

Peace & Joy Unlimited: The Festive in Everyday Life

Charles Keil

Start with the faith which is also a token of humility and an admission that we know nothing, that we are less than atoms in this universe. We are less than atoms, I say, because the atom obeys the law of its being, whereas we in the insolence of our ignorance deny the law of nature. But I have no argument to address to those who have no faith.

Gandhi (Young India, Sept. 24th, 1931)

If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have to struggle, we won't have to pass fruitless idle resolutions. But we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously or unconsciously, the whole world is hungering.

Gandhi (Young India, Nov. 19, 1931:361)

A fairly concrete Abstract

When my old pal and anthropological colleague Robert K. Dentan declared that the forest peoples of Malaysia were better described as anarchs than as anarchists, I caught the distinction almost immediately: we theorize, they not only practice it, they are it. 'Anarchs'r us,' -- but no boast or slogan needed. Now I see it as a crucial redefinition of Paul Goodman's "millennialist" (vs. "utopian") anarchism, a back-to-ontological-basics rephrasing of: 1) Stanley Diamond's *In Search of the Primitive*; 2) Gregory Bateson's great trilogy; 3) all the "tribes without rulers" ethnographies; 4) the Emerson/Nietzsche challenge to pursue "joyous science;" and 5) the accumulating convergence of "green anarchist" (J. Zerzan, D. Jensen, L. Keith) and "Great Transition" (L. Kohr, E.F. Schumacher, R. Hopkins) literatures as five cornerstones (a Pentagon of Pleasure) of the olde and still best paradigm for studying humanity as we recreate ourselves: humble, ignorance-based, "participant observation" and old-fashioned Spradley & McCurdy ethnography. I believe we all need to become anarchs now, celebrating the egalitarian assumptions of the festival in our daily lives, while getting ourselves off the backs of the remaining speciation.

A Concluding Paragraph

'Yep, be the change you wish to see in the world' -- let's get "festive" with the littlest! That's the easy sum up, the "take away." In your own, unique, leaderless ('an-arch') way, take your genius or 'soul' or piece of The Great Spirit, to the nearest child care center and help the staff and kids become a local classless, rotating-leadership, society; express this in dance-song-drumming once, or twice, a few, or many times, each day. As the kids get happy dancing and singing to their own drummers, "different drummers" and styles in each locality, then humanity's endless variety of child cultures can reclaim our true *human Being* (*Humo ludens collaborans*) and give us a chance against the big meltdown, the continuous jump-off-the-cliff of "carrying

capacity;" the ongoing nightmares of sociogenic brain damage, and whatever it is that Gaia may have to do to restore eco-balance globally and locally.

Good News

The good news is that children want most of all to be in synch around 8-11 months old: they want to sing 'vocables' in tight synch on cue; "crow" & "squeel" and explore the sound spectrum; have lots of the legfun, mouthfun and peekaboo that we adults call 'poetry;' want to bang on things; do call and response 'razzberries' with their lips; to nuzzle and be nuzzled; to be bounced and dandled in time to music, etc. etc. etc. You know how toddlers about to toddle are; you were one once yourself. Do you remember using your members flexibly, wildly, crazily? Before you were dismembered, so to speak, by all the verbalizations, literacies, cognitive fetishisms?

Since all of mind is about motion (R. Llianas 2002, Keil 1966), since roughly 66% to 93% of human communication is non-verbal (raising one eyebrow, or two, to convey a ton of skepticism, twitching a lip to devastate with a quick sneer; miming, dancing, gesturing, taking a stance, adjusting your proxemics, doing all the stuff that actors, dancers and mimes are good at; howling, giggling, laughing; shouting, whistling, humming, singing those four 'other channels' the Pirihan up the Amazon (Everett) use to communicate with *feeling*, etc. etc.), don't we owe it to all our children to practice the primary communication skills a few times each day, and more if they want it? It won't be all peace, love and joy; but it can be done with the aim of "Always maintain only a joyful mind." (P.Chodron 1994:92)

I think I can remember Dean Martin telling Jerry Lewis to "Look ashamed!" and Jerry grabbed his head with both hands, pulled it down to look at the ground as he shrivel'd and twisted himself into a pidgeon toe'd pretzel. (Big laughs.) Then he would peek out from under to see if he was "looking ashamed" enough to make Dean and us happy. (More laughter.) Red Skelton, pretending to be two seagulls talking to each other, "Gertrude & Heathcliff", was also a funny teacher of "primary communication." But all these "festive skills" -- mocking the dark side, identifying with spirits, birds, animals and plants, drumming, singing, dancing the seasons and Nature's cycles, horn tooting, honk festing, joke telling, miming, rhyming, funny walking, looking ashamed, goofy talking -- are, by their very Nature, simply communicated and imitated. They don't have to be taught. They just have to be done, for fun, to enhance primary communication in daily life. And reclaim our true *Species Being*.

Maybe one skill, or another, has to be taught rather than picked up by osmosis. But look how easy such a "teaching moment" can be.

Kids in Kenya dance and drum:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4NbzRuXspM> (start about 40 seconds into this)

First of all, they can sing, clap on one and three, dance happily and 'hoppily' without a drummer, or some musicians, or a 'media' boost. Can we?

Make up something in English or Spanish to replace whatever they are singing?

What does the drummer do to it? Steady pulse with right hand.

Stick on top to side of drum for a single or double syncopation.

{pause to teach it on a waste basket or bucket; 100s of songs from the "guiro snap," ETC.}

Dancers can hop on one foot and lift the other, back and forth.

Are there any other "limiting factors," "missing skills" that need to be dealt with?

What's keeping us from doing this? (Probably "time" at the end of the day.)

