbal first articulated her radical approach to parenting based on the principles and practices of Nonviolent Communication,⁶⁶ she began to speak for the perspective of seeing this form of parenting as an act of social change. Now, having metabolized the full ramifications of what we have lost, and the specific danger to our continued existence as a species emerging from the lineage of the biology of love, her perspective is deeper and clearer to me: at least some of us, somewhere, need to find a way to do the near-impossible in order to make a future truly possible.

This, to me, entails three overlapping steps. One is to transform our understanding of life and actively challenge the patriarchal version of reality that has come to dominate our thinking of who we are and what history has been. One is to do the extraordinary work of re-integrating the split between freedom and belonging, so we can come back to individual wholeness. And one is to engage, either directly or indirectly, in the monumental task of creating a different life for this generation of children, so they can carry forward and conserve a renewed capacity to live in the biology of love.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Inbal Kashtan, “Compassionate Connection: Nonviolent Communication with Children”, *Mothering Magazine*, Feb-Mar, 2002.

⁶⁷ There is, of course, also the enormous and daunting task of finding ways to transform our largest institutions. I sense that I have taken on enough in this article to leave this question noted for other occasions.

Changing the Story

In some ways, this is the easiest part of the necessary transformation. The information is available, and we can find it. It's less available in mainstream media outlets or even in much of the academic world. It requires some effort to find, and it's available. There is no need to start from scratch, because many of us have already been doing the collecting.⁶⁸

Ultimately, the message I hope we fully live into believing is simple:

Most of our existence, at least 97% of it if not 99%, we lived in matriarchal societies in which we were thriving and enjoying life, fully connected to our bodies, to our sensations, to each other, to life as a whole.

A set of tragic events around the world resulted in a traumatic shift that created patriarchal rule, first in local pockets, then through expansion almost all over the world. They happened because of circumstances we may never fully know, and yet we seem to know enough to conclude that they were not intrinsic developments *within* cultures. Patriarchy arose because of vulnerability to certain extreme outside stressors, within which we appear to revert to the biology of aggression. Perhaps our biology of love had not evolved sufficiently to handle such conditions, since the *capacity* for dominance and submission had remained in our genetic makeup even if our *manner of living* had fully evolved into the biology of love.

We all suffer the consequences of these events. Men and women – though not alike; adults and children – though not alike; people of lighter and darker skin – though not alike; people of wealth and impoverished people – though not alike. The separation affects all of us and distorts our sense of self and our capacity for well-being. Some of us are also the object of hatred, persecution, violence, and diminishment.

The trauma, separation, scarcity, and powerlessness that have been the result of all this unfolding are also the root cause of all our attempts to control nature which are now putting us closer and closer to a point of no return, both on the external physical plane, in terms of destroying all life support systems, and also on the internal biological-social plane, in terms of losing our capacity to pass on the legacy of love that is our true makeup.

We can, still, reclaim, restore, and conserve our human lovingness, though not for long. The key to recovering it is reconnecting with our *emotional* selves – our feelings and our needs – and beginning to trust that our deepest longings are not destructive if we can receive them with love. That will allow us to honor children's lives, so we can provide and sustain for them an easy fullness of both freedom and belonging.

⁶⁸ One possible starting point is my own *Spinning Threads of Radical Aliveness*.

If ever we manage to turn the tide, may we have a longer stretch of time to settle into the biology of love. First culturally, then physiologically and anatomically, and, finally, genetically.

Reclaiming Ourselves: A Personal Practice of Liberation

Because I regularly write on topics related to practices for personal liberation,⁶⁹ I am only providing a few cursory notes on the path towards integration of freedom and belonging.

First, and foremost, personal liberation, like all liberation, begins with love: “the acceptance of the legitimacy of oneself, of the others, and of the circumstances that one does not like and wants to change. Without love there is not emotional space to act in responsibility and freedom.” (BoL, 106)

Second, personal liberation is extremely unlikely to take place without the willingness to experience discomfort. There’s discomfort that comes just from creating any shift in what’s familiar, especially for those who occupy positions of privilege within the patriarchal hierarchy. Beyond that, there are two additional significant types of discomfort. One is purely internal, and arises when we realize that a big part of what holds patriarchy in place is “our cultural addiction to the patriarchal demands of mistrust, control, power, domination, or abuse.” (BoL 121) This discomfort can be embraced, ultimately, by remembering that all these and their effects are “not our basic biological world,” and that “as we release those addictions the biology of love reappears spontaneously.” (BoL, 121)

The second discomfort has an external component to it, because when we make changes individually and not as part of a group or community, we are likely to bump up against the existing structures of domination. Depending on our circumstances and on how far we go, this can range anywhere from social awkwardness all the way to executions. Many of the women whose work I rely on so much have experienced silencing of their work. The risks are not trivial.

