

Denunciation of Patriarchal Upbringing: A Close Reading of Barker's *Seven Lears*¹

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Abstract

The paper focuses on a close reading of Barker's Seven Lears in which we follow Lear through seven stages of his life before he becomes the king. The main goal of this research is related to the question posed in Barker's play that concerns the chances of children in a modern patriarchal society to develop their sense of justice. Thus the pedagogical approach used in the rearing process of young Lear is described and further problematized in the paper. Similarly to Shakespeare, Barker openly condemns and directly criticizes the pedagogical practice which educates new generations of blind obedient citizens. He also portrays a modern world based not on love, but on power and hatred – the unjust system and those in power ferociously devalue any trace of love, tolerance and solidarity. Though Lear gradually realizes the ultimate value and power of love and pity, this personal insight comes too late, as will further be demonstrated in the paper. The theoretical framework of this article relies on significant critical insights of Bradley, Eisler, Bloom, Palmer, Miller, Hughes, etc.

Key words: denunciation, upbringing, morality, conscience, pedagogy, patriarchy.

Introduction: Common Ground for Shakespeare's and Barker's Depiction of King Lear

Barker's *Seven Lears* (1989) essentially reveals that the maternal sphere is completely irrelevant in the rearing process of a royal. However, *Seven Lears* has no more resemblance with Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* as far as the plot is concerned – it deals with Lear's life before he becomes the king. The play follows seven Lears, that is, seven stages of Lear's life – from his childhood to his old age. The introduction of the play suggests that the play is motivated by the missing mother figure and an inexplicable hatred towards her, as Barker writes: "The Mother is denied existence in King Lear (...) She was the subject of an unjust hatred. This hatred was shared by Lear and all his daughters. This hatred, while unjust, may have been necessary" (1989: 1).

The inexplicable hatred and absence of love reflected through the theme of missing, as well as corrupt, mother figures represents a common denominator in both Shakespeare's and Barker's version of the story about King Lear. Shakespeare depicts the world of King Lear as utterly deprived of love which was a starting point for Barker when writing his contemporary version of this Renaissance play. In both plays, Lear's world possesses all the relevant features of what Riane Eisler terms the "dominator model society"² (1987: 5), the society organized around a pattern of implicit compliance with forcefully imposed patriarchal norms.

In other words, what matters to both Shakespeare's and Barker's Lear most is the fact that, as a tyrannous ruler demanding nothing but unquestioning obedience to his wishes, he is at the highest level of social hierarchy. In his lecture on *Shakespeare and the Value of Love* (1995), Harold Bloom describes Lear as "a kind of mortal god: he is the image of male authority, perhaps the ultimate representation of the Dead White European Male" (1995: 181). Insensitive

and arrogant, Lear does not allow himself to realize he has been wrong in his decisions, both political and personal. In Shakespeare's play, there is Kent, Lear's loyal follower, who takes a risk to criticize Lear for both his harsh treatment of his disobedient Cordelia and his despotic reign: "See better, Lear, and let me still remain / the true blank of thine eye" (I, i, 158-159). In Barker's play, social circumstances that contributed to the creation of such an unjust patriarchal ruler are thoroughly exposed, judged and condemned. Though the modern version of Shakespeare's story about King Lear retains some of the characters who offer opposition to the ruler and the way he reigns (Kent being one of them), their critical power is not strong enough to fiercely rebel against the dominant ideology, so they are mostly depicted as the unfortunate victims or tools of the unjust system as will be exemplified in the further analysis of the play.

Barker's *Seven Lears*: Denunciation of Patriarchal Upbringing

"The First Lear" opens at the kingdom of Lear's father. At this early stage, Lear is a boy who innocently plays with his brothers. He encounters the Gaol, a group of prisoners who act as a chorus throughout the play. Their function is that of *vox populi*, in the manner of famous Greek tragedies. Seeing the group of prisoners chained, Lear initially shows empathy for them and their unjust treatment causes Lear to question the issues of morality and government: "If people were good, punishment would be unnecessary, therefore – (...) The function of all government must be – ..." (Barker 1989: 6). Although Lear struggles to find the answers, he utterly fails since he is in his formative years when he needs external guidance for the proper development of thoughts and formation of opinions. At this point in the play, as Bradley insightfully suggests, "lack of language seems to reflect the lack of developed thought" (2008: 266).