What's keeping every childcare center from improvising a unique local childculture of rhythmic games, handclapping songs, drum interlocks, dance styles?

Last Sunday (2/3/2013) I got together with a few drummers and we made up some grooves; here's one that starts out as a merengue but morphs into something "different" that we've put in the borntogroove.com website:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKCuB06H1zY&feature=youtu.be>

The festive wrights, skills, techniques, and tools of the peace and joy trade are easily mastered, and the littlest children are eager to use them. But it may be that child care personnel don't have much "will to party" left and are, like many of us, used to being entertained rather than 'entering entrainment,' 'getting into a groove,' 'being funny,' moving from "love to love, and peace to peace," as the Mahatma put it, with style.

So, unlike Gandhi, but post-Rachel-Carson, I do have an argument with those who have no faith, less faith, a different faith, any faith other than my own in "children dancing into the culturally and species diversified future." Since the 1980s I've been trying to figure out and advocate for diverse processes that might create very local child cultures of high energy performance everywhere, but especially in the overdeveloped, over-technologized, over-mediated, hyper-alienated, information-saturated world right here in the USA.

So I do have "an argument to address to those" who don't share the faith just yet and I have just made it.

Let's add some bibliography to the lines of argument.

From Jane Ellen Harrison's *Themis* () and *Prolegomena* () to Marilyn French's *Beyond Power* (1985) and B. Ehrenreich's *Dancing in the Streets* (2006) with all the anthropological marxist-feminist thinkers in between -- see page 4, "reclaiming our species being" where this feminist line is in **bold print**.

From Goethe thru Steiner to Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearances: Studies in Idolatry* (1957/1988): modes & degrees of "participation" in Nature, thru music-dance, rites of passage.

From L. Kohr thru E.F. Schumacher and L. Mumford to Kirkpatrick Sale's *Human Scale* (1980); sma is beautiful, small is inevitable, whoever gets back to human scale quickest wins!

From Dogs in Athens (Socrates/Antisthenes/Diogenes/Crates&Hipparchia) to Quakers, Shakers, Thoreau & Gandhi; see my review of L. Navia's *Antisthenes of Athens* (2001) on line.

From Wm Blake's "fourfold vision" and Karl Marx to Dwight MacDonald's *The Root is Man* and Paul Goodman's *Drawing the Line Once Again* (2010 ed. by Taylor Stoehr) we get an approach to daily life that is both spiritual and intensely practical: "neolithic conservatism," "EdenEternityEqualityEssence Now!," "Paths to Paradise: On the liberation from work," (A.Gorz 1985) -- and a very long stream of slogans and exhortations that all converge on bringing reason, conscience, and joy or the "festive spirit" to our daily and nightly lives from moment to moment, and from now on.

Charlie Keil [author of *Urban Blues* (1966); *Tiv Song* (1979); *Polka Happiness* w. A.V. Keil and Dick Blau (1992); *My Music* w. S. Crafts and D. Cavicchi; *Music Grooves* with S. Feld (1994); *Bright Balkan Morning* w. A.V. Keil, R. Blau and S. Feld (2002); *Born to Groove* with Pat Campbell on the web (2006)] retired from teaching in 1999 and has been morphing into an instrument playing poet who gardens sloppily.

back to the sustainable future

Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason & conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The Ninth Amendment of the US Constitution

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

toward reclaiming reason and conscience
 thru the 'ignorance-based' worldview (W. Berry and W. Jackson)
 from war to peace (Buddha, Socrates, Christ, H. Thoreau, M. Gandhi, M.L. King)
 from big to small (W. James, L. Kohr, E. F. Schumacher)
 from global and regional famines back to local foods (F.M. Lappe)
 from spend & consume back to save and conserve (W. Berry)
 from national energy&dominance values back to local energy&resilience values (R.Hopkins)
from drama back to dromenon (Jane E. Harrison)
from power-over-structures back to pleasure-in-processes (Marylin French)
from 'pure' meanings back to movements-feelings-meanings (Suzanne Langer)
 from professionals back to players (Airtio)
 from commodified music back to community musicking (L. Higgins)
 from alienation back to participation (Owen Barfield)
 from entropy back to sacrament (Gregory Bateson)
 from linear discursive back to cyclical recursive (G. Bateson & John Dial)
 from death wish & resistances back to life force and willingness¹
 from class & hierarchy back to classlessness & equality (K. Marx)
 from *hubris*/tragedy back to humility/comedy (@lcoholics @nonymous)
 from transcendence back to immanence (S. de Beauvoir)
 (from immanence to trance-in-dance)
 from exclusionary thinking back to incorporative thinking (Catherine Ellis)
 from utilitarian to spiritual (Jeremy Rifkin)
 from spurious civilization to genuine prime cultures (E. Sapir)
 from residual to emergent (Raymond Williams)
 from products back to processes (R. Williams)
 from men's endless projects to mind and Nature enough (Angie Keil)
 from efficiency back to sufficiency (Jeremy Rifkin)
 from legal world back to Natural world (Haudenosaunee via John Mohawk)
 from land belongs to us back to we-belong-to-land (aboriginal peoples)
 from unison to lift-up-over-sounding (Kaluli via Steve Feld)
 from anarchism to being anarchists (Semai via R. K. Dentan)
 from addiction to perfection to participatory discrepancies (C. Keil)
 from dismal sciences to joyous sciences (R. Emerson, F. Nietzsche)
 from me to we (Muhammad Ali)

... please redo and fill out this list of where
 and how
 we need to go from here

¹ See S. Freud's books, N. O. Brown's *Life against Death*, etc, D. Dinnerstein's *Mermaid and Minotaur*, S. Pressfield's *theWARofART*, and a growing shelf of "self help" books on self-realization-in-community.