

# The Great Simplification

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Riane Eisler (00:00:00):

If all things were equal, which they're not, of course, we are very much affected by whether our culture orients to the domination or the partnership side. And it's always a matter of degree, by the way. But if all things were equal, we would biologically really tend to be more inclined to a partnership system. Empathy is something that developed in the course of evolution.

Nate Hagens (00:00:34):

I am honored to welcome Riane Eisler to the podcast. Riane is the president of The Center for Partnership Systems, as well as the editor-in-chief of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies. Riane's written many books, most famously *The Chalice and the Blade*, also *The Real Wealth of Nations*, as well as recently, *Nurturing Our Humanity*, co-authored with Douglas Fry. Riane has had an innovative whole systems research approach that offers new perspectives and practical tools for constructing a less violent, more egalitarian, more gender balanced, sustainable future.

(00:01:21):

It's amazing to me how much I resonated with Riane's ideas, and yet I had never heard of her until a few months ago. We have multiple friends in common. She's 93 years old, very active in these issues, and this was a wonderful conversation. I learned from her. I've ordered her books. Please welcome, Riane Eisler. Hello, Riane, great to see you.

Riane Eisler (00:01:59):

It's great to be with you. Thank you for inviting me.

Nate Hagens (00:02:02):

Well, I'm glad we got the technology squared away, but it is amazing that we can talk to each other and share your wisdom with tens of thousands of humans all around the planet. So technology gives me a headache sometimes, but it's also amazing.

Riane Eisler (00:02:18):

Yes, it is amazing when it works.

Nate Hagens (00:02:23):

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I have a lot of questions for you. You have been active in a space that I care a lot about for a very long time. And for whatever reason, I've only become aware of your work only recently. So let's take a deep dive backward. You are a futurist, also a macro historian among other titles, and your lifetime of work has been rooted in systems, theories, and dynamics since the very start. So how did you first get interested in systems and how have you approached the inherently multidisciplinary nature of this field over many decades?

Riane Eisler (00:03:07):

Well, my first job out of going to college was with an offshoot of the RAND Corporation called the Systems Development Corporation. And this was in the '50s, going way back, and when systems was not yet a household word as it is becoming now. And while they were interested in military systems, and I am not that keen on those, shall we say, it was my first formal exposure. But actually even before then, I am an attorney and I had completed my first year of law school before I got married and before I got my first job.

(00:04:09):

In law school, they ask you to really debrief. And that is systems work. And as an attorney too, a client doesn't come into your office and say, "Would you apply section 1222 of the blah blah code to my case?" They tell you a story and it's up to you to figure out what the patterns are, and hence, what is the applicable law. But I think my interest in systems actually goes way back to my childhood, because I am a child refugee with my parents from the Holocaust.

(00:05:01):

Those experiences, and they were traumatic experiences, first in Vienna where I was born on Crystal Night, and then in Cuba where, by a miracle really, my mother obtained my father's release from the Gestapo. It's a long story. And we met and they managed to purchase an entry permit into Cuba and we were on one of the last ships before the one that got turned down that a movie was made about it, the St. Louis. The movie was the Voyage of the Damned.

(00:05:37):

I had to ask myself in the way that children ask questions, does it have to be this way? Does there have to be so much cruelty and insensitivity and violence, when we humans, as I saw with my mother, have such an enormous capacity for caring, for

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creativity, for consciousness? And I couldn't answer these questions without a systems approach.

Nate Hagens (00:06:16):

So let's dive into that. You have over 500 articles and many books, but getting into the foundation of your work, your newest book is called *Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*. In this book, you categorized human societies, as you just mentioned, into domination and partnership systems. Can you explain the difference between these from your macro historian perspective?

Riane Eisler (00:06:48):

I'd be happy to. But I warn you, it's not a simple explanation. On one level, it's very simple. The old categories that we inherited from more rigid domination times, right-left, religious-secular, Eastern-Western, Northern-Southern, capitalist-socialist, they fragment our consciousness. We are not trained to see patterns.

(00:07:16):

We are not trained to step back and take into account the four cornerstones that are really fundamental to my work. Family and childhood is the first one. We know from neuroscience, and this is all, of course, in my book, in *Nurturing Our Humanity*, that the first five years are critical. Critical. They impact nothing less than how our brain is constructed and hence how we think, how we feel, how we act, including how we vote.

Nate Hagens (00:08:03):

And in the womb, right? The five years includes time in the womb?

Riane Eisler (00:08:03):

I would say that it does, but certainly we are not born with fully formed brains. Most people don't realize this, but our brain continues to develop, and it develops a great deal in the first five years. That's not to say that we can't change afterwards. We happen to have very flexible brains. And remember I said something about the survival instinct of our species. I think we don't just adapt. And by the way, Darwin realized this. And my late husband, David Loye, wrote a great deal about what he called Darwin's Lost Theory, which is a sidebar to all of this.

