Hopi Indian Witchcraft and Healing

On Good, Evil, and Gossip

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One of the abiding problems in the study of American Indians is that it is plagued by stereotyping and romanticism. In the history of ideas in Europe and the United States, negative as well as positive stereotyping has been called "primitivism." Much of my own work has been an attempt to get beyond primitivism in order to get to know real human beings, whether in the field or in the history books (Geertz 2004a). I have called for a "deconstruction of the Exotic" in the sense, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz once argued, that we study the mundane worlds of various peoples in order to understand our own. I suggest that in that process we come to understand human beings and their worlds. Thus, the deconstruction process is followed by a reconstruction process. I have elsewhere called that process a "reconstruction of the Exotic," but I think a better phrase is a "reconstruction of the Human." By this I mean generalized insights gained on the basis of "accurate ethnography, authentic familiarization with the worldviews and scriptures of the world's religions, and no-nonsense knowledge of how believers actually behave" (Geertz 1994, 19).

Perhaps nowhere is there more of a need of this sobering process than in the study of Hopi Indian religion and culture. For reasons sometimes clear but often opaque, the Hopis have been singled out by Europeans and Americans as a most special people indeed. Despite concerted efforts against this attitude by both scholars and Hopis, the stereotyping continues unabated. Today it is the New Age with its New Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men, but I fear that it will only be replaced by something else tomorrow. As I reluctantly concluded in a paper on moving beyond primitivism:

> Despite the urgent necessity to move beyond primitivism, I do not think that this is something we are capable of accomplishing. It would require more than Western and non-Western scholars are prepared to offer, and it would involve struggling against massive tides of general cultural values and historical contingencies around the globe. . . . Moving beyond primitivism today, however, would primarily mean moving beyond primitivism in the positive sense, in other words, in the sense that *promotes the romantic idea of indigenous cultures*, which I have argued here keeps real indigenous peoples out of the picture just as effectively as the scientific racism of the nineteenth century! . . . I suggest that a way to move beyond primitivism is not along the path of intuitive empathy, creative hermeneutics, the misunderstood interplay of mutually absolute discourses, or misanthropic ecological ideologies, but rather through a radical revitalization of the Enlightenment project. (Geertz 2004a, 61–62)

Following along the lines of a recent contribution on deconstructing primitivism in the study of Hopi Indian religion (Geertz 2008b), the present essay will explore evil in Hopi thought. The Hopis are, of course, no more evil than other people, but they have often been portrayed as being exceedingly harmonious and good by people who don't know any better. It is therefore instructive to see how Hopis deal with the problem of evil, and, hopefully, along the way we will gain insight into real human beings.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Hopi Indian religious thought is based on a vision of *suyanisqatsi*, a "harmonious and tranquil life." The crucial element in this vision is the concept of the heart, *unangwa*. The ideal person embodies all of the qualities of what it means to be Hopi, in other words, a well-behaved person who is humble, good-humored, diligent, and so on. Such a person is called *pam loma'unangway'ta*, "he/she has a good heart." This good and pure-hearted person is also essential to the proper performance of ritual activities. Ultimately, the ritual activities of good-hearted people maintain the causal cycle that brings rain, which nourishes the crops and feeds the people so that they can live and grow and become well-integrated members of the clan and society.

Ritual persons have been initiated into clan and secret society knowledge and are thus able to "work for life" (*pam qatsit aw hintsaki*, "he/she works for life"), in other words, to maintain human life through the proper performance of rituals. But knowledge is not the only requirement. Perhaps more important is the requirement to maintain a proper state of mind during the ritual that focuses on the above-mentioned causal cycle and on the goals of each particular ceremony. A ceremonial dance sponsor is called *tunatyay'taqa*, "he/she who has an intention." The Hopis say: "When one carefully pays heed, and always concentrates on it, then he will be the one to have influence on these clouds, this is what they say" (Geertz 1986, 49; Geertz and Lomatuway'ma 1987, 320).

If someone disturbs the causal chain, for instance, if a sponsor is unknowledgeable or immoral or evil, then the dance will fail and the rain clouds will stay away from the area, thus causing damage to the whole fabric of life. People who do such things on purpose practice an evil life. Such persons are called *nukustunatyay'taqa*, "he/she has an evil intention." The evil life that they follow is composed of a causal chain mirroring that of the good life. Thus, the *suyanisqatsi* is off-set by the *koyaanisqatsi*, "corrupt life, life out of balance." These two causal chains are in opposition to each other and, as such, represent the good religious life and the evil magic one (cf. Geertz 2003, 330–33; 2004b, 308–10). The struggles that they represent are often mobilized through gossip.

