

WATER, POWER AND HUMAN NATURE: IN SEARCH OF HUMANS EVOLVING

Water "to hold, as' twere, the mirror up to [human] nature."

Hamlet Act III, Scene ii

"Or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them."

Hamlet Act III, Scene I

Introduction

This paper is a preliminary attempt to examine the relationships between culture, nature and people. A continuous analysis of those intersections will shed further light in the search for human nature, evolution and destiny. This paper is preliminary to the extent that it discusses power as culture, water as nature, and biophobia as human nature. Ortner (1974) increased interest in similar discussions a quarter of a century ago. Here, we will extend the discussions and offer new and different perspectives that examine material objects.

Anthropology has come full circle in this Century. It began the century by spinning "beautiful" webs of ideology (e.g., eugenics and unilineal theory) that had little to do with "reality." The Century ends with anthropologists spinning new "cutting edge" webs without examining material objects as correcting evidence. Boas cleaned house a century ago. The authors attempt to use water and the human body to keep our own work tidy.

In this paper we attempt to describe, examine and discuss human nature in terms of water (nature) and power (culture). We think that it is urgent that we study human nature and its evolution to determine why it appears to be destroying the species. Human nature has abused the Earth from which comes its health and it seems determined to continue down that pathway. Perhaps a little enlightenment can alter our course and save our children and grandchildren, perhaps not.

Water

Water, power and human nature are three important dimensions of the 21st Century, globalization and the destiny of the human species on Earth. As we have discussed, water is pervasive in the essence of human life and power. It is the mirror image and substance of human life. It challenges the human imagination see Rodriguez-Iturbe and Rinaldo 1997). As such water impacts every aspect of all life on Earth and it determines the prospects of life in the universe. One of the authors has a neighbor who enjoys using religion as a whipping boy for many of the global dilemmas. He claims that religion is a human delusional system. The author responds that religion is only one of the many human delusional systems. Most humans look in the mirror and do not see themselves whether they are religious or not. Even if they happen to know who they are most humans look and refuse to see themselves (see Bendich and Deckelbaum 1997, Collins 1995). Water was one of the first human mirrors. Water continues to be an important instrument in human delusional systems (see Donnelly 1949, Warshall 1995). On an overpopulated and polluted Planet humans may have to choose between power-extinction or impotence in-face-of some of nature's flow and process. Karl A. Wittfogel (1929, 1931, 1935, 1938, 1953, 1957, 1960 and 1964) and others have explored the relationship between water as a resource and the rise of human power, but water has other meanings to be explored.

We input water to discuss and to attempt to understand human life and power. The denial of our animal kinship is but one stratagem of the human delusion of power and superiority to separate, punctuate and distinguish human life from the process and flow of all life on Earth. "The great chain of being" is a human delusion that is obsolete in the next century. If biophobia is a crucial component of human nature and humans are preoccupied with water (nature), then, some human interactions with water (e.g., fear of drowning, denial of their animal bodies which are largely constituted with water) should provide us with insights into the biophobic relationships with water (see Williams 1997, 1998).

Water runs downhill. Human cells just run down. The sun lifts water to the sky and enables human cells to reach their own peaks. Gravity and aging continue the cycles

respectively. The rhythms and characters of water mesmerize humans because they closely reflect human life and history. A functional-evolutionary perspective might suggest that natural settings with expansive water are preferred by humans. Evidence from East Africa (Leakey 1980; Brown et al. 1985) suggests that early hominids frequently located their home sites near the edges of water. There would be drinking water, security and defense positions, a magnet for game and in some sites (seacoast, estuary and salmon river) a wealth of fish, shellfish and crustaceans. Coss and Moore (1990) believe that the skill in securing drinking water was a critical selection determinant in human evolution.