At the beginning of the play, by depicting Lear, who ponders on such issues as morality and government, Barker makes it clear that young, contemplative Lear is different from his aggressive brothers who only want to play war games. As a result, Lear is soon assigned a teacher, the Bishop. Barker purposefully assigns him the role of authority over Lear so that it becomes rather obvious that he represents not only a teacher, but also a surrogate father whose main function is to prepare young Lear for his reign. From the moment the Bishop takes Lear under his control, the upbringing of Lear will be radically changed, as Kristen Palmer claims: "From here a portrait of a coddled ruler arises, one whom everyone agrees with and protects from his own stupidity" (2010: 1). The Bishop's task is to thoroughly eradicate Lear's inner sense of justice:

I will educate you by showing you how bad I am. Because I am a bad man you will learn much from me. (...) You will detest me and your innate sense of justice will cry out for satisfaction. When one day that cry ceases, your education will be over. (1989: 7)

The Bishop's speech emphasizes both his "linguistic control and his multiple layers of consciousness: consciousness of his role as educator, of his role as narrator, of Lear's role as student and Lear's reaction to him" (Bradley 2008: 248). Further in the play, Barker demonstrates that Lear is not strong enough to resist the Bishop's instruction and soon becomes lost. The sole reason for this cruel treatment of young Lear can be found in the fact that the Bishop does not show Lear reality as it is, but the way he himself creates it – he educates Lear to

get rid of his conscience that, according to his questionable standards, stands in the way of Lear's success as a future king. Thus, the Bishop is rather willing to misuse his educative function and manipulate his inexperienced pupil so that he becomes a proper Machiavellian ruler.³ The irony of the aforementioned situation lies in the fact that the Bishop primarily has a spiritual religious vocation that he ultimately abuses in the rearing process of a future king as well as his Christian flock.

Thus, the pursuit of the good (the play's ironic subtitle), as Barker perceives it, unfortunately remains an illusory pipe dream in modern civilization since contemporary educators are presented as mere manipulators. The question posed in Barker's play concerns the chances of children in modern patriarchal society to develop their sense of justice. What Barker emphasizes here is precisely the pedagogical approach that the Bishop uses. Similarly to Shakespeare, Barker openly condemns and directly criticizes the pedagogical practice which educates new generations of blind obedient citizens. He also portrays a modern world based not on love, but on power and hatred – the unjust system and those in power ferociously devalue and depreciate any trace of love, tolerance and solidarity. Instead, the Bishop teaches young Lear to be cruel and indifferent. Though Lear gradually realizes the ultimate value and power of love and pity, this personal insight comes too late, as will be demonstrated in the further analysis of the play.

In "The Second Lear", the audience is exposed to cunning strategies of manipulation in the case of Lear's upbringing. It is revealed that the process of rearing the young king is carefully calculated in advance. Lear's intellectual development is under the Bishop's control, whereas his emotional (sexual) development is under Prudentia's control. Prudentia is a lawyer, a woman of distinction, and Lear is immediately overcome by passion for her. Seductive Prudentia, as her name suggests, does only what is prudent: her primary goal is self-interest and respect for the existing patriarchal norms and laws. Her will adjusts to the will of the dominant system; being a lawyer, she is a representative of the institution of law that legalizes injustice. Prudentia uses law to impose power and instill fear among potentially disobedient individuals. She deliberately betrays her archetypal feminine role of nurturer and becomes a proper illustration of blind obedience to the patriarchal system. Thus, she stands in line with numerous dehumanized female characters from Shakespeare's plays (for instance Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth* and Queen Margaret from *Richard III*) that have embraced the destructive impact of dominant authorities and she became even more aggressive and crueler than her patriarchal educators. Hence, through the character of Prudentia, Barker portrays modern women who are familiar with the history of female oppression and now have willingly internalized the apparatuses of the oppressors so that they as "the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors" (Freire 2005:45).