EVIL AND WITCHCRAFT

To the Hopis, witches or evil-hearted persons deliberately try to destroy social harmony by sowing discontent, doubt, and criticism through evil gossip as well as by actively combating medicine men. Thus, the downside of Hopi ethics is witchcraft and slander. One anthropologist called this spiteful gossip a social cancer (Eggan 1956, 362–63). Hopis feel intimidated and powerless by the thought and fear of occult attack by witches or sorcerers.

The Hopis believe that witches attack victims from their own matrilineage or closest household members. Anthropologist Alice Schlegel has argued that the archetypal witch is the mother's brother, and the preferred victim is the sister's daughter (1979, 129). Although my own material is silent on the subject, it nevertheless rings true in terms of Hopi matrilineal logic, in which the sister-brother pair is archetypal.

Whatever the exact nature of Hopi witchcraft is, one finds that suspicion and gossip often destabilize or dampen family and interpersonal relations.

Before describing a few examples from my fieldwork and the literature, a few words on conceptions of Hopi witchcraft are necessary.[1]

Individuals who act suspiciously, are unfriendly, have been seen crying for no apparent reason, or have mysterious things happen around them are assumed by Hopis to be witches or sorcerers (I will call them witches for short, both male and female). The stories about them are legion, and the Hopis constantly talk about them, eternally trying to guess who they are and what they are up to. They are called *popwaqt*, the plural of *powaqa*, "witch" or "sorcerer." They are unequivocally evil, casting spells, causing illness, killing babies, and destroying the life cycle. They practice *powaqqatsi*, the "life of evil sorcery." The Hopis call them *kwitavi*, "shit people."

The term *powaqa* means a "person who transforms."[2] The root, *powa*, implies change, for good or for bad. By extension, a *powaqa* is one who transforms his or her environment to evil ends. More precisely, a witch is a person who kills close family relatives in order to prolong his or her own life by four years. By killing, I mean causing through occult means an unnatural death, such as stillbirth, infants dying of ordinary illnesses, or healthy adults suffering from strange illnesses. Witches are also the occult cause of unusual circumstances, such as hailstorms on a sunny day, extreme drought, or people suffering bad fortune.

Witches belong to a coven or secret brotherhood that practices its rituals at night at a place called Palangwu, identified by Hopis as Canyon de Chelly. They perform initiation rituals on new members, kidnap children in order to raise them in the secret order, and kidnap recently deceased women to rape them or perform other despicable acts. Witches have two hearts, one human and the other animal (the witch is called *lööq unangwa'ytaqa*, "two-hearted person"). The animal heart allows them to transform themselves into their power animal and do supernatural things. If a witch is discovered in the act of bewitching someone or in the act of doing something that indicates he or she is a witch, such as wandering aimlessly in the desert crying in despair, the witch will try to bribe the person who has discovered him or her. If that person accepts the bribe, he or she will also become a witch.

Hopis are very reluctant to confront witches, and they do not con-

duct witch hunts. This would only backfire on the hunters, whose families and fortunes would subsequently suffer. Oddly, the best protection against witches, besides various prophylactic measures such as leaving uncovered cans of urine next to house doorposts, is to behave themselves, in other words, to be the self-deprecating, unambitious, friendly, and hospitable person of Hopi ideals. That way, witches won't get jealous and try to attack them. Witchcraft, then, besides explaining evil and misfortune, simultaneously encourages Hopis to act morally and ethically correct.

When talking to Hopis and reading descriptions in the literature of people suspected of witchcraft, it is striking that witchcraft beliefs are an integral part of Hopi gossip, with all the classic aspects of slander. Don Talayesva, well known in Hopi studies for his detailed and fascinating autobiography, edited by Leo W. Simmons (1942), described someone he suspected of being a witch. His name was Nathaniel, and he appears several times in Talayesva's autobiography:

> I also had some trouble with a Two-Heart. One of Nathaniel's children had died and he let the missionaries bury it. The people remembered his queer behavior and avoided him as a witch. He lived alone much of the time, teased children who came near him, threw stones at neighbors' dogs, and tried to be too familiar with some of the women when the men were away. He appeared less friendly to me, and once when I spoke to him at the store, he just stared at me and walked away. So I decided to keep a close watch on him. (Simmons 1942, 291)

It is difficult to see how this has anything to do with witchcraft. In fact, Nathaniel could be a typical, unfriendly neighbor anywhere in the world. Even Talayesva acted like him on several occasions. This is clearly an example of a concatenation of hearsay, odd behavior, spite, and jealousy—the right combination of ingredients, in fact, of gossip, rumor, and slander.