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(00:08:58):

But Darwin realized that we humans don't only adapt, but we create. And almost everything around us is a human creation. And I'm not just speaking of material things, which are obviously the desk, the house, the clothes, everything, the technology. But I am talking about our cultures. We create our cultures. But as I said, the old categories don't really describe these patterns and that's where the partnership domination-social scale, the partnership domination-biocultural lens comes in.

(00:09:47):

Because you can look at societies that are on the surface, on the domination side, very different, the Taliban, Eastern religious, the rightist fundamentalist alliance in the United States, religious, but in very different places. You can look at Hitler's Germany, a secular western society, but you can also look at a leftist society, not a rightist one, Stalin's former Soviet Union. You can look at Putin's Russia today. You can look at Iran. On the surface, these are all very different, aren't they?

(00:10:34):

But think about it for a moment. They all have the same configuration. They lean very heavily to the domination side. The first thing is the family. They all have not only an economics and a society that is authoritarian, that is top down, but also a family. The second is gender. Have you noticed that they all have very rigid gender stereotypes, don't they? I mean, Hitler did a lot to push women back further towards the domination side. Iran does the same. The Taliban does the same.

(00:11:23):

Even denying girls school. Putin in 2018 radically substantially reduced the penalty for family violence. Why? Because he gets it that an authoritarian, rigidly male dominated, highly punitive, often violent family is inextricably connected with exactly the same state, authoritarian, rigidly male dominated, highly punitive, authoritarian, strong man state.

(00:12:11):

So the domination side, we can see the patterns very clearly, but my interest was in what is the alternative and is there one? And my research shows that yes, but we have to move out of these conventional fragmenting categories to see what I call, and I had to make up a word, partnership alternative.

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Nate Hagens (00:12:38):

So I want to get to that in a second, but you said there were four components or pillars, the family and the childhood, the gender, and what were the third and the fourth?

Riane Eisler (00:12:47):

Well, economics and there's also story and language. But the actual configuration of these societies, these four pillars are the pillars of the long-term strategies in addition to the short-term tactics that we must pay attention to, and we can get to that later.

Nate Hagens (00:13:17):

So this isn't just an emergent phenomenon, this domination, this is actually thought about and planned about and strategized ahead of time so that it unfolds by someone's plans?

Riane Eisler (00:13:31):

I think that it unfolds very much through a dynamic that involves our childhoods, that involves how we structure gender roles and relations. From this perspective, gender is not just some women's issue or some men's issue or everybody in between. It is a primary social, economic, and family organizing principle. And I can't really emphasize this enough because it is so contrary to what we're taught, what's drummed into us. And it's not only drummed into those who want to push us back, but it's drummed into people who consider themselves progressives.

(00:14:25):

Because in all of our higher education... I mean, gender studies is brand new. It's only about 60 years old, and it's marginalized in the academy. So is child development. We all should know about child development, which is a fantastically important field involving, as I said, neuroscience, but it's marginalized. You only take that course if you happen to be in a field related to it.

Nate Hagens (00:14:58):

Real quick, for those who haven't come across your work, what briefly did the chalice represent and the blade represent from that famous book of yours?

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Riane Eisler (00:15:10):

They represent two ways of looking at power. People mistakenly sometimes think that they represent gender, but that's only because of the stereotypical socialization of these rigid gender stereotypes that is characteristic of all domination systems. But they actually are symbols of power. The blade is a very appropriate symbol for power as defined in a domination system. It's the power to control, the power to really take life. But there's another type of power. It really depends on how power is defined.

(00:16:04):

As we move more towards the partnership side, we're beginning to see that recognition of this type of power. I mean, the battle for our future is not between right and left, and religious and secular, and Eastern and Western, and Northern and Southern. It's between these two configurations. And we can get to the partnership configuration in a little bit, but it is the power not to take life, but to give life. It is the power to illuminate life. It is the power that we all have, but that in domination system is coded feminine.

(00:16:48):

But men have it too. I was married to a very, very caring man, and we all know women who are not caring. This has nothing to do with biological sex, with women and men. Has everything to do with whether we orient to a... It has everything to do with whether... All right. It has everything to do not with women or men, but with whether we orient to the domination or the partnership side.

Nate Hagens (00:17:27):

So a woman that doesn't have the nurturing chalice dynamic and a man who does have or doesn't have the blade but does have the caring dynamic, that happened not because of biology, but because of their nurture, the culture they grew up in, their family situation, all the things that happened to them when they were children. Is that correct?