Lear is uncertain how to deal with Prudentia; he is overwhelmed with his dubious feelings for her: "I'm in such / I'm in such / I won't say ecstasy / I won't say" (1989: 8). Again, young Lear lacks proper words to describe his emotional state which is a projection of his immaturity and naivety. The issue of language and oral expression is according to Bradley extremely important because Barker's characters define themselves through language or lack of it:

Lear cannot find words to convey his emotion; language is inadequate. (...) The act of speaking becomes something that needs to be spoken about. This happens almost obsessively. In our first encounter with Clarissa, she comes onstage to tell her mother that she has found her missing bird, a message she then decides not to tell. Characters talk about language, they worry about language, they define themselves through language.

(Bradley 2008: 266)

In contrast to Prudentia's character, there is Clarissa, her 16-year-old daughter. Clarissa's name suggests her main features: she sees everything clearly and is not afraid to speak the truth. Thus, she represents Barker's modern version of Shakespeare's Cordelia: "I think you want me to admire you. In many ways I do but it would be no compliment if I praised things merely to please you. (...) So I will say – as best as I can – only the truth. (...) I say whatever comes into my head" (1989: 7). By introducing the characters of these two women, Barker insightfully alludes to great Shakespearean heroines, those who, though victims of the patriarchal system, become its most fervent representatives, and those who in diverse ways fight against oppressive ideology. Clarissa, just like Shakespeare's Ophelia or Juliet, is an uncorrupted young girl who tells the truth, she is the only one in the play who cares about her conscience. After meeting her for the first time, Lear immediately falls in love with her and tells the Bishop about his passion. The Bishop, a proper emanation of crippling patriarchal authority, instructs Lear to kill the mother and abduct the daughter and thus ultimately destroy any meaningful link with the female sphere. Soon enough, it becomes obvious that the manipulative strategies of patriarchal upbringing have gradually given concrete results, and Lear finally loses his childlike innocence. Lear himself acknowledges the change: "I do! I do change! Hourly! The surface of my mind is like the boiling tar, God knows what may bubble from the bottom, tar in the eye!" (1989: 11)

In spite of the fact that Barker, among many contemporary artists, presents the irreparable consequences of the abuse of children in this play, child abuse nowadays is still sanctioned and "held in high regard...as long as it is defined as child-rearing" (Miller 1990: 282), as Alice Miller would say in her study *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in the Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence* (1990), where she also claims that:

All children are born to grow, to develop, to love, to live, and to articulate their needs for their self-protection. For their development children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them and honestly help them to become oriented in the world. When these vital needs are frustrated and children instead abused for the sake of adults' needs...then their integrity will be lastingly impaired.

(1990: 281)

Therefore, instead of forcing the prefabricated notions of the society upon children, instead of teaching them how to become perfectly fitting cogs in the machine, how to prostitute what is best in them, the very core of their humaneness, the society, teachers and parents should simply allow them to follow their natural impulses, support them and instruct them as to unequivocally follow their creative urges. Such a drastic change of attitude may bring to an end "the perpetuation of violence from generation to generation" (1990: 283).

However, this is not the ideal that modern culture strives towards, according to Barker. Immediately after the scene in which Lear recognizes his change, that is, gradual loss of childlike innocence, the voices of the Gaol soon remind him of their wrongful imprisonment. Lear and the Bishop argue over whether or not such imprisonment should be condemned: “They are all guilty of something, even if it is not the cause of their punishment,” the Bishop argues (1989: 12). Lear comments on the obvious injustice of such a treatment, but the Bishop does not give him the answer to his youthful queries. Instead he counsels Lear to ignore the Gaol, openly proclaiming that his counsel is untrustworthy. An implied patriarchal lesson that Lear is here given refers to creating a mass of obedient and law-abiding citizens, with their initial desire to question the problematic reality forcefully stifled and eradicated.