But the Hopis believe that witches exist, and even though you will be hard-pressed to find a Hopi who will admit to being a witch, confessions of guilt have been recorded in the literature. The confessions I know of are secondhand, so they may just be rumor in disguise. However, let me quote one of my informants. This person was employed in a public job at one of the villages. His position encouraged the gossip

mongering in which he excelled. He was also a spiteful man. One day, I was talking to him alone in his office. We were discussing the Traditionalists, whom he hated with a vengeance. At one point he was overcome by an emotional outburst:

> I don't use the white man's way. I won't take them to court. I use the Indian way! I run them right into the ground [dramatically pointing to the floor]! I say certain prayers and do certain rituals. That gives them trouble and makes them sick. You can see, already a couple of them have died! There are still a couple of them to go. You can call it black magic, but they leave me no alternative![3]

This took me by surprise because the whole idea of Hopi witchcraft is that it is secret and thrives on rumor. Admitting duplicity could cost him his life and occult power—that is, if he really was a witch. Perhaps he thought it would be alright to admit this to a white man. Perhaps he was lying. One thing is clear: it was no joke.

Hopis are reluctant to confront suspected witches. The usual strategy is to act good. Talayesva and his wife, Irene, were very unfortunate in their attempts to have children. During their long marriage, they lost all four of their children at very early ages. Their misfortune was a constant source of pain and anguish, and the only logical explanation for the deaths was witchcraft. The question was, Who was the witch? Irene's family suspected Talayesva himself, but they found out that the killer of the first child was thought to be Irene's uncle. The important point here is how Talayesva reacted:

> We soon discovered the murderer—Irene's uncle. . . . When Irene told me this, I tried to keep the news to myself; and I watched the man who killed our baby. I avoided him as much as possible, but I was very polite whenever he was around, hoping thus to gain his pity and soften his spite. (Simmons 1942, 262)

Thus, we see that even when he thinks he knows who killed his newborn infant, Talayesva's only weapon is to act politely! However, it should be noted at this point that the Hopis believe that witches will be horribly punished after death.

The all-pervasive fear of witches is clearly illustrated in an example from one of my taped interviews. The speaker is a thirty-year-old medicine man aspirant from Walpi. His name is White Hawk, and he is a

member of the Tobacco Clan.[4] He was an apprentice of his maternal uncle, who was a medicine man, but as time passed, White Hawk suffered from three occult attacks by sorcerers who were trying to prevent him from becoming a medicine man. When his uncle died, White Hawk was no longer under his protection, and he was convinced that a further attack, which would be the fourth (four being a sacred number), might successfully drive him mad. So he quit his apprenticeship. As he told me:

> All these people are living here on this earth. There is never anything good here. People pick on you. They make you sick. These evil people are forever looking for victims. They are always carrying their olivella shells around.[5] You can't ever have anything nice. They don't like it, and they curse you.[6] When you look around, you see that there are so many of them! No wonder they hurt you for something you have. It's not *their* belongings that we use, it's not *their* money that we have. It is your own effort that you use in taking care of your wife and children.
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> People are always having bad dealings with each other. They are always bewitching each other. Especially the evil-hearted ones.[7] I know some of them, I know who they are. You can tell who they are. This is what our uncle told us. They will identify themselves. They will take your money away. They will do bad things to you. They will profit from you. They forget these benefits when they hurt you. They move off a bit and then turn around and say bad things about you.[8] They don't come and say things directly to you. They keep a distance and gossip about you. Words don't hurt the speaker when said from a distance.[9] If he's a mean person, he would never dare to come and confront you himself.[10] He's a coward, which is how he shows that he is a mean person. All he thinks about is hurting somebody. And when a person has a baby, then they go for it too. They go to the girl or the boy, and when the baby is born, they attack it, and the baby has convulsions or goes out of its mind. All of this because our mothers, fathers, grandmothers or grandfathers are like that.[11]
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> And people don't think about this when they gossip about each other. They have no decency. They say, "This person is like this, this person is like that," and they act like they have no faults of their own. But when you look at them, you find out that they have

done many wrongs. They don't remember this, but always have something bad to say about you. They always make fun of other people. But you just look at them and smile.[12]

Once again, what are we actually witnessing in this example, if not an atmosphere permeated with witchcraft fears and fueled by gossip, rumor, and slander? We see a mixture of confidential information, troubling yet unverified facts, misunderstandings, fantasy, and irritating, egotistic neighbors. However, gossip and witchcraft are clearly about proper and improper, good and bad, right and wrong. They are, without doubt, mechanisms of ethics and morality.