Riane Eisler (00:17:54):

No, not quite, because what we know today is that this whole argument about nature versus nurture or nurture versus nature, it's another red herring. It's another distraction. What happens is that yes, our social environment mediated through family, certainly through economics, through our entire environment, through our

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education, it has a great deal to do with what... Of our innate capacities are either supported or inhibited.

Nate Hagens (00:18:38):

So is it like a positive feedback that a boy or a girl grow up in a society that is a domination society and it pushes them in a different direction so that they think it's normal and vice versa?

Riane Eisler (00:18:57):

Yes, but the good thing is that, and this is part of Nurturing Our Humanity, that actually if all things were equal, which they're not, of course, we are very much affected by whether our culture orients to the domination or the partnership side. And it's always a matter of degree, by the way. But if all things were equal, we would biologically really tend to be more inclined to a partnership system. Empathy is something that developed in the course of evolution. Caring is something that developed in the course of evolution. Not all species care for their young.

Nate Hagens (00:19:47):

So can you give some examples either historically or on the present day of partnership systems or partnership societies?

Riane Eisler (00:19:54):

I can start with some tribal societies because they can be tribal, and I can go all the way up to more technologically advanced societies. I can give you two, but there are many, many more societies studied by anthropologists who are relatively well-known. One are the Teduray of the Philippines studied by an anthropologist from the University of California who happened to get in touch with me after *The Chalice and the Blade* was published. And he said, "I used to call them radically egalitarian, but they have the configuration of the partnership society."

(00:20:45):

The other one are the Minangkabau of Sumatra studied by an anthropologist, again, who's quite well known. They call themselves matriarchy. I really want to emphasize this. There never was a matriarchy. This is part of really of what we have been taught.

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Because if you really look at matriarchy and patriarchy, they're not opposites. The opposite of patriarchy is a partnership society of the two.

Nate Hagens (00:21:24):

So there's never really been a matriarchal society? When people use that word, what they really mean is a functioning partnership society.

Riane Eisler (00:21:32):

I think that that is correct. But people, when they see that women can be leaders, they immediately have assumed that, oh, this must be a matriarchy. But men have a role in these societies, had a role. Well, we are going into our Indigenous western history now. And by the way, this development of this shift, which only happened, depending on the place, about 10 to 5,000 years ago to the domination side, which is a blip, a drop.

Nate Hagens (00:22:14):

Riane, what you're telling me, and I didn't know your work until recently, but it rhymes and matches with so many other stories from different scholars. Are you saying that before 10,000 years ago, the other 290,000 years of our species physiological history, that most or even all of that time was a partnership dynamic?

Riane Eisler (00:22:38):

I'm not saying it was... What I am saying that the society oriented more. Remember, it's a scale. It's a continuum. There are two ends to it. One is this pure domination. One is a pure partnership. It doesn't exist, okay? But what we do have are societies that orient to one or the other. I had to coin a word, because we have a word called utopia, which really means no place, and I'd coined the term pragmatopia, a practical place.

Nate Hagens (00:23:19):

So I'm understanding that it's not binary, it's not you're a domination system or you're a partnership. There's a scale. And not only that, but each society might have different factions that score higher on that scale. For instance, United States culture, how would you define that?

Riane Eisler (00:23:41):

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Well, at this point it's very interesting because the fault lines are becoming very explicit. There are those people who have been very heavily traumatized, the MAGA people, and they have the domination configuration in spades, don't they? I mean, strong man rule in the family and the state, rigid gender stereotypes, violence. Remember how power is equated with the power to take life?

Nate Hagens (00:24:24):

And is that a conscious decision as adults, this is how I'm going to be and this is how I'm going to vote? Or is it a reaction to things that happen to that demographic earlier in life? Do you have an opinion on that?

Riane Eisler (00:24:39):

I believe, and I write about this in *Nurturing Our Humanity*, I believe it starts very early in life, and it starts more often than not in families. The good news is that not everyone who grows up in a domination oriented family accepts this. I mean, David Loye, my late husband, his father was the head of the Bartlesville America First Party, and yet David formed his own values. And I think he was very bright.

(00:25:18):

There's a lot of literature about how these children who are very bright do tend to lean more towards the caring, towards the valuing of equality. And of course, freedom has been totally misinterpreted. I mean, they talk a lot about freedom, but it's for freedom... What it means is freedom for those on top to do whatever they damn please, whether it's in the family or in the family of nations.

Nate Hagens (00:25:52):

That's so interesting. Two-part question. So these terms, domination and partnership societies, are relatively new to me. I just learned them when I've come across your work and researched this conversation. But how does those concepts map to evolutionary biology research on multilevel selection or even to a collective action problem? And depending on your answer to that, is the root issue too narrow of a definition of self? I mean, if we widen out the definition of self, then obviously partnerships societies make more sense for us and for our community.