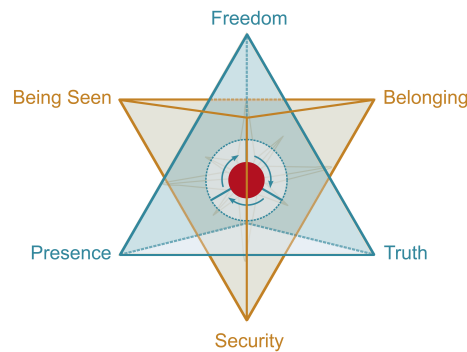
My own core practice of liberation has been the practice of vulnerability. My own biggest costs have been loss of friends and partial invisibility of my work. I take the ongoing risks lovingly. I write about them frequently on my blog. I know that I can only do this because of having a loving network of support.⁷⁰

Whichever practice we choose, the point of the practice is to reclaim wholeness and bridge the two need triangles, regardless of which of the two we gave up early on. If we gave up freedom, it would mean risking loss of belonging and safety in order to choose, freely, to show more of ourselves. If we gave up security, it means choosing, once again, to open up to the potential disappointment of not being seen and loved instead of protecting ourselves by separating from others.

⁶⁹ See my blog, thefearlessheart.org.

⁷⁰ Recognizing our irreducible dependence on others, our participation in the web of interdependence, is a foundational element of the work. Thus, asking for support is both necessary to be able to continue to stay on the path of liberation, and the outcome of liberation, an overcoming of the ethos of self-sufficiency.

As we move towards more and more integration, we have the option of reaching a unique destination that my sister Arnina calls the star of life. That integration is a definite subversion of patriarchy on the individual plane.



When integrated, our presence is connected with being seen, our truth is no longer at odds with belonging, and we can experience freedom and security at the same time. As individuals within the context of a patriarchal world, this may be as close to heaven as we can get.

It is the foundation from within which we can continue to engage with any other activity we choose to undertake to create the world we know is possible. It is a way that we can trust, more and more over time, that as we work for change, we won't recreate patriarchal domination. When we reach this capacity, I have more hope that we can extend ourselves in service to communities and groups as we learn, collectively, how to transform patriarchy on the structural plane.

And if we have children, this is also the foundation on which we can take on raising children in an environment that is EDN-consistent: as close as possible to the manner of living that is the biology of love, consciously choosing and embodying the matriarchal values and ways of being that we know are our lifeline.

Parenting for change: supporting the freedom to disobey

At this point in our unfolding story, our primary task as those caring for children is to provide enough freedom and enough security, through love, trust, play, and ongoing gifting, that a child can develop fully, without ever having to consider a tradeoff between core needs, and thus able to continue, perhaps with less effort, the path of love⁷¹: "loving humanness must be lived culturally for our *homo sapiens-amans* biology (genetics, anatomy and physiology) to be, in fact, systemically conserved in our biological evolution." (BoL, 133)

⁷¹ I am often overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. Over the course of my life, for example, some aspects of raising children have become even less connected than they were. For example, baby carriages now point outward, so that the child is visually separated from the person pushing the cart who is behind, out of view. Even parents who hold their children close to their bodies more often than not, where I live, hold the babies facing the world, not the parents.

I am fortunate to know what this way of parenting can look like, having witnessed, closely, my sister Inbal and her wife Kathy raising their son Yannai in full orientation to his needs without giving up on their own; never once punishing him for anything he did; encouraging his own choices and responsibility without telling him what he should do; using force in extremely rare circumstances, when imminent physical risk was present; and making decisions *with* him and not *for* him, in ongoing dialogue in consensual manner consistent with our matriarchal legacy.⁷²

The result of such upbringing, when it's possible, is a person whose needs are not polarized, and thus don't need to be reintegrated; they simply are. A person who grows up in love and with little or no punishment is also significantly more likely to be willing to disobey, a necessary trait for caring action in a world based on domination.⁷³ Perhaps it is time for the act of being able to raise disobedient children who are not riddled with shame to be seen as a badge of honor instead of the existing images of what "good" children are. This is another reason why the path of liberation is important, so that we can release even the habit of believing that we're supposed to control our children, a habit that stays even in people who otherwise embrace a non-controlling approach to life. I remain in mourning about how rare it is for adults to maintain an unwavering commitment to children's freedom and power.

Although Inbal and Kathy fully succeeded in their parenting task, their path may not be easily reproducible. To begin with, their path depended on having enough material privilege to be able to support Yannai's very clear choice, from early on, to homeschool, which he did until he went to college. He was also an only child, which meant that the overall amount of attention and resilience was sufficient. They were also surrounded by a community of loving friends, living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Had they had a second child; had both of them needed to earn money, making homeschooling impossible; and/or had they lived in other parts of the world and with less support, they could have been the exact same people and not managed to pull it off. It's too precarious to rely on the capacity of individual parents to manage.

What else can we do, then, if we are aware that "The history of human beings is carried by children, not by adults" and that, therefore, "human lovingness will be conserved or lost through the upbringing of the children"? (BoL 98).

This is precisely why I was saying that the path forward that Goettner-Abendroth called for is accurate and not straightforward. The paradox we live in is that we are creatures that need love in order to give love, and we have created the worst conditions for us to be able to receive love. Somehow, we need to find a way to bootstrap ourselves in order to continue, so we can find, quickly enough, a way to infuse enough love at enough levels to make our children's lives more whole.