Lear soon finds out that his father is dying, and his first act as king is to make Horbling, the minister, his fool: “This is promotion! (...) You will, in this function, be unconstrained by duty, conscience, or whatever drives you to make such squiggles on the paper...” (1989: 15-16). Although this statement seems to be based on Lear’s ironic perception of reality, Barker ultimately shows that the contemporary fool is, as in Shakespeare, the embodiment of unconstrained freedom and indefinite wisdom, with no fear of patriarchal authorities.

From the moment Lear is chosen to be the new king, he plans to use his new power and seduce Clarissa. She is aware of his intentions and says to him: “Nakedness can be so cold. Can be so granite. Do you want granite? Here’s granite! You foolish man. What use is it? Unless I feel? Unless I want? Dead iron on a mountain”(1989: 19). Unlike Lear, who is taught to be cruel and indifferent, Clarissa directly criticizes popular trends of hiding away and restraining emotions and in the manner of her Renaissance humanist predecessor Giordano Bruno, insists on teaching Lear that love is the *prima materia* of human existence. Thus, she openly shows through her own example a totally different perception of reality that the one offered to Lear by his patriarchal authorities.

“The Third Lear” depicts the battlefield where Lear’s army has been defeated and fled home. At this moment Barker puts emphasis on portraying violence as an unavoidable contemporary phenomenon. Namely, Lear, in the manner of Shakespeare’s warlike and power-crazy kings Henry V and Richard III, experiences an outburst of violence: “Kill the prisoners. (...) Burn the villages! (...) And all the infants, massacre! (...) Hang all the citizens! (...) I love to kill! Throat high in killing!” (1989: 20)

In his study, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (1992), Hughes recognizes that the psychological crisis of Shakespeare’s male heroes happens when their “rational ego’s skeptical, independent, autocratic intelligence – the ultimate form of the Goddess-destroyer,” rejects the Goddess and ultimately suppresses the female sphere:

At one pole is the rational ego, controlling the man's behaviour according to the needs and demands of a self-controlled society. At the other is the totality of this individual's natural, biological and instinctual life. ... From the point of view of the rational ego this totality appears to be female, and since it incorporates not only the divine source of his being, the feminine component of his own biological make-up, as well as the paranormal faculties and mysteries outside his rational ego, and seems to him in many respects continuous with external nature, he calls it the Goddess. Obviously, this is only a manner

of speaking, or of thinking, but it is one that has imposed itself on man throughout his history.

(Hughes 1992: 513)

It seems that Hughes' division between the rational ego and the totality of natural, biological and instinctual life in Barker's modern version of Shakespeare's play is purposefully and most clearly presented through the dominant impact of Lear's diverse educators: on the one hand, the Bishop who stimulates Lear's lowest urges and cravings for power and on the other, Clarissa, who ultimately represents the voice of Lear's almost forgotten conscience and his innate strivings for love and mercy.

Being all the time aware of these diverse influences, Lear tries to justify his violence when Oswald, one of his soldiers, comments that Lear's adversaries have "spoiled peace and happiness" (1989: 20): "So many buildings, such fertile crops. Jealousy alone ensured someone would have put them to the torch. (...) As for the dead, they would have died in any case, complaining, sick and senile, which is a burden on the state" (1989: 20-21). This statement personifies the inner struggle between diverse educative impacts and finally shows that Lear is "torn between a rationalized response to killing and deep emotional trauma" (Bradley 2008: 250). "I saw so many corpses!" (1989: 21), says Lear, now expressing his feelings of repentance. He admits that his problematic governance would justify any of his soldiers killing him immediately. Kent and Oswald consider this, while Horbling asks for Lear's murder since he "has the policies" (1989: 22).