Riane Eisler (00:26:39):

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Well, we have in the course of evolution inherited a movement towards caring. Even vertebrates, some lizards eat their young. I mean, but you come to mammals and we don't survive, they don't survive unless there's some degree of care. Empathy also developed. You see it in other species. You see it very highly developed, for example, among bonobo apes, which not coincidentally have not been studied as much also, because they have the same DNA difference, very small DNA difference between the bonobos, the common chimpanzees, and humans.

(00:27:31):

But we've studied more the chimpanzees, which tend to be not completely, not by any means completely, but they tend to be much more inclined to be on the domination side of killing. I mean, there has been no reported observed, and they've been studied recently, the bonobos, quite a lot. And they're smarter. Their sexuality is different. They actually have sex for pleasure like humans do.

Nate Hagens (00:28:09):

Yeah, they really do make love not war, the bonobos.

Riane Eisler (00:28:12):

That's right. Yes.

Nate Hagens (00:28:16):

Would you agree, disagree, or offer a different perspective from the E. O. Wilson, D.S. Wilson famous phrase that selfishness beats cooperation within groups, but cooperative groups will out compete selfish groups?

Riane Eisler (00:28:34):

I think that in domination systems, that is a true fact. I think that David Sloan Wilson has contributed a lot. I think he has a blind spot on gender, but I also think that his theory needs to be extended. Because I see so many, especially young people, but also older people who have empathy, even not just for the in-group, but who understand what you've been talking about, that caring for others, and that includes our life support systems in nature, is a survival requisite.

Nate Hagens (00:29:22):

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So you're generally on board with the multilevel selection concept, but you think it needs to be extended to include gender and out-groups and even more, like multiple levels?

Riane Eisler (00:29:36):

Because I think that, and this may be a relatively new mass development, but I see more and more people who have empathy for people that they are not part of their in-group.

Nate Hagens (00:29:56):

And we have social media and technology to thank for that maybe.

Riane Eisler (00:30:01):

Yes. Well, it's not the technology, it's how it's programmed. And what we're seeing in our nation is two subgroups, aren't we? Those who want to move forward, if you will, to a more caring, less violent, more equitable, and certainly more respect for our life sustaining systems, and then you have the other ones. But there's one characteristic that they have in common, and it's called denial, whether it's climate change denial, whether it's election results denial, whether it's COVID denial.

(00:30:47):

And that, as I write and elucidate in *Nurturing Our Humanity*, is a trait acquired very early. Because if you are in a rigid domination family, you are dependent on the very people who are causing you pain for life, for food, for shelter, for whatever care you can get. So you have to be in denial.

Nate Hagens (00:31:23):

So that denial reaction was helpful to your survival when you were growing up.

Riane Eisler (00:31:29):

Of course, it is in those families. And not only that, you are constantly being told that there's an out-group, whether it's a different race, a different religion. I mean, whether it's Shia or Sunni. They fight each other. It's not exclusive to the West, this in-group versus out-group thinking. It is, however, very prominent in domination oriented cultures.

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Nate Hagens (00:31:59):

So are there historical examples or modern day examples of a shift of a domination system or culture to a partnership culture or a shift the other way from a partnership society culture to a domination one?

Riane Eisler (00:32:17):

Well, I think we're seeing both right in front of our eyes right here in the United States, but I never finished and I would like to finish because we got stuck on tribal societies and I never continued to some of very technologically advanced societies which are mistakenly considered socialists where they're not. And I'm talking about Nordic societies. If you look at the configuration of Nordic societies, first of all, they're not socialists.

(00:32:49):

They have a very healthy market economy, very healthy, but they also have caring policies which make it really very much more possible to be competitive actually. Because as I write in my book, *The Real Wealth of Nations*, which I think you'd really like, by the way, it's about a new economics that goes beyond both capitalism and socialism. I mean, yes, we need a free market. We don't happen to have one. And yes, we need enlightened government policies, but we need to move toward a different economic system.

(00:33:32):

And we're seeing movement in that direction, by the way, I mean, of supporting the work of care, and especially in our post-industrial era, by the way, and I know I'm being nonlinear here, but it's necessary, because even economists who live in some alternate reality keep telling us that the most important capital for our post-industrial era is high quality human capital. Well, we know from neuroscience that that heavily depends on the quality of care and education children receive early on.

Nate Hagens (00:34:12):

It is totally okay to be nonlinear, Riane, because I also am nonlinear. I had coffee before this podcast and I'm just so thrilled to talk to you. So invariably, sometimes I'm overly interrupting guests like you because I'm so curious. So please finish your points. If I don't let you, that's on me. So am I hearing you say then that domination systems

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versus partnership systems, that that doesn't directly map onto capitalism or socialism?

Riane Eisler (00:34:49):

Absolutely not.