Like those ancient German tribes that swam beside the frontiers of the Roman Empire, the indigenous Indians provided American swimming with a historical perspective, an image of the noble savage fated somehow to be at odds with the world, and in their decline imbued the 'swimmer' with an elegiac quality that it has never really lost. Nothing reveals their religious sense of nature, their feeling that they were linked somehow to the rivers, lakes and waterfalls around them, more vividly than this swimming scene described by George Catlin, who painted the Indian way of life in its last years of existence, before it finally disappeared from the plains:

'At a distance of half a mile or so above the village, is the customary place where the women and girls resort every morning in the summer months, to bathe in the river. To this spot they repair by hundreds, every morning at sunrise, where, on a beautiful beach, they can be seen running and glistening in the sun, whilst they are playing their innocent gambols and leaping into the stream. They all learn to swim well and the poorest swimmer among them will dash fearlessly into the boiling and eddying current of the Missouri, and cross it with perfect ease... Around this bathing place are stationed sentinels, with their bows and arrows in hand, to guard and protect this sacred ground from the approach of boys

or men in any directions. Perhaps no people on earth have taken more pains to learn swimming, nor any to turn it to better account.'

References abound to the Indian love of swimming. Longfellow's Hiawatha plunged 'beneath the bubbling surface' and 'through the whirlpool chased the beaver,' while Pocahontas was renowned for swimming and diving skills. The name 'Wichita' derives from the Indian for 'waist-deep,' as the squaws were pushed forward into the rivers to test their depth and if convenient for crossing, would cry out 'Wichita' to those on the bank. It was from the ranks of these Indians that two challengers were chosen, Flying Gull and Tobacco, to represent America against the English champion Kenworthy in 1845, and amazed Londoners with their over-arm windmill stroke. Their flailing style was to be the inspiration for the greatest of American swimmers, Johnny Weissmuller, whose coach based his action on theirs, the whirling rotation of his arms and the powerful propulsion of his legs that drove his torso far above the surface of the water. When towards the end of his life Trelawny emerged from the waves on to the beach at Sompting, Americans passing by presumed him to be an Indian. Rupert Brooke, when watching Indians swimming in the Northern Lakes, found them 'more in touch with permanent things than the America that had succeeded them,' and far superior to the 'weedy, furtive, acquisitive youth that may figure our age and type.'

Sprawson 1992: 222

Humans create songs (e.g., "OL' MAN RIVER") about water to reflect about their own lives and as usual they get it wrong. We are not separate from nature. Water grows potatoes and cotton and the waters that grow them are soon forgotten. Water pushes barges and lifts bales, and if it gets a little drunk, it lands in hail. Life, too, just keeps rolling along.

Humans are obsessed with water. They have socially constructed sacred (holy), medicinal and recreational water. Sacred, medicinal and recreational water stave off death and

misfortune; create human health and happiness with natural and supernatural powers. Holy water is God's water. Therapeutic water is the physician's. Both God and the physician are ministers of life and death. They are certified administrators of human life. Therapeutic and holy water are cultural (power). They are cognitive products of social construction. Humans are like a drop of water trying to understand the sea. They are a tiny speck of animate stardust among cotillions of billion-year constellations. Thus we are overwhelmed, fascinated, preoccupied and obsessed with both water and sky (note the history of aviation from Kitty Hawk to jumbo jets to space exploration; note the history of skyscrapers and UFOs; see THE BIOPHILIA HYPOTHEIS by Kellart and Wilson, 1993)). But we have not learned to distinguish understanding our world from conquering it in the difficult process of living with our own inferiority complexes.

Humans are preoccupied with water as substance and symbol (as well as with power). People perceive it as representative of well-being and of the good life. The State of Michigan proudly displays signs at its borders announcing "WELCOME TO MICHIGAN, GREAT LAKES, GREAT TIMES." Humans treasure pleasure boats, ships, water travel, bath houses and sulfur springs. Today students carry bottled water around as oral pacifiers. Humans build shelters on river plains, lake fronts and ocean shores that water will surely destroy. They build artificial pools, lakes, fountains, irrigation ditches and water falls that require unreasonable maintenance. They dam water, dump waste into water and exploit water for all manner of machines. Running water urges them to urinate and donate (wishing wells). Humans perspire and perspiration has its odor. They secrete from the eyes, ears, lungs, bronchial tubes, skin, sinuses, nose, sexual organs, and the colon. They salivate, masticate, expectorate, regurgitate, urinate, defecate, masturbate, fornicate, exudate, suppurate, lacrimate and hemorrhage. All of these require water. Without water "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3: 19).