Suddenly Clarissa arrives with new army to follow Lear home. Her maternal instinct, potently expressed through the offer of unconditional love and support to her misbehaved child, is best expressed through her caring and nurturing counsels: "I think if this is to be a happy kingdom you must study good, which is not difficult, and do it. I will help you. I will criticize you. (...) You must try to overcome the flaws in what is otherwise, I am sure, a decent character!" (1989: 24) In a mother-like fashion, Clarissa wants to save Lear from corruption and violence because she clearly perceives the effects of the Bishop's influence on Lear in his formative years. She literally represents the voice of Lear's conscience. Under her motherly scrutiny, Lear admits that war has corrupted his innate potential for goodness. However, Clarissa does not give up on him and once again confirms her kindness and purity: "What was good in me, through seeing, is now more good. What was less good, there is less of" (1989: 25).

Gradually, Lear becomes aware of the Bishop's destructive influence and praises Clarissa: "She lacked the benefit of your teaching, which only threw my mind into worse chaos. My head's a sack of clocks, all keeping different hours. I blame you for this, love and blame you. Look at her, she sees through me! (...) She sees my incurable sophistication" (1989: 26). He finally realizes that Clarissa is capable of appealing to the remnants of innate goodness in him and making them develop. Thus he probes into the Bishop's influence, considering it perilous; this is yet another aspect of the destructive patriarchal system that needs to be questioned, according to Bradley: "In raising questions about meaning and value in Shakespeare, Barker's adaptation suggests that canonicity, like culture, is just one more set of ideological assumptions that must be questioned" (2008: 257).

What follows is the scene in which Clarissa is giving birth to Goneril. The grown-up version of Goneril, watching her own birth, says: "I was reluctant. No, that's understatement. I

was recalcitrant. Even that won't do! I fixed my heels in her belly and stuck! (...) I sensed – out there – was vile” (1989: 31). Significantly, Goneril refuses to be born in a vile world, she is intuitively unwilling to come to the world where the maternal sphere is suppressed.

In “The Fourth Lear”, Lear discusses science with his Inventor thus alluding to its impact, role and function in modern society: “It is the story of our progress. Grief, and after grief, design. The graveyard and the drawing board” (1989: 40). Lear perceives science as “a route to truth and transcendence, but he fails to recognize how his single-minded obsession with science is ruining his kingdom. Lear’s exploration of science as a guiding principle has blinded him to reality and social responsibility” (Bradley 2008: 258). Even though his kingdom is almost in ruins, Lear continues with his experiments. Noticing that Lear is completely obsessed with the wish for technological advancement, Kent opposes his perilous designs just like in the original Renaissance version of the play: “I think, Lear, in your case, there is no fitting the hand of intelligence into the glove of government” (1989: 25).

For instance, Lear wants to fly a plane, and when he fails at it, he finds a boy who will fly instead of him. It is only when the plane crashes and the boy dies that Lear gives up his contemplation of science. “In this sense, Barker provides a type of narrative that has a consistent trajectory within “Fourth Lear:” Lear is trying to find some principle to make sense of his world. Lear struggles for self-definition. But even this trajectory fails to be consistent from one section to the next” (Bradley 2008: 258). As far as religion and science are concerned, Bradley states that Barker is “defiant of ideologies like religion and science which mediate our reactions to the world around us. As a postmodern writer, he raises questions that challenge the way audiences interact with their world and their culture” (Bradley 2008: 271).

In “The Interlude”, Kent expresses his dislike for the Bishop because he is aware of his poignant influence on Lear. He tries to kill him, and the Bishop uses Regan, who is still a little child, to protect himself. He, as the representative of the church, uses an innocent child to save his life – this is the most powerful example of Barker’s criticism of religion in the play. Quite expectedly, Kent kills the Bishop. Giving a justification for this murder, Clarissa admits that she is glad about the Bishop’s death: “I never thought I would give thanks for murder, but I must not hide behind the fiction that all life is good. How simple that would be. How simple and intransigent. Such absolute moralities are frequently the refuge of misanthropy.” (1989: 44)