Nate Hagens (00:34:50):

That you could have a capitalist system that was leaning partnership and you could have a socialist system that was a domination system.

Riane Eisler (00:34:59):

Well, you have had them. Not only could you, but you have had them. I mean, think of North Korea, a socialist society. It's a pure domination system. Think of Putin, which is not socialist, by the way. I mean, it's a capitalist society. It is a pure domination system. Think of Stalin's former Soviet Union, a socialist society. But we're stuck in these old categories and they fragment our consciousness and prevent us from seeing these patterns. Now, I really want to continue about the Nordic societies, if I may.

Nate Hagens (00:35:43):

Please. You may.

Riane Eisler (00:35:45):

Because it's very important because it helps us see the partnership trends right here in the United States and globally. What you see in these societies is that they're not socialists and also their more caring character is not due to their being smaller and more homogeneous. Think of all the smaller, more homogeneous societies that are very domination oriented in our world. They have, however, once you understand that configuration, the partnership configuration. There is more gender equity in both the family and the state or tribe.

(00:36:36):

So remember gender being a really primary organizing principle in society, in families, in economics because of the hidden system of gendered values. They also have about 45 to 50% of their national parliaments are female. Now, I have said it and I'll say it again. It is not that women are more caring, but women are socialized and biologically

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perhaps inclined more to learn caring behaviors. And so women as a group tend to support more caring policies. However, in these Nordic nations, men will also vote for caring policies as a group. Why?

(00:37:35):

Because the dynamic is that as the status of women rises, so also does the status of the values that are stereotypically associated with femininity, like caring, nonviolence. So it is not coincidental that the Nordic nations show, again, the difference between partnership and domination oriented societies. They pioneered the first laws that prohibit physical discipline of children in families. Let's say it is wrong. Now, that's a very important partnership trend, and I'm working to involve religious leaders, because 80 to 90% of the world's people identify with some kind of religion.

(00:38:35):

That's just how it is, or some kind of spirituality. So we need them to stop talking about violence as only in relation to war or to crime, but a family violence. And I don't like the term domestic violence because it's so marginalized. I prefer using intimate violence or family violence.

Nate Hagens (00:39:03):

What is the difference between those two?

Riane Eisler (00:39:06):

Well, it's the difference in words. Remember the fourth cornerstone that I mentioned, that we have to change and move to the partnership side is story and language. And again, being very nonlinear, we have both religious and secular stories, normative stories like, oh, original sin and selfish genes. It's the same story. I mean, they fight each other, but it's the same story. We're bad, right? So naturally we have to be rigidly controlled from the top, as in God-fearing in the religious realm or in the fascist realm.

(00:39:53):

I mean, we have to examine our stories and change them. And that's happening, but it's happening in bits and pieces. Like even Barbie, which was a wonderful, funny movie, but in the end it saw only two possibilities, matriarchy or patriarchy. I mean, in the end it was, ugh, what do we do here? Let's tolerate these men. Let's include more men. No, that's not the way it goes, because you need to understand the configuration of the partnership system.

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Nate Hagens (00:40:36):

And if we had a check mark for what a domination system would be, what would be the check marks that would indicate a partnership system?

Riane Eisler (00:40:45):

Well, the check marks, first of all, family and society and economics is not all top down. Secondly, these rigid gender stereotypes, and we're seeing trends in that direction. I mean, when I was young, we had a women's page which was all about cotillions and debutants and I don't know what. And now we hear more about gender and about socialization, but it's still considered sort of a thing of its own. No, it is central to... Look, I said everything is about relations. Where do we learn about our relationships?

(00:41:35):

In our families, in our gender relations. Children who are born into rigid domination families know two things. They learn two lessons that are indispensable for domination systems. One, that violence by those who are bigger and stronger against those who are smaller and weaker is not only normal, it's moral. Two, they learn the hidden system of gendered values. Yes, we idealize mother and keep her in her place. I mean, just like we have this really bizarre Christian holy family where only the father and the son, but not the mother of God are divine, right?

(00:42:27):

She's the only mortal. They get it. I mean, they get it in their education, in their religion, in their family, right? But wait a minute, violence and abuse, it has to be built into domination systems because it's man over man, man over woman, race over race, religion over religion, nation over nation. And you were talking about empathy. Empathy is growing. In the Nordic nations, not only, by the way, did they pioneer the first laws saying that no physical discipline the children, they pioneered the first peace studies, for goodness' sakes. I mean, why people can't see the pattern?

Nate Hagens (00:43:22):

So the check mark on the partnership societies, how would that look with the encounter to man over man, man over woman, race over race?