Men have proclaimed themselves superior to women because women process more water (e.g., menstruation, gestation, lactation and labor). Humans wash themselves too often, too long

and too harshly to separate themselves from "inferior" humans and other "lower" animals. Cleanliness creates "superior" humans and thus human power. But humans can destroy that which they love. Like the U.S. National Parks people are destroying water. The human obsession, pollution, and overpopulation has lowered the quality of water on Earth and now threatens life here.

In the 19th Century Dr. John Harvey Kellogg operated a Water Cure Institute in New Jersey. Later he moved to Battle Creek, Michigan with his Western Health Reform Institute. There he built a body irrigation machine to continually flush the human bowels with water as well as continual therapeutic baths and massages in water. Dr. Kellogg's sanitarium became a famous health spa for the rich and famous (John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, George Bernard Shaw, Johnny Weissmuller, etc.). Many of Dr. Kellogg's medical therapies are practiced today but his errors and eccentricities discredited him. He died in December 1943 at the age of 92. His brother Will Keith Kellogg (of corn flakes fame) who worked with him at the sanitarium for many years died at the age of 91.

In a speech (5-7-98) to the Arab American institute President William Jefferson Clinton proclaimed "the place where I grew up had healing hot waters." He was trying to explain how he experienced so much ethnic diversity in a Southern town of 85,000 people. Our anticipated volume will discuss the human dramas of present day spas, water front tourism and ski resorts.

John Augustus Roebling who planned and began the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York died as a result of his insistence on water therapy for a crushed foot (an accident during construction). Gangrene set in the foot and he died of tetanus. These are two examples of water therapy in the United States. There are more here and worldwide.

Physical Water

Water is multivalent. We will discuss two meanings here -- physical and spiritual. The human heart, kidneys, skin and brain all require hydration. The adult body is composed mostly of water. Almost three-quarters of the brain is water. The body may require about 64 ounces of

water every day and if you are breast feeding about 30% more. Water maintains your blood pressure, aids in reproduction regulates your body temperature, lubricates your joints and processes your food. Every time you breathe you transport water out of your body. Humans require water to grow their food, bathe their bodies, wash their clothes and other possessions and to sustain their lives on the Planet. But humans also think, feel and emotionally experience water.

Spiritual Water

Spiritual or psychological water is conceptualized. Fountains of youth, coins in the fountain and the river of Styx are human conceptualizations. Human conceptualizations of water allow people to release their inhibitions in and around water. They remove their shoes and clothes and expose their “imperfect” bodies. They play and experience a feeling of well-being that is different from landlocked sites. Water is a siren that attracts humans to it and into it. Humans have ventured into water at great personal risks and uncertainty. They often value water more than land and land adjacent to water more than other land. Even children who are afraid of water will have contact by throwing objects into or otherwise engaging it.

Water Kinship

The sand is hot and rough, the ocean’s frightening and the glaring sun has proven unfriendly, but here we go anyway, sand buckets, radios and folding chairs in our arms and smiles on our faces. The refrain has begun: Let’s go to the beach.

This year we will head to oceanside resorts in numbers that consistently make it one of our favorite types of vacations. More than 40 percent of Americans went last year, says Stanley Plog, head of Plog Research, which provides data to the key players in the travel industry.

What draws us? Experts say we might be seeking our watery evolutionary roots, a simulation of our submerged prenatal rocking...

A colleague of Freud's, Sandor Ferenczi, speculated that we strive for a return to an "aquatic mode of life" in the womb and in our origins in the sea.

Writers including Thoreau and Melville talk about the draw of the ocean. Poetry is filled with such references, as are New Age writings. Paterson 1998: 16

How can we explain this spiritual and psychological affinity with water. Well, humans are mostly water themselves. Even more, water is a part of the universe that allows humans to bridge temporarily to their "normal" conditions as tiny specks of animate stardust among cotillions of billion-year old constellations.

The "normal" conditions of humans are those that exist before birth and after death as particles of the universe. But every human is assigned a tour of duty to act temporarily as a vehicle or device for the transmission of DNA. This temporary assignment is one of struggle and humans long for their "normal" home in the universe. They may have a "death wish" or at least moments when they are tired of life, regardless of how "good" it appears. They can not escape the dialectic tension between eros and thanatos, biophobia and water (biophilia). But they are instinctively patriotic to their DNA tour of duty and most of them serve faithfully to the end.

