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Edited by

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MacGillis, Sister Miriam – *See* Genesis Farm.

Macy, Joanna (1929–)

One of the outgrowths of social and environmental activism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been a reevaluation and reappropriation of the various religious traditions of the world. "Engaged Buddhism" utilizes Buddhist concepts such as co-dependent co-arising (in Sanskrit, *Pratîtya Samutpâda*), compassion (*karunâ*) and wisdom (*prajñâ*) as a basis for ethical action in the world. Many Buddhist practitioners understand their relationship with the natural world in terms of interconnectedness and mutuality of being. These ideas are used to describe both experiences of unity with the natural world, as well as to provide an impetus for action on behalf of it.

Joanna Macy, one of the founders of the Institute for Deep Ecology, combines Buddhist teaching and practices with General Systems Theory in workshops and classes that she leads around the world in order to facilitate personal and social transformation, especially in regard to environmental issues. She promotes what she refers to as the "Great Turning," from an industrial growth society, to a life-sustaining civilization.

Through working with Tibetan refugees, she became acquainted with Tibetan Buddhist monks and was formally introduced to Buddhist thought and practice. After returning to the United States, she pursued and completed a doctoral degree in which she explored the relationship between Buddhist notions of interdependence and mutual causality and systems thought (Macy 1991). She spent several years in Sri Lanka where she worked with Theravadan Buddhists of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement who were engaged in efforts to help rural villagers to become communally and ecologically self-sustaining. Buddhist insights and practices are found throughout her work.

Macy began to do what she came to call Despair and Empowerment work as a result of her involvement with the Nuclear Freeze and Disarmament campaigns of the 1960s through 1980s (Macy 2000). She developed group exercises and role-playing scenarios that were designed to enable people to acknowledge and express their pain, grief and despair for the world and then to harvest that passion and compassion to bring about the changes necessary to diminish or rid the world of those things which threatened it. Her book, *Despair and Power in the Nuclear Age*, as well as its revision (with Molly Young Brown), *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World*, grew out of this work and contains a collection of these exercises and role-playing scenarios, as well as an explanation of some of the principles behind Despair and Empowerment work.

In Macy's work, the notion of interconnectedness is what enables persons to feel pain for the world and one another, and is also the source of strength for addressing the crises facing the world:

> I have been deeply inspired by the Buddha's teaching of dependent co-arising. It fills me with a sense of connection and mutual responsibility with all beings. Helping me understand the non-hierarchical and self-organizing nature of life, it is the philosophic grounding of all my work (Macy, www.joannamacy.net).

In Buddhism, the practice of meditation is to break through the illusions the mind creates about the nature of reality. Macy's work builds upon this idea through the use of role playing and exercises designed to help workshop participants to see the world as it is, not only its interconnectedness, but also the destruction of the environment and species extinctions. Her work is designed to cut through the illusions constructed by the individual mind and society that serve to deny the reality of the environmental crisis. But that practice is an engaged practice, addressing environmental and other social issues:

> The vitality of Buddhism today is most clearly reflected in the way it is being brought to bear on social, economic, political, and environmental issues, leading people to become effective agents of change. The gate of the Dharma does not close behind us to secure us in a cloistered existence aloof from the turbulence and suffering of samsara, so much as it leads us out into a life of risk for the sake of all beings. As many Dharma brothers and sisters discover today, the world is our cloister (Macy, www.joannamacy.net).

Macy uses the imagination in the form of role playing and rituals in order to look closely at the actual conditions of the world. This use of the imagination is a way to move people beyond mental numbness to experience the reality of the global environmental situation. One example of this is the Council of All Beings, which Macy and John Seed developed to ritually reconnect human beings with other species and natural forces.

Craig S. Strobel

Further Reading

Macy, Joanna. *Widening Circles*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2000.

Macy, Joanna. *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Power in the Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1983.

Macy, Joanna and Molly Young Brown. *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 1998.

Seed, John, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming and Arne Naess. *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*. Philadelphia, PA and Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers, 1988.