⁷² At the writing of this article, Yannai is eighteen and just finished his first year of college. An interview I made with him when he was eleven about growing up in that household is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsyON8QERYc>. At the time of the interview, Inbal was in remission from the ovarian cancer that ultimately led to her death when Yannai was sixteen.

⁷³ This is attested to by the Oliners' study of those who rescued Jews, who were significantly more likely to come from non-punitive households than those who didn't. See *The Altruistic Personality*.

This means, to me, that we surround ourselves with enough love to be able to reclaim our own full loving nature. It also means that we consciously seek others to build community with, so that the task of raising children can come back to its communal context, so that the loving is spread around and multiplied. Such communities can also be the places of experimenting with what it means to restore relationships of reverence with nature so the flow of trust in abundance can resume, and with it restore the gifting ethos that has sustained us since time immemorial to its visible and celebrated place. If we succeed, even partially, and if we manage to avert the worst of global warming, then our children can bond with each other, freer than us. Perhaps their children will reach the image below, of many stars of life, in their multiple shapes corresponding to whole, unique, fully developed, not-necessarily-symmetrical humans, coming together with room for all in the large circle of life.⁷⁴



With that, we may complete a species journey described by evolutionary biologist Elisabet Sahtouris: “Species after species, from the most ancient bacteria to us, have gone through a maturation cycle from individuation and fierce competition to mature collaboration and peaceful interdependence.”⁷⁵

Final Words

As part of writing this article, I created a table that summarizes the story this article captures: the matriarchal world of our past, suffused as it was in the biology of love; the world of capitalist patriarchy that we currently live in; and the possible integrated world of the future, integrating what we learned on the way with our original legacy. Due to space limitations, I am only including seven of the twenty six rows in it as a sample and as a way to close the circle of this article.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ As a curious note, the different stars of life looked very different from each other when laid out flatly, and become less distinctly different when put into the ball; as if adding the third dimension brings out of them their commonalities.

⁷⁵ (<https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/ecosophy-natures-guide-to-a-better-world/>) (footnote from this: See Elisabet Sahtouris’ *Celebrating Crisis* at <http://worldbusiness.org/celebrating-crisis-towards-a-culture-of-cooperation/> which includes an image of the maturation cycle.)

⁷⁶ The full text of the table can be found here: <http://thefearlessheart.org/social-evolution-in-summary/>.

	Biology of Love – Origins	Patriarchy (especially under capitalism)	Biology of Love – Integration
Overall “Manner of Living”	Consistent with the biological lineage; spontaneous <i>and</i> conscious actions to continue and preserve the lineage in humility	Inconsistent with the biological lineage; active attempts to control and override the spontaneous; hubris to the point of threatening the continued existence of the <i>Homo Sapiens-Amans</i> (loving) lineage and drifting into a <i>Homo Sapiens-Aggressans</i> one (see footnote for more explanation)	Consciously, through reflection and new choices, embracing the lineage of love we came from and mourning the loss and trauma; supporting children in having a spontaneous experience of the biology of love and therefore being able to conserve it
Mode of thinking / reasoning	Embedded systemic / analogical orientation towards the whole	<i>Local</i> linear causal reasoning; growing reductionism; fragmented or compartmentalized thinking interferes with systemic understanding	Integration of both modes through a conscious “double look”: reflection on whole / system and its composition / parts in tandem
Contribution to Humanity / Life	Ways of organizing human social life that sustain love and embeddedness within life, art, craft	Literature, analytic tools, philosophy, individual artistic and intellectual expression, individual spiritual practices (e.g. yoga and meditation), scientific knowledge	Conscious application of science and technology in service of regeneration, rebalancing, and stewarding planetary thriving; capacity for chosen reintegration of mind, heart, body, and spirit

	Biology of Love – Origins	Patriarchy (especially under capitalism)	Biology of Love – Integration
Needs	Organic flow of responsiveness to self and others' needs; all needs in harmony	Unruly, must be tamed (by authority and/or reason; through obedience and shame); divided into two triangles (safety and freedom) in either/or relationship with each other	Conscious integration of safety and freedom triangles into a “star of life” (triangles coming together) that is unique to each person
Response to Violent Attack	Varied; unprepared; vulnerable to takeover (e.g. original patriarchal invasions; European settling of North America)	Responding to violence with violence; war	Consciously learning to mobilize the power of nonviolent resistance for transcending the attack and including former opponents in the solution
View of children	Children as gift of continuity of life and support for all	Children as in need of being tamed; seen as liability and/or resource	Children as carriers of renewed love legacy into the future
Child rearing methods	Full integration, love, apprenticeship, support; all needs honored in an undifferentiated manner	Obedience, shame, segregation; conditional belonging for the obedient and normative along with constrained freedom for the powerful	Autonomy, contribution, multi-age groups, dialogic power-sharing; conscious cultivation of both safety and freedom

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