Riane Eisler (00:43:31):

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Look, there would still be hierarchies. I had to coin new words. Because we need parents, we need teachers, we need managers, we need leaders. But power, we're back to how power is constructed differently. And you see trends in this direction. I'll just give you two trends. One is the trend towards the leader no longer being the controller from the top, but being someone who inspires, who empowers.

(00:44:02):

It's a brand new word, empowers. Transparency, I mean, how can there be transparency in domination systems? That is more a movement towards partnership. But we need a new frame, and that is the frame provided by this partnership domination lens, the biocultural lens.

Nate Hagens (00:44:26):

So I know it's not binary, it's a sliding scale. But of the eight billion humans on the various nations and cultures in the world, what percentage are living in predominantly partnership like dynamics and societies, would you guess?

Riane Eisler (00:44:46):

Well, you know the answer to that just as well as I do. It is still a minority.

Nate Hagens (00:44:54):

A huge minority.

Riane Eisler (00:44:55):

Yes, but that doesn't mean anything because every human has this yearning for caring connection.

Nate Hagens (00:45:04):

For sure.

Riane Eisler (00:45:06):

I mean, we want it. We need it. It is healthier. The ACEs studies, for example, the Adverse Childhood Experiences studies, which I imagine you're familiar with, even in the United States, trauma, childhood trauma, is so prevalent. But the fact that we're beginning to talk about trauma, that's a partnership trend.

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Nate Hagens (00:45:36):

You've alluded to it, but I would like you to get very specific. What are the core fundamentals of a caring economy?

Riane Eisler (00:45:46):

Well, look, economics is about what we value and what we measure. And both capitalism and socialism... Well, first of all, they came out of very early industrial times, the 1700s, the 1800s. We're now in the 21st century post-industrial era. So on that count alone, they would be antiquated. But even though both capitalism and socialism actually challenged a tradition of domination, by the way, Smith challenged mercantilism, the control from the top of kings and so-called nobles.

(00:46:32):

And then Marx challenged the bourgeoisie at the beginning of the so-called Robber Baron age. It was really brutal. But both of them perpetuated this hidden system of gendered values. And I have to go into that because we have to understand that without more, without a change in what we reward and what we measure, this isn't... I mean, this is one of the key intervention points is economic rewards. You have a system in which what is measured by GDP and GNP. I mean, for both Marx and for Smith, nature was there just to be exploited.

(00:47:30):

Conquest of nature, right? And as for the care, there's nothing about caring for nature, for our life support systems. As for caring for people starting at birth, for children, for the elderly, for the sick, for everybody, for both these men, this work was to be done for free by a woman in a male controlled household. So much so, and here is where being really interdisciplinary comes in and knowing my law. I mean, even as late as when Marx wrote, in many jurisdiction, a wife, and most women were wives, could not sue for injuries negligently inflicted on her.

(00:48:18):

Only her husband could for loss of her services. I mean, we have to understand our history and our history has to be taught. And there is a movement in that direction, but I'm afraid that it's being taken as a shame or blame movement. And it doesn't have to be.

Nate Hagens (00:48:44):

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We're waking up. There's something happening. There's something emerging in our culture. And frankly, if I would've had this conversation with you five years ago, I'm not sure I would've followed you, but I feel what you're saying. I feel the validity of it. I feel the importance of it. You are known as a macro historian. Why don't you shift hats to a macro futurist hat? How could we either in communities or in nations or as an entire human culture actually shift more towards a caretaker versus dominion dynamic? I mean, do you have a roadmap or any suggestions on how we start that?

Riane Eisler (00:49:32):

Well, remember I started with my theory of change, and this is something that I have developed over the years, and it's the last chapter of these four cornerstones in *Nurturing Our Humanity*. My theory of change is this, our job today is to have both short term tactics, which we see all around us. I mean, look, for the first time in human history, in recorded history, we have had all of these groups.

(00:50:11):

And by the way, the Nordic nations are an example of how empathy doesn't have to be related to genes because they invest more, proportionately more, than any other group of nations in foreign aid to people to whom they are not genetically related, people on the other side of the globe. So our empathy has been growing, and I think this is an evolutionary development because you talk to young people today and they have a lot of empathy.

Nate Hagens (00:50:49):

Is that part of the answer, is that we empathize and learn and listen more?

Riane Eisler (00:50:53):

I think that that is part of the answer. Because domination systems are not only based on violence, they're based on blame and shame. I mean, I'm hitting you because you're bad. Well, I mean, what are you going to do with that? You have to go into denial somehow because the people that you depend on for life are causing you pain. So you have to go into denial.

(00:51:29):

And then if you're told that, oh, everything is the fault of this out-group, whether it's woman like the story of Eve or Pandora, et cetera, or whether it's Jews, I mean, these

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bizarre stories about the Elders of Zion and I don't know what or another race or another religion or another religious sect like Shia and Sunni, you're stuck. And it's not that complicated, but it's a dynamic that has been very invisible until lately.

