

TOM HERZ
333 Addison Street , San Francisco , CA 94131
Phone: (415) 334-1045 / email: tomherz@sbcglobal.net

June 26, 2007

To the Judges of the Templeton Prize:

With this letter and accompanying documents, I am reactivating my nomination of Dr. Riane Eisler for the Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries about Spiritual Realities.

The Templeton Prize office already has the nomination binder I submitted in 2001 plus some supplementary reactivating information from 2002. The purpose of the enclosed material is to update my nomination with:

- some additional perspectives in this letter on the merit of Dr. Eisler's work as it relates to the Templeton Prize,
- a current curriculum vita of Riane Eisler,
- letter of support from a scholar professionally involved with the endeavors of the Templeton Foundation and highly qualified to assess her worthiness for this award plus his bio, and
- information and excerpts of reviews on Riane Eisler's new (2007) book, *The Real Wealth of Nations*.

For over twenty years, Riane Eisler has broken new ground through her work. The power and originality of it is reflected in the fact that her seminal work, *The Chalice and the Blade*, has been translated into 22 languages. Through her contributions that have expanded the way we understand human relationships, she has provided us a historically based alternative to the bind of an endless power struggle for dominance. The ramifications of this reframing are manifold, and include at its core a spiritual truth. And the impact, as evidenced in the formation and growth of groups in many religious denominations and in other forums that have caught on in many parts of the world, continues to expand in numbers and scope.

Prof. Linda K. George, in her 2002 letter in support of Riane Eisler's nomination for the Templeton Prize made some incisive assessments of her work that deserve restatement here. Prof. George notes that Dr. Eisler's work:

- illustrates "rigorous scholarship..."
- "strips away the illusions of separation from God and each other and calls us to a higher purpose" that transcends religions, governments, and specific culture
- and the many followers she has inspired is "dedicated to transforming the culture on the planet to one guided by the highest moral and ethical principles."

Prof. George points out that unlike most scientists who "concentrate on manageable research questions, Dr. Eisler tackles the big questions" and "brings clarity and understanding to them...She is showing us how God loves. I truly believe that Dr. Riane Eisler is the sociohistorical equivalent of Albert Einstein and that her contributions will have equivalent impact on how we come to think about life and its purpose."

Through research and analysis in her earlier writing, which enables us to better understand the roots of the essential teachings of some of the world's major religious traditions, Dr. Eisler's more recent work has moved further in the direction of how she defines "spirituality which is putting love into action" and how

to implement this. She does this by providing an analysis of what conditions promote the kinds of behaviors that are at the core of most religious traditions: caring, nonviolence, compassion, empathy.

Eisler has shown that creating these spiritually nurturing conditions requires a new way of looking at our past, present and the possibilities for our future. This is why it begins with a story of cultural origins that highlights our enormous biological capacities for caring, creativity, and empathy. But it extends beyond this, as her focus has always been on where we are going.

She manifests this by formulating practical steps we must take to create the conditions that support rather than inhibit those capacities that make us truly human, as noted above. Eisler develops this further in her new book, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (2007), which shows the urgent need for an economic system that gives visibility and value to the most essential human work: caring for people and nature.

The overarching spiritual dimension that Eisler illuminates is powerfully expressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his comments of praise for this book:

"The Real Wealth of Nations gives us a template for the better world that we have been so urgently seeking. As practical as it is hopeful, this brilliant book shows how we can build economic systems that meet both our material and spiritual needs. It illuminates the way to a bold and exciting new future."

Eisler also bridges theory and practice with projects such as the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV), which highlights "the need to change traditions of violence in our primary parent-child and man-woman relations – where people first learn what is and is not normal, possible and moral – since this is foundational to creating what we today call cultures of peace." Many internationally known leaders including Archbishop Tutu, two advisors to the Dalai Lama and representatives of the other major world faiths are on the SAIV Council (<http://www.saiv.net/council.htm>).

Prof. Charles Taylor, 2007 Templeton Prize honoree, has noted that "the culture of the humanities and the social sciences has often been surprisingly blind and deaf to the spiritual." For over two decades, Riane Eisler has demonstrated how integrally related these endeavors are. In understanding the current state of the world and the phenomenon of extreme violence that Prof. Taylor has addressed, we can gain tremendous insight and awareness of its roots and the dynamics that continue to help it flourish in the work that Dr. Eisler has done. My 2001 nominating essay treats some of this material as well as Eisler's illumination of the spiritual foundations of humanity's capacity for love and caring. Her current efforts provide blueprints for people who are interested in putting principles into concrete action in the world.

Prof. Taylor's selection as the 2007 winner fortuitously raises the profile of philosophy in these pursuits of vital concern to the Templeton enterprise. Dr. Eisler, a cultural historian and evolutionary theorist grapples with some of the same basic dilemmas using different methodologies.

From the perspectives and examples given above, as well as in my original nominating essay, and in the many letters of support, it seems abundantly clear that Dr. Eisler has exhibited a freshness, creativity, innovation and effectiveness in creating new structures of understanding God's love and the relationship of the Creator to the ongoing creation of the universe while simultaneously releasing new and vital impulses into old religious structures and forms of many faiths. The time has come to recognize her on a scale befitting the magnitude of her contributions and achievements.