Strobel, Craig. *Performance, Religious Imagination and the Play of the Land in the Study of Deep Ecology and Its Practices*. Unpublished dissertation. Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, 2000.

See also: Buddhism – Engaged; Buddhism – North America; Council of All Beings; Deep Ecology; Deep Ecology – Institute for; Epic of Evolution; Gandhi, Mohandas; Re-Earthing; Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (Sri Lanka); Seed, John.

Magic

Magic is, broadly speaking, an attempt to violate the natural exchange of energy. It seeks an operative shortcut, the getting of more for an output of less. In this sense, the practice of magic appears to be anti-nature – especially the "demonic" magic of the medieval grimoires that seeks to suspend the laws of nature and accomplish superhuman ends. Traditionally, magic represents a category of attempts to tamper with the natural flow. In this sense, it has an affinity with the efforts of technological engineering and civilization's wish to tame or harness the natural world as a resource for exploitation.

But if magic represents a violation of the natural order, a transgression of the linear laws of equal exchange, contemporary science's emergent theories of complexity argue that the cosmos is more alinear than linear. Complexity theory studies retrodictively the processes by which something becomes more than merely the sum of its constituent parts. In like manner, as magic seeks to generate power through ritual and spells, in principle the word when correctly spoken becomes more than itself. In the fullest sense, the word expresses the physical being or essence of the thing it describes. Consequently, magic may be thought of as a "science of the word" – a notion that appears to its fullest in the *logos* prologue to the gospel of St. John.

Another understanding of magic, apart from illusion for the purpose of entertainment, posits it as the production of effects in the world by means of invisible or supernatural causation. It may also be considered as action that is based on belief in the efficacy of symbolic forms. But once again, the essential idea remains the notion of securing something of greater value in exchange for something whose intrinsic worth is less. This need not necessarily involve the supernatural. For instance, for a nominal outlay of electrical energy and telephonic financial charges, two people on different sides of the planet can engage in conversation and as such may be considered involved in an act of magic. This allows recognition of how technology itself represents a violation of the natural law of exchange. For the Greeks, *techne* referred to the "art of craft," and magic and technology were both the patronages of the god Hermes. As French theologian Jacques Ellul explains, *technique* is not only a reference to machines but also to "the logic of manipulation and gain that lay behind machines" (in Davis 1998: 144).

In its traditional sense, magic has limited concerns. These include the healing and preventing of disease, the finding of lost or stolen articles, identifying thieves and witches, gaining vengeance and the warding off of evil influences. An early distinction was made between magic and religion – with magic operating by constraint; religion, through supplication. Following a structural-functionalist approach, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) accepted a radical distinction between religion as a communal mater and magic as a non-congregational affair between a practitioner and a client. But Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), following a different line of structural-functional theory, in his *A General Theory of Magic* (1902), reasoned that magic is indeed a social phenomenon but one that makes use of a universal force or *mana*, an available spiritual power. In other words, for Mauss, magic or *mana* refers to the genuine effectiveness of things.

In contrast, and following what Graham Cunningham (1999) considers an emotionalist approach, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) denied Mauss and considered magic not as a universal force but as a power located within the individual magician. It amounts to a substitute technology in primitive society in which scientifically established knowledge is otherwise unavailable. Consequently, for Malinowski, magic is primarily a question of psychology: where knowledge or technology is lacking, it offers psychological relief. Malinowski also distinguished between religion and magic in which the Church is understood as the central community and magic as what exists on the fringes of communal activity. He argued that magical acts are expressions of emotion – particularly emotions that are connected to either possession or powerlessness. Such acts or emotions for Malinowski are in reality mental obsessions.

It is, however, the English anthropologist James G. Frazer (1854–1941), classified within the intellectualist school, who developed the distinction between magic and religion into one of progressive historical stages. For Frazer, magic is part of the earliest level of human development and arises from the human desire to control nature. It is, however, formulated on fallacious understandings of cause and effect. The successive stage of