Water, a part of the other or "normal" cosmic world, enables humans to have brief sojourns into that world. It enables humans to briefly transcend (e.g., gazing or bathing) the life-struggle experience. The attraction of water, imprinted during nine months of gestation inside of a sack of it, allows that brief experience of escape from the life-struggle. The human, a drop of water, attempts to understand the sea, at least to touch or engage it briefly. Water is a medium that finite humans exploit to grapple with the infinite of which they are a part. Water, like power, is a catalytic conductor of humans into the cosmos. Water conducts by kinship and power by illusion (of conquering the inferiority complex).

An Illustration

Water is comparable to a furlough during World War Two. Most of the people who served during that war felt it a duty. People who did not serve were anxious to have "good" reasons to explain their presence on the home-front. The Nation and the world were being threatened by evil forces and we all had a responsibility to save our children, our families and our way-of-life. Notwithstanding that duty the horrors of war gave those who served a great longing for the home-front. The psyche of humans required that those on the frontlines be rotated away from action periodically to prevent their mental-physical collapse. For my purposes war is life (birth, struggle, death), the home-front (with peace in our time) is our cosmic home and the furlough is water.

All of this suggests that much of human evolution has been determined by, parallel to and a response to water. Like water, human life flows, is always moving. It is a process too. You cannot grab it except in myth and temporary interruptions. The essence of water has similar rhythms and cycles to the essence of human life. Humans intuitively and perhaps unconsciously and consciously identify with those rhythms and cycles notwithstanding socially constructed resistance to that endless and seemingly meaningless process in water. Power allows the illusion of controlling human life and Nature's water with temporary interruptions of its cycles and process. Humans crave those illusions (see Donahue and Johnston 1998). These brief and temporary interruptions of flow and process of human life and water is power. Water, like human "inferiority" tends to reach its own level. Water is nature, power is culture and human nature is a blend and brew of both. The authors examine water to see nature, power to see culture and in the enterprise we discover human nature.

Power

Power is to the social system what energy is the physical system. Without power, nothing happens. Some of the social components of power are numbers, valued attributes, and efficient and effective social organizations. Groups that have more than others in any two of these components usually prevail in human society. Yet it should be recognized that all groups have power. Those that cannot implement

social norms without help from others, nevertheless, can disrupt social organization. This disruption is veto power which subdominant as well as dominant groups possess.

If racial and ethnic groups are reconceptualized as community power groups, further explanation is necessary regarding why some groups have more and others have less power and the consequences that flow from one's position as dominant or subdominant in the power structure.

In this connection, I divide the community power structure into two complementary groups that are labeled dominant and subdominant rather than superior and subordinate. The new language overcomes the connotations of the past that the weaker power group called the subordinate group is inferior, lower, and secondary, and that the stronger power group called the superior group is preferred, higher, and primary. Dominance has to do with that which prevails. While the dominant characteristic is manifested, we know that it may be masking a contrasting characteristic that is present but recessive or subdominant.

Thus, dominance connotes who and what is in control and not who and what is superior. Under different circumstances, that which is dominant may become recessive and that which is recessive may become dominant. Another example of the coexistence of dominance and subdominance comes from music. The fifth tone of a diatonic scale is dominant and the tone next below is subdominant. Both dominant and subdominant tones have intrinsic value as do both a major and minor chord; each is a different chord. There is no connotation of better and worse or superior and inferior in the concepts dominant and subdominant. Moreover, these concepts clearly indicate that controlling characteristics in one situation may not be controlling in other situations. This understanding protects our discourse from the essentialism that has crept into

meanings when racial and ethnic groups are discussed as superior and subordinate groups.

I have discovered that dominant and subdominant power groups complement each other in some very important ways so that one without the other is incomplete. Dominant power groups tend to be more concerned with stability and the past. Subdominant power groups tend to be more concerned with change and the future. There is no intrinsic value either in the past and stability or in change and the future. One should not be more valued than the other. We should change what in social organization that harms any individual and stabilize what in social organization that helps all. Dominant and subdominant power groups and their different inclinations enable a society to perpetuate its helpful traditions and correct its harmful customs.