In “The Fifth Lear”, six years later, Lear has locked himself in a tower so that the cries of the Gaol cannot reach him. He does not want to see anyone, and even Clarissa is helpless at calling him. Prudentia admits that she encouraged Lear in his deeds. Here, Barker denounces law as the false representation of justice since Prudentia, as a lawyer, encourages violence instead of condemning it. Hearing from her daughters that Lear lives with Prudentia, Clarissa orders her mother to be killed. Though she tries to stay loyal to her principles of truth and justice, Clarissa ultimately becomes a victim and tool of the patriarchal system she fervently opposes: “This acting. This intervening. This putting stops to things. Who obliges you, Clarissa? / My conscience” (1989: 50). Encouraged by the voices of the Gaol, Clarissa has her mother murdered. Thus, Clarissa condemns her mother for betraying her inner self but actually replicates her mother’s crimes by issuing the order for her murder: “How you hate those things, how you strangle the clean things in yourself. (...) I think you are guilty. Of smothering yourself. Which is also a murder” (1989: 51).

In “The Sixth Lear” Kent admits his love for Clarissa, telling her that she is “the truth itself and never need embellishment” (1989: 54). Clarissa soon announces that she is pregnant, though the father of the child is not Lear. Soon after Cordelia is born, Lear tries to drown her in a barrel of gin, calling her a bastard. Unexpectedly, a new character, The Emperor, appears and Lear greets him, telling him of his domestic problems. The Emperor is portrayed as a sort of evangelist who offers Lear faith as a solution. He is supposed to offer the hope of deliverance from the unjust patriarchal system. The scene changes into the one where Goneril and Regan arrive to play with Cordelia, and Clarissa shows them the Gaol. This scene is reminiscent of “The First Lear” when Lear played with his brothers. Clarissa orders Lear to free the Gaol, but he says: “I said to the inmates of the gaol, when I have done a crime sufficient to dwarf not only what you did, but what you have imagined, then daylight’s yours. The gaoled are only in the gaol by being worse than their gaolers. How else?” (1989: 61) Instead of them, Lear murders Clarissa: “God wants her for the comfort of His solitude...We can’t be blamed...” (1989: 62) The Drummer, an emanation of happiness, appears. But Lear proclaims: “I never wanted happiness! Why do I follow you, therefore?” (1989: 62) By killing Clarissa, Lear has murdered his conscience and his potential for goodness – he has smothered his genuine self, just like Prudentia did.

The image of a pile of the dead bodies of the Gaol marks the beginning of “The Seventh Lear”. In front of this deadened heap of bodies, Lear and Kent are playing chess. Lear’s language has completely broken down. Once again, instead of focusing on the crux of the problems literally surrounding him, Lear focuses on Kent’s cheating at chess and the fact that he has been aware of it for eight years. When Kent asks Lear why he brings this up today if he has known it for all those years, Lear replies that he merely wished to acquaint Kent with the fact that he knew. This statement can be interpreted as Lear’s ultimate personal confession about the impossibility of any sort of change in the dominant system of values. The mere knowledge about corrupt system is definitely not enough to provoke action; an initial personal change can potentially cause the change by inspiring concrete deeds against the dominant order. Quite appropriately, the voices of the Gaol are heard for the last time: “We knew/How else could we be free?/But knowing/How could we be allowed to live?” (1989: 63) Here it is obvious that Lear has not changed, not even in the old age. In his pursuit of the good, Lear found nothing. He remained a blind servant of the oppressive system that turned him into a destructive ruler. This play shows what happens to a child devoid of mother’s presence – instead of being instructed in the lessons of love, children are taught to hate and destroy and ultimately become completely dehumanized, though obedient citizens of the oppressive patriarchal system.