Nate Hagens (00:52:09):

So tell us a story, Riane, based on your lifetime of scholarship and care on this topic that what would a human culture 500 years from now, assuming we've navigated climate change and nuclear war and all the other bottlenecks that we face this century, there are human habitants and a thriving somewhat civilization, call it that. What would be the hallmarks of that and what could you envision such a society that matures and learns from everything that we've experienced and our understanding about who we are and where we came from and what's possible?

Riane Eisler (00:52:51):

First of all, we need to know that it is possible, and that does require that the past is studied as it was as we're beginning to excavate, and I mean excavate. I mean, there's an interview, for example, of an archeologist who excavated Çatalhöyük, which was a more partnership, more Gaelanic society, Ian Hodder, and he wrote an article. I mean, I can only tell you the configuration will look different.

(00:53:34):

The details, I don't know. But I know this, economically, both women and men will be caregivers of children, and both women and men can develop their "careers," their calling, whatever you want to call it. Technology if it doesn't destroy us, which is a big if.

Nate Hagens (00:54:04):

Well, for sure artificial intelligence, which is much in the news, it fits into your domination dynamic.

Riane Eisler (00:54:11):

Absolutely.

Nate Hagens (00:54:12):

Yeah.

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Riane Eisler (00:54:14):

We developed, by the way, a tool which is a self-assessment tool. And I think that I'd like you to take a look at it. Things are very much in flux, but I think we need to understand what beliefs we internalized, what beliefs our family of origin had or has in order, and we also need to understand the possibility of moving toward a partnership way of life.

Nate Hagens (00:54:49):

Can this partnership way of life and the scholarship that you're contributing and offering hold the keys to healing our broken US society? And that's a question that your co-author, Teddie Potter, who's a friend of mine, asked me to ask you.

Riane Eisler (00:55:08):

I think it does, because I think I have enormous faith in human creativity. And I think that if that change coalition of "progressive" people were to use this frame, they would come up with interventions that focus on both tactics, short-term tactics and long-term strategies. I cannot emphasize the importance of the long-term strategies enough. If you look at where the energy, the money, the resources of those pushing us back has gone, if you look at Trump's appeal to his base, it is family control over children.

(00:56:07):

It is rigid gender stereotypes and nothing in between. I mean, it doesn't exist. I mean, let's erase it, when in fact history is full of examples of people who didn't conform to either these even recorded history. Economics, I mean, we're moving towards a more caring economics. But the problem is that even Biden, who his chief economic advisor wrote a wonderful blurb about The Real Wealth of Nations, and so I know that he has been influenced by this, but even when he proposed expanding care for children, expanding parental leave, the Democrats...

(00:57:00):

Even when he proposed caring for children, even when he proposed more parental leave, the Democrats compromised by throwing women and children under the bus. I mean, we've got to stop this. An Australian study showed, for example, that if the work of care were taken into account, it would constitute 50%, and this is the work done primarily by women worldwide. It would constitute 50% of the reported GDP. I mean, this is ridiculous.

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Nate Hagens (00:57:44):

So if you were in charge or as is more the case, you have a microphone right now in front of tens of thousands of viewers, what would be the short-term tactics and the long-term strategy that would possibly lead us toward more of a partnership system in our culture?

Riane Eisler (00:58:04):

First of all is ending abuse and violence of children in families, both boys and girls and everybody in between. I cannot emphasize this enough because it is a linchpin of domination systems and it teaches us to accept, as I said, violence and abuse by those who are bigger and stronger over those who are smaller and weaker.

Nate Hagens (00:58:33):

Just that decision, that can be made by a woman and a man or parents that have a child right there. They don't need anyone else.

Riane Eisler (00:58:41):

It's being made. I mean, think of all the families that are struggling. And in the '60s we mistook rebellion for reconstruction. Today what we talk about is authoritative rather than authoritarian parenting. I mean, children do need some limits, but the teaching of those limits should not involve the contrary of what we're trying to teach, for goodness' sakes.

Nate Hagens (00:59:16):

So other than that, what other tactics and long-term strategies can you suggest?

Riane Eisler (00:59:23):

All right, gender. I think that the work that we're doing... Gary Barker is a friend of mine. He's the president of Equimundo. He did a wonderful TED Talk, which I highly recommend, which he claims was influenced and inspired by me in large part. I think that male socialization, the male entitlement mentality has to be frontally examined because men are entitled as human beings to safety. They shouldn't have to give their lives as in Putin's Russia because some man on top wants more real estate like Putin does.