Willie 1996: 145

Culture, especially power, has been molded by the nature of water. The corrupting character of human power has almost destroyed the water. The Columbia River, the greatest river in the West, is being threatened by plutonium waste from ground water in Southeastern Washington and in the process has demonstrated some of the corrupting elements of human nature. Polluted water is a cultural transformation of nature. Human power is changing Earth into a place in which humans can no longer live. That transformation would usher in periods of new life forms that humans have repressed, abused, restricted and destroyed. Like water, life is ever changing, moving, flowing and disappearing (from a human perception). Humans have been ordained a very brief existence by their rapid development of power, its addiction and irrational abuse.

Humans are also obsessed with superiority which is conceptualized and utilized as power. Power can enable the control of humans and water. Power, like water, incorporates,

controls and dominates more and more as it expands. Power has been studied for centuries and it has many treatises. In more recent times it has become a reductionist "scholarly" game of rhetoric. A simple synonym for power is superiority. Many animals exhibit dominance behavior; territorially, mate competition and food chain ranking. Humans have translated these behaviors into culture as they distinguished themselves from the other animals. Culture creates "lower" animals and "superior" humans. "Superior" humans have power that has allowed them to dominate much of the Earth. Power is a soothing salve for the human inferiority complex. It deludes humans into superiority and immortality, into superior sex, death and digestion. Its magic carpet transports us from animal reality into God-like mythology.

Children are born with an intuitive cognitive map that is cartographed to the external environment (E. Margaret Evans, personal communication, 3-10-98). That intuitive map facilitates the learning of language, the distinction between animate and inanimate objects, responses to gravity, identifications with arbitrary individuals and groups, and the ranking of individuals and groups and species. Humans grow up with a proclivity for superiority and power, cultural transformations of primate dominance behavior, territorially, mate competition and food chain ranking. Some societies promote that proclivity, others discourage it, both are aspects of power.

The essence of human life is transfixed into our consciousness. We are preoccupied with the essence and determinants of it. People have the power to threaten and end one another's lives. The higher their rank and position the greater may be that potential.

As a response to human insecurity (especially about their physical bodies) humans create and perpetuate conflict and violence to seek and secure power. This bolsters human identity. We define human nature as biophobia and power (the quest for and avoidance of its dominion). Human evolution has entailed traumatic psychological experiences as our perceptual powers emerged within common animal bodies and with common animal needs. This was the likely evolutionary origin of our insecurity. Those perceptual powers enabled humans to contrive the image of themselves as "superior" animals. That contrivance, and the human hegemony

developed to validate it, was a successful adaptive mechanism to survive, persist, develop, and evolve, as well as to tolerate the ambiguities of our very existence. But that contrivance carries the cognitive baggage of inferior feelings among humans because humans must live with animal bodies and animal needs notwithstanding evolution and revolutions. These inferior complexes (after Alfred Adler, 1964) endow humans with the obsession of producing and reproducing social inferiority among "others." That is power.

The human quest for power, often appearing irrational, and the exploitation and misappropriation of natural and human resources in that quest are beacons for us to search for human nature (see Kutler 1997). Power seems a pervasive human addiction and the exploitation of the resources support the habit. Power has always required the exploitation and often misappropriation of Earth's resources. It still does.

It was the search for power that created the Atlantic Slave Trade and the *"American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World"* (Stannard 1993) in which modern genocide and biological warfare were perfected. They enabled the Spanish, American and Portuguese Empires. It was the "manifest destiny" of "superior" people. In this Century alone the British, German and Soviets have seen their own empires rise and fall on the backs of millions of dead and tortured humans. Even today the United States spends most of the nations resources to "defend" and insure its own power. The "killing fields" of the Confederate South and the Yankee North, the Normandy and Omaha Beaches, Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia have all serviced the Gods of power. Yet even today, women, who have been subjugated for 3 million years describe their own solutions as empowerment.

Power is like a cultural food chain of slaves, peasants, warriors, scribes, priests nobles and kings. Slaves are "eaten" by everybody (see Kingsolver 1998). Each of the others are "eaten" by all who follow them. Slaves have no one to "eat" except, perhaps one another. Kings are "eaten" by nature, Gods and other kings.

Humans eat when they are not hungry or in need of nutrition. They eat merely to exhibit power and superiority. They eat to prevent others access to resources and what they cannot eat

they hoard, waste or destroy. This waste and abuse of resources combined with overpopulation and the finite resources of Earth will enable humans to self-destruct.