Sincerely,

Prof. Tenzin Robert Thurman, Ph.D.

Professor of Religion at Columbia University, Buddhist scholar and one of the presenters of the inaugural 2001 series of Templeton Research Lectures on the Constructive Engagement of Science and Religion given at the Center of Study of Science and Religion at Columbia University.

Dr. Thurman is the Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies in the Department of Religion at Columbia University, President of the Tibet House U.S., a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Tibetan civilization, and President of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies. He remains a close lifelong friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Professor Thurman's scholarly and popular writings focus on the "inner revolution" that individuals and societies successfully negotiate when they achieve enlightenment. He defines this inner revolution as accurate insight into the true nature of reality and determined compassion for the suffering beings. He also works toward what he terms a "Second Renaissance," which he sees currently taking place as Western culture goes beyond the 14th century European discovery of the natural sciences of the ancient Greeks that catalyzed the "first renaissance" to discover and apply in practice the advanced "inner science" of ancient Indian culture.

Thurman's work and insights are grounded in more than 35 years of serious academic scholarship. He has a B.A., A.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard and has studied in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India and the United States. A long-time advocate of Buddhist monasticism, in 1962, Thurman became the first American ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist monk. He gave up his robes after several years, however, when he discovered he could be most effective in the American equivalent of the monastery, the university.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Department of Religion
Office of the Chair

June 21, 2007

Templeton Prize Judges
c/o Tom Herz
333 Addison Street
San Francisco CA 94131
tomherz@sbcglobal.net

Dear Sir/Madam:

I write to join Thomas Herz and others and enthusiastically nominate Dr. Riane Eisler for the Templeton Prize. In the past I have nominated His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and it is possible that previous letters of mine supporting the choice of His Holiness may be in folders of ongoing nominations for him. I am still of course, highly supportive of His Holiness' nomination.

Dr. Eisler is a very different case, also absolutely worthy in her own right. In fact, I'm sure His Holiness himself would argue to award her the prize before awarding it to him! From what I have read, Thomas Herz and other distinguished nominators have made all the essential arguments for Eisler's case – no need for me to repeat them. I would like to add only a few personal observations.

Dr. Eisler's first best seller, *The Chalice and the Blade*, was a revelation to me, departing from the breakthrough archeological discoveries of the great Maria Gimbutas, discoveries of the many millennia of matrilineal societies that *peacefully* flourished in Europe's heartland before the arrival of violent male-dominated societies around ten millennia ago, as I recall, the Kurgan chariot conquerors. Eisler went beyond Gimbutas interpretively, overthrowing convincingly the entrenched notion that violence and war are inevitable and interminable in principle among human beings, and providing a compelling vision of the "partnership society" our planet is growing toward, wherein woman and man will work together as equals, the female perspective bringing nonviolence, caring, compassion and other such values to the fore and getting the men to calm themselves down.

Her vision for the first time provided a powerful historical and socio-biological perspective supporting the teachings of Jesus Christ given in his Beatitudes on the Mount, along with Shakyamuni Buddha, Mencius (if not Confucius), Lao-tzu, and others, that the true nature of human beings is gentle, loving, altruistic, and joyful in the bounty of God

Columbia University, Religion Department, 80 Claremont Avenue,
New York, NY 10027, 212-851-4122

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and the universe, and that violence, militarism, and power-mongering is the business of Caesars who are short-term destructive of others and long-term self-destructive – not to mention bound for hell in future life. Our modern, militaristic, patriarchal societies have strayed so far off the true teachings of the great prophets and sages because our scientists have foisted upon us as if realistic and well-grounded a picture of a violent, savage humanity that requires brute force to control – it is a picture promoted by the so-called “Legalists” in ancient China, the Kautilya school of statecraft in India, in contravention of the wiser teachings of the early Confucians and Taoists, and of the Buddha and the Upanishadic sages. But these “modern” scientists have ignored the woman, and the feminine side of human nature, without which there is no humanity at all.

So Eisler deserves the recognition that her spiritual and scientific insight corrects this unrealistic distortion, and provides real hope for humanity, currently caught up in seemingly hopeless struggles against nature itself and between mutually alienated “civilizations,” that create scenarios of doomsday that could well become self-fulfilling prophecies. And she not only has made her perspective widely known through her writings and tireless travels and speeches, she has spread her spiritual and historical insight through other fields of knowledge. Her latest contribution, for example, *The Real Wealth of Nations*, demonstrates persuasively how the partnership model, the *peaceful* way of life that is possible when man and woman are in true balance and harmony, is the true source of sustainable human thriving on this beautiful planet.

Theologically speaking, world-wide patriarchy has hidden for too long the feminine side of God, the Ultimate Absolute, reducing Her to a “Holy Ghost,” an invisible womb of Voidness, an inexpressible Tao, and so on. It is time Her foremost living representative was recognized for the great “Progress in Spiritual, Scientific, and Humanistic Understanding” she has achieved.

I therefore recommend Riane Eisler for the Prize in 2007 with heartfelt enthusiasm and no reservations whatsoever.

With all best wishes,

Sincerely,

Robert A. F. Thurman

Robert A. F. Thurman
Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Buddhist Studies
Chair, Department of Religion

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