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(01:00:12):

I mean, domination systems don't work for men either. And besides, men shouldn't have to suppress their humanity. I mean, that part of their humanity, I keep going back to my lovely David and my partner for 45 years. He was such a caring man, and he predicted that we'd go through a period of extreme difficulty as we are seeing right now. But his hope was that the human spirit would prevail, and that's my hope too.

Nate Hagens (01:00:59):

My question is today, being aware of planetary boundaries and climate change and biodiversity and the 10 million species we share the planet with, is it possible that we could extend those social and legal statuses to nature given what you believe?

Riane Eisler (01:01:22):

Well, I think that it is a slippery slope. Because unfortunately, and I don't like that part of nature, there is a food chain and that's built into nature. I think that caring is the key, caring for our natural life support systems. So we're back to this more unified pattern. Because if we care for our life support systems, we're not going to exterminate all of these species because we want ecological balance in the world.

Nate Hagens (01:02:11):

Isn't some of the issue of caring, and I asked you this before, I'll ask it in a slightly different way, get back to how narrow or how wide our definition of self is? Because if you have a wider definition of self, caring becomes obvious how important it is to people around you and to yourself.

Riane Eisler (01:02:35):

I couldn't agree with you more, but a lot of people don't see it that way and people are not taught to see it that way. I mean, we have a system in which... There is, by the way, competition in domination and in partnership systems. But like everything else, it's not dog-eat-dog. I mean, dogs don't eat dogs. It is more I see you excelling at something, like at speaking, I'm a speaker, and I'm inspired by it. I'm inspired to develop. It's that kind of competition. You don't get rid of competition. You don't really get rid of conflict.

Nate Hagens (01:03:26):

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But let me ask you this, for the people watching this who are curious and inspired and motivated by your delineation of domination systems and partnership systems, what advice would you have to them in their own lives that can apply some of your philosophy and scholarship in a practical way in their own lives, male or female, young or old?

Riane Eisler (01:03:53):

Well, I have this advice. If you think of child labor laws, if you think of all the advances that we are making and we have made, it's been due to a small, usually unpopular group of women, men, and people in between. So remember that you have power, the power of the chalice. That is the advice. And remember that not only can systems change, they have changed. We can move more to the partnership side, not perfect, but a heck of a lot better.

Nate Hagens (01:04:46):

Thank you. If you could wave a magic wand, what is one thing you would do to improve the human and planetary futures?

Riane Eisler (01:04:56):

I would change consciousness, and I would teach pattern recognition from early on. Children, babies have pattern recognition. You ask a young child, what is your best relationship and what is your worst relationship? And by golly, they're going to describe a partnership or a domination relationship. The relationship that is your worst relationship is where you're not seen, you're not heard, where you're dismissed, and your best relationship is where you're heard, where you are seen, a partnership relationship, and where you can be a full human being. They get it.

Nate Hagens (01:05:44):

I understand pattern recognition. You're saying that that actually can be taught?

Riane Eisler (01:05:50):

Oh God, yes, it was taught to me. I mean, first of all, be aware that chaos theory of nonlinear dynamics, which influenced me very much, by the way, that when you are dealing with complex living systems, you cannot just understand how they work in

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terms of linear causes and effects, which is a fragmenting methodology that is inherent in our "science" that you have to understand.

(01:06:26):

Look, I introduced a new methodology. It's the study of relational dynamics. Two dynamics are key here. What kind of relationships does a particular social configuration support or inhibit? Secondly, what are the primary systems components that have to be addressed? And that has really informed my work. It's not that complicated.

Nate Hagens (01:07:02):

Well, I'm inspired after this conversation. I didn't understand everything. And since we're both nonlinear humans, I think if we hit record again and start it over, this might be a completely different conversation. But thank you for your lifetime of work and care on these things. We need to work towards a partnership system. Absolutely. Do you have any closing words or thoughts to share with our viewers?

Riane Eisler (01:07:34):

Well, my closing words are really very similar to my advice. We can all be powerful agents of systems transformation from domination to partnership. And it can start with a simple thing, changing the conversation. Have you ever thought of whatever? Whatever will work in your job, in your family, everywhere, with your friends, because I think that change does start with changes in consciousness. Then that leads to different actions, but different actions then lead to wider consciousness. And I by no means claim that I have the final answers, but I know that this frame can be helpful.

Nate Hagens (01:08:33):

And the change in consciousness, which leads to change in actions, actually then changes the consciousness of others in a co-evolutionary way.

Riane Eisler (01:08:43):

Absolutely, and that is exactly what each of us is called to do, but we're also called to do interventions in those four cornerstones.

Nate Hagens (01:08:59):

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I am bumping up your book to my top three in my to read list. Riane Eisler, thank you for your time and for your lifetime of work on a very important topic.

Riane Eisler (01:09:10):

Well, thank you. It's been a pleasure, and I look forward to more.

Outro (01:09:15):

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