The global transformations in global technology, communications, transportation, weapon's systems and commerce are all being diverted to the quest for power in a world in which the natural and human resources are limited. The global waste and abuse of those resources for power is symptomatic of a species gone amuck. The human quest for power is a crucial component of human history and human nature. The human drive to be superior can be humbling in its display of denials of self respect and self control. Materials for an economy and polity, the means and structure for earning a livelihood and culture-nature relations, all have implications for power. Material and charismatic bases for power are mutually reinforcing.

The Gouro elders' power, for example, rests on the control of objects, people, and the symbolically separate market and prestige spheres of exchange. Power is, therefore, encoded in symbols, enacted in relationships, and grounded in things (Dimen-Schein 1977: 221)

The relationships in production, distribution and consumption reveal some basic power relationships in a culture. But contrary to Marx, the means of production is only one conduit to power. There are others -- games, social relations, marriage and natural and human resources.

Power, then, exists in different domains within each culture. It has material, psychological, and social dimensions, and its constitution varies accordingly – strength in rape, tools in production, "pull" in getting a job, charisma in group leadership, decision making in politics, or the manipulations of myth in propaganda. Its psycho-social dimensions include awe and noblesse oblige, respect and contempt, sadomasochistic relationships, among others. Its behavioral expressions vary. (Dimen-Schein 1977: 211)

People with power pretend that the substance and status of power represents the "goodlife" (Baritz 1989, Williams 1992: 30). People without power pretend that the symbols

(e.g., the extravagant consumer) of status and power are the substance of it. But President Clinton exposes the delusion for us all. He is one of the most powerful people in the world. Yet, he has spent 7 years (1991-98) of persecution by the media, "a right wing conspiracy" and upper class Americans who find it impossible to tolerate the Horatio Alger life of a poor ("inferior") Southern boy who is now "superior" to them.

"Inferior" people are not passive. They punish those with power (see Cohen 1998). The media debunks and shreds our public "heroes" into flawed people. It seduces our "heroes" and "heroines" into being celebrities, and when they cease to be exciting news, their faults become as ravenously sought as their former achievements. Competing politicians and power-seekers like J. Edgar Hoover exploit these exposures. The rich, famous, and powerful conspire to deceive us into believing that they are free and happy. But the "inferior" conspire to prove that they are as miserable in the circular conspiracy of inferior-superior. The "inferior" buy and support the tabloids, tabloid journalism, exposés and other scandal publications. They riot, plot revolutions, loot and return to the job to assassinate their supervisors. They steal from the powerful, sabotage their interests and enjoy their misfortunes. The lethal brew of over population and addictive power tolls for all of us as technology provides weapons that confer power arbitrarily.

Power and superiority denies most humans the best health care. Many have none. The Black Death might have taught us that contagious diseases do not respect wealth and power. Most humans have poor nutrition which endangers gestation, healthy development of children and a healthy humanity. Most humans have inadequate shelter or none. Most humans have inadequate education or none which endangers any democracy. Most humans have inadequate occupations and income which prevents their well-being. Power and superiority demands the ranking of humans. Most of them are "peasants" with all of the inadequacies stated above. They are being "eaten" by all of those above them. They have access to the information, worldwide. They will have access to terrorists' weapons. We live on an endangered Earth.

Conclusion

In conclusion it appears to the authors that water, power and human nature have many similarities and relationships with one another. Humans categorize each of them in order to create meaningful human perceptions. Human attitudes toward water, power and one another represent systems of values about our Planet. Those values can result in health care disasters, war of all- against-all, and human extinction. New and different values can result in an Ecological Revolution with a rejuvenated biosphere and continued human survival.

The global village of the 21st Century has lost the dreams of socialism, communism, activism, unionism, civil and equal rights, and social justice. Futuristic writers are predicting gloom and doom of a technology driven "big brother" world. The alternatives lie in ourselves as humans. Those alternatives can enlighten the pathways into the future. They can provide new ideologies such as "biophilia" and "ecosophy" and provide new goals such as the Ecological Revolution. But humans will have to discover who they really are, unraveling the exalting mythology that surrounds them, to make the bold new adventures possible on an endangered Earth.

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