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Rematriation of the Truth

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Europeans consider murder to be the ultimate crime.

However, for the Iroquois, and for Native Americans, generally, lying is the ultimate crime. Murder kills one person at a time, but lying kills everything, all at once. One insane person murders, but lying makes the whole world go mad.

The first step toward sanity is the Rematriation of the Truth. A term coined by the Mohawk poet, Susan Deer Cloud, “Rematriation” retools culture in terms of matriarchal giving. Regarding speech, it means that the Gift of Breath replicates *reality*, it does not invent some myth convenient to bullies. Rematriation of the Truth means that everyone has access to all the facts, all the time, to facilitate the One Good Mind of Consensus.

However, Euro-Christians have a fraught relationship with truth and lies. The distinction between Native and settler civilization could not be more broad or more obvious.

Natives see The Lie as the animating feature of all Western discourse, but Europeans wink at lying, coddle it as cute or maybe annoying, but do not regard it as anything too important.

The basic ways to hold a society together are by belonging or by fear. Cultures of belonging welcome newcomers, fitting them into their existing structures and trusting them to take up their granted place with integrity. The outsider is

immediately regarded as a “Self.” Thus, throughout North America, Natives practiced the custom of adoption, and, once adopted, a newcomer was treated as a birth member of the culture. The welcome is based on the expectation of truth, both going to and coming from, all members of the group. Proper decisions can be made only when everyone is in possession of the truth.

Societies that see fear as their major tool not surprisingly exclude newcomers, fingering them as “Other,” not “Self.” These cultures invent scary defamations about newcomers, officially distrusting their motives and never fully accepting them, even if they are granted citizenship. The exclusion is based on a supposition that newcomers are lying, having come not in search of camaraderie, but in search of some secret advantage that bodes ill for the host culture.

Exclusionary societies are primarily patriarchal. The original Puritans of New England, for instance, had rigorous rules about who could enter and remain in one of their towns. The outsider had to be cleared by town fathers [*sic*] before he [*sic*] could settle down in the town. Certain races and religions were *never* welcome. By contrast, welcoming cultures are primarily matriarchal, while those patriarchies such as the Lakotas, which also adopt newcomers in, were matriarchies until the Spaniards arrived with their ponies and their Big Lies.

The Lie has been touted in the so-called West as a tool of good order since at least Plato’s *Republic* (360 B.C.E.). Plato first defined the “Noble Lie” that supported the supposedly Magnificent Myth—an alternative translate of Noble Lie—of the culture at hand. The lie was “noble” because it was a “true lie,” with no power to create

“falsehood within the soul.” The Noble Lie has recently resurfaced as honorable, even admirable, in John Mearsheimer’s *Why Leaders Lie* (2011).

The circumlocutions here are breath-taking. Plato’s basic idea, which has not significantly altered in 2,500 years, is that it is fine and dandy for top leaders to lie to the public, just so long as the lie is for a good cause (as defined by the leaders, of course). Any culture that can create such oxymorons as “true lie,” “noble lie,” and “little white lie,” without even blinking at the cognitive dissonance, should not be trusted on anything.

Native America learned that the hard way. Given ourmatriarchal modes, we took Europeans at their word, all the way through the so-called “treaty” period, during which one lie after another was foisted off on us as a ploy to secure our land and our deaths. Too late, we found out that, although Euro-Christians paid lip service to telling the truth to other Christians, they felt no similar obligation to tell the truth to any “heathen savages” in the crowd. Consequently, of the some 400 treaties signed with Native America by the U.S., not one was honored by the settlers.

I do not believe that it is accidental that lying as a strategy is tied culturally to patriarchy. Lying destroys trust, making it easier to frighten, and thus to control, people. If I want to make you hate someone enough to do her harm, I will begin by lying about her, making sure to push your biggest fear-buttons with the lie:

*Oh, she is just lazy, refuses to work,
expects you to pay exorbitant taxes so
she can lay around the house all day.
You’re subsidizing her ten bastards, you*

know—each by a different man. She's Mexican, and you know how they don't even care about their children, anyway. I hear she turns tricks on the side, and anyway, she's in this country illegally. Her kids are gonna ruin the educational system.

Notice that lies makes the majority complicit in behavior that most would eschew as individuals. The reward for being part of the recognized in-crowd is the ability to participate in oppressing others.

Of course, if the ploy is not just controlling an internal population, but attacking a foreign one besides, the lies only get bigger:

Those people have weapons of mass destruction and no compunction about using them. This is a clash of civilizations, my friend, and those Muslims would just as soon kill you as look at you. They're all terrorists. Kill 'em all, and let God sort 'em out.

This Noble Lie transferred billions from America's social needs into the pockets of the military-industrial complex, at the same time that the complex made a lunge for the remaining oil supplies of the Arab world. It even made the U.S. population so complicit in the lie, that U.S. citizens did not refuse to be sent abroad to die for it.

The most frightening aspect of Big Lies is that deceptions this large do not just have one lie, but *levels* of

lies, *nested lies*, residing within one another like Russian dolls, with the lie changing at every level. The outermost doll heard about weapons of mass destruction. The next doll in heard about spreading democracy. The next in heard about big money contracts for war-industry cronies. Even farther in, was the story that the majority of Iraqi oil went to Germany and Japan, economic competitors of the U.S., who could be crippled by shutting off the spigot. I have no idea what the innermost lie was, but I am sure it was a doozie. People cooperate with nested lies because they allow the people telling the Noble Lies actually to believe that, unlike the rest of us schlubs, *they* know the *real* skinny—when they do not.

Rematriation of the truth is, therefore, a revolutionary act.

Rematriation of the Truth is our first obligation.

I have heard some Native American elders, including Russell Means, doubt that our matriarchies can be re-established, but I disagree. Russell Means is Lakota, so he does not have the Iroquoian and woodlands prophecies of how our Fourth Epoch begins:

After the White Panther, the Fire Dragon of Discord has pushed the children's faces into the dust, after heads have rolled west, then the great Turtle, on whose back we ride, will begin to rock her carapace. To and fro, she will rock until she rolls in the water, as she did once before, a long time ago, brushing the irritants off her shell. When she rights herself again, only the Real People will be left on her back, and time will begin again.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Saganyadaiyoh, the Seneca seer, Handsome Lake, said that the pitching and rolling would begin in 2010.

Not only will the greatest Grandmother of them all, Mother Earth, take a hand Herself in righting the situation, but Her daughters on the ground also have a duty. It is to begin telling the truth, *disregarding fear*.

This is the most revolutionary act of matriarchy:
Telling the absolute truth and demanding the absolute truth from everyone else.

This is the Rematriation of the Truth.