Concluding Remarks

At the end of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, it becomes clear that he is “a man who after much suffering, which is expiatory and therefore in the proper sense deserved, achieves what he had all along been in search of” (Keast 2003: 83) – the vision which was necessary for him to see the truth, “the truth of Divine Love” as Hughes (1992: 278) would term it. Barker’s Lear, on the other hand, completely rejects this healing vision. Though he was given an insight to Hughes’ “truth of Divine Love” (1992: 278) through the character of Clarissa, he could not cope up with

its demanding life-nurturing principles and cowardly discards it in the act of Clarissa's murder. Being blinded by cruelty and corruption of the ideology he has been subjected to, Barker's Lear has ultimately become the victim of the oppressive patriarchal system. Since love and compassion are not recognized in Lear's world, Barker intentionally portrays his main hero as a proper representative of the ongoing destructive patriarchal practices. Not only does the playwright here condemn their unquestioning authority, but he also the oppressive patriarchal ideology that purposefully destroys the concept of a mother, who is supposed to implement certain egalitarian values in children, and replaces her with dubious surrogate father figures who, with their demanding authority, consciously violate children's innocence and goodness.

Notes

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²In her study, *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (1987), Eisler purposefully chooses the opposed symbols of chalice and blade in order to point to two different sets of values and models of society. Whereas the chalice is linked to the partnership model of society, the blade is a symbol of the dominator model of society that is based on patterns of supremacy and is at its core belligerent and hierarchical. The chalice thus points to nurturing values, while the blade implies a certain hierarchical order that ranks individuals according to their sex, race and class. This order is further maintained under the threat of violence, as Eisler informs us, and is linked with a male god and the glorification of the ability to take life, in contrast to the partnership model's sacralization of women's capacity to give life through birth. Eisler sincerely believes that since partnership societies existed in the past, they might be developed again in the future. The shift in social structure was apparently accompanied by a change in the types of technologies developed, from life-sustaining to war-related, from the chalice to the blade. Eisler opts for the advantages of the matriarchal society and enthusiastically asserts that our society can be hopefully transformed back to the partnership model. In other words, it is her genuine belief that a historical transition from earlier idyllic to more aggressive cultures can be reversed in order for the matriarchal society to be constructed again in the future.

³Machiavelli was interested in creating a viable political theory that would eventually lead to the well-being of his Renaissance community, through the discussion on human nature, the social practice of the corruption of innocence by experience, as well as the constant struggle between the capacity for good and evil in man. Machiavelli was especially interested in the secular understanding of the political power as a force for both good and evil, a view that was identified with the discourse of his studies *Il Principe* (*The Prince*) (1513) and *The Discourses* (1517). Like most Renaissance authors, whose main subject was man as he is, rather than as he ought to be, Machiavelli was interested in 'real man' (Suhodolski 1972: 352): the accurate secular knowledge of man's real nature he considered rightly a condition of viable political theory and good government.

But how accurate his insight was is still a matter of dispute. Machiavelli's view of "real man" is pessimistic: men, according to Machiavelli, are greedy, deceitful, self-interested and concerned primarily with preserving or achieving power at any cost. An ideal ruler, therefore, is the one who does not hesitate to use any repressive means at his disposal to control his subjects. He must use force to create an "ideal" society reflected in the government that could protect man from himself. Machiavelli's heroes are heroic not because of their goodness, but because of their strength, cunning and success. Political dishonesty is

legitimate, claims Machiavelli, because in an imperfect world, a prince cannot be morally perfect without effecting his own destruction. Although it would be preferable for a prince to appear to be virtuous and good in the eyes of his people, history shows that he must compromise the standards of goodness and virtue whenever necessary.

Thus, Machiavelli's motto – "the aim justifies the means"- involves among other things a cynicism on the part of the ruler whereby he strives for the appearance of rectitude, which the world values and he himself does not care for, and discards this appearance whenever he decides that the circumstances call for open cruelty. Indeed one of the chief means that Machiavelli believes a prince must not hesitate to use is cruelty, because cruelty makes people fear him, and because "it is much better to be fear'd, than to be lov'd." In short, since the Machiavellian prince must lie, cheat and break his word, it is logical that, during his rule, morality is not to be given serious consideration.

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