GOSSIP AS NARRATIVE ETHICS

My interest in gossip as religious narrative grew out of detailed work with the social and political aspects of Hopi eschatological prophecies.[13] In my book *The Invention of Prophecy* (1992), I tentatively argued that gossip could be viewed as a kind of narrated ethics expressing more or less defined models of thought and behavior. Gossip concerns social and personal identities cast in the light of conversational narrative. It defines and redefines these identities in terms of contemporary issues and helps people work their way through baffling problems, normative principles, and potential interpretations. This all sounds as if gossip is nice and cozy, and sometimes it is. Other times it is not. But even malicious gossip plays by the same rules—which is why people are so easily deceived by it. Gossip is a two-edged social instrument that ensures the ongoing socialization of the individual. It is a powerful and merciless instrument.

Recent groundbreaking insights in neurobiology, psychotherapy, and psychiatry together with classical insights in social psychology and psychological anthropology now provide us with the tools to flesh out the nature of gossip. The literature on narrative, cognition, and culture is enormous, and I won't go into it here. The issues relevant to my focus on gossip are the role of narrative in defining selves, its role in furthering the primary embodied and affective processes experienced by infants and children, and its role in social cohesion.

Narrative can be approached from a variety of levels. In the humanities, we have somewhat obstinately stuck to one level only, namely, the linguistic. By linguistic I mean semiotic, narratological, and literary.

There are good reasons for this, of course. Narratives are, after all, well, narratives, that is, stories, written or told, with plots, characters, and various narrative ploys. Psychological linguistics and speech-act theory, however, have shown that there are other fundamental aspects to narratives. In brief, these aspects can be summarized as the *social* or *pragmatic* contexts of narration. In these contexts, issues of text comprehension, identity, and the construction of selves play central roles.

Gossip is a subgenre of narrative. It introduces aspects that are missing from written or formal storytelling, namely, a series of linguistic and paralinguistic techniques that invite listeners to participate and cocreate. Stories in such contexts are conversational, ongoing, constantly interrupted, challenged, judged, and *emergent*, as literary theorist Rukmini Bhaya Nair has argued (2002, 5).

Narrative also shapes and socializes identities and selves. As Peggy J. Miller and colleagues wrote:

> Of all the intersections of narrative and self, perhaps none is more common than that which occurs in ordinary talk when people relate to one another their personal experiences. . . . Stories of this sort . . . provide one widely available means by which people create, interpret, and publicly project culturally constituted images of self in face-to-face interaction. . . . There may be a special affinity between narrative and self such that narrative can be said to play a privileged role in the process of self-construction. (1990, 292)

Anthropologist Elinor Ochs and psychologist Lisa Capps agree and claim further that "narratives situate narrators, protagonists, and listener/readers at the nexus of morally organized, past, present, and possible experiences" (1996, 22). Narratives, they argue, are versions of reality where protagonistic selves are coauthored. Such narratives, including gossip, consist of identity-in-the-making.

Finally, there are cultural aspects to narrative. Some stories are so universal in scope that they are capable of reaching across cultural boundaries, but they are basically products of particular cultures. They draw not only on particular languages and cultural themes and characters but also on specific cultural assumptions. Nair proposed the term *impliculture*, a take-off on Grice's theory of *conversational implicature* (1975, 1978, 1981), as designating cultural inferencing in narrative. Impliculture also expresses how cultural conventions govern narratives:

> [With] the concept of *impliculture*, or cultural implicativeness . . . we can theorize particular cultural communities as groups engaged in a complex polyphonic conversation. A great deal depends on conveying the unstated, or the understated, in such an ongoing group conversation, since insider status within the community would come from listeners' picking up specific *implicultural* meanings, rather than simply deducing the general Gricean meaning implicatures. . . . Or to put it another way, we might say that our narratives reveal a fragile "self" to the extent that they fail to exploit listeners' tacit knowledge, not only of the standard maxims of conversational implicature, but of the special conventions of narrative impliculture. (Nair 2002, 188)

Upon exploring the possibilities of this approach, Nair concludes:

> Our basic identities are conferred on us by the myriad tales we hear and narrate throughout our lifetimes. The "self," in this sense, is a "center of narrative gravity" created by each individual at the intersection(s) where story-telling lines of force meet. . . . [N]arrative . . . functions as proto-theory. It works by introducing us to "primitive" but foundational versions of biological theory . . . , political theory . . . , moral theory . . . , aesthetic theory . . . and so forth. . . . Cognitively, narrative seems to have been designed as an evolutionary mechanism to probe experience and create competing theories about the world, especially the world of *emotional experience*, which is so crucial to cultural survival. . . . They tie in causal, logical explanations of actual concrete "events" with emotional affect in a powerful way, so that the "lessons" taught to us as children, and then throughout our lives through stories, lay the cornerstones for most of our crucial beliefs and reactions. (2002, 343–44)

Nair also argues that storytelling is also a mind-reading technique. According to this view, she writes, narrative "affords an inexpensive, everyday means whereby we may gain emotional *practice* at empathizing with others, as well as build a *theory* which 'explains' the future consequences of our acts" (Nair 2002, 346).

Following this multilevel approach, it might be helpful for us to distinguish the characteristics of gossip on various levels as well. The *first*

level concerns the narratology of gossip. Generally, gossip proceeds along the classical schema of narrative sequence: somebody does something to someone; or someone refrains from acting in circumstances otherwise requiring action; or events and circumstances just happen to someone. In other words, the protagonist acts, refrains from acting, or is acted upon. The resolution is often wanting because gossip is breaking news, events (almost) as they occur, often not as yet completed. The allure of gossip is the possibility of deciding on someone's behalf what that person ought or ought not do. And if the narrative sequence has been resolved already, then the other alluring possibility is to judge the appropriateness of paths chosen by the protagonist.

The *second level* concerns the themes of gossip. In principle, the variety is endless, but there are a few basic themes that we never seem to be tired of. They represent, as it were, epistemic fixations. These are matters concerning social relations, social status, and existential situations. Who is cheating on whom, who has been given a bad deal by whom, who has risen in the ranks or fallen in disfavor, who has acquired some item of wealth or gone bankrupt, who has become ill or been struck by misfortune, accident, or death.

The *third level* concerns the principles at work behind the scenes, so to speak. We do not just tell stories about other people. Unless the narrator is a compulsive gossiper, there is usually a point to the story. I don't mean a point in terms of narrative competence, rather, a point in terms of cultural competence. Thus, the principles involved are justice, fairness, morality, and proper or acceptable behavior; and, of course, the backside of these principles. The more, the better.

The *fourth level* might be called the embodied level. What I mean by this is that we are not dispassionately telling or listening to what factually happens to other people. We are interested in participating in their dilemmas, however secondary or fictive that participation might be. Our bodies, emotions, and morals force us to participate. If we know the protagonist well, or if the matter is urgent, we might even be persuaded to act in real-time contexts. There is something visceral about our fascination with gossip, and there are good neurobiological reasons for this. Furthermore, the feelings aroused by gossip are entertaining, stimulating, and primal.

Finally, the *fifth level* is the cognitive and social-psychological level. Here we find the functions of gossip (and narrative in general) in terms

of consciousness, the construction and coconstruction of selves, and the monitoring of social relations. Most, if not all, gossip involves an autonoetic quality, however indirect it might be. The stories told about others are really stories that directly or indirectly reflect back on the narrating person. These are not formal autobiographies. They are implicative, implicultural, assumed attitudes and stances that display the narrator's own person (or one of the narrator's personae, at least). Listeners, however, also have something to say about this, and often do. So autonoetic display can be, and often is, challenged, thus becoming coconstructed.[14]

MEDICINE PEOPLE

What are the witches' opponents like? Basically, they also use occult power, *tuhisa*, but they use it for the good of the people, especially their relatives. They use their powers to heal the sick or the possessed or the bewitched. They can also intuit the future or find hidden or lost things or persons. Their protector is the great god Maasaw, whereas witches are protected by Iisaw, Witch Coyote.

There are several kinds of medicine people: *tuuhikya*, "medicine man/woman," *povosqa*, "seer" or "finder," and *yaya'*, "magician."[15] The latter is a now-extinct healing society that excelled in magical tricks. The *povosqa* is so named because he or she uses a quartz crystal to discern pathogenic weapons and arrows in the patient's body. *Tuuhikya* consists of the unspecified object prefix *tuu-* and *hikya*, "vitalize something." The job of the healer is *powata*, "to make right, cure, exorcise," so that patients can be *powalti*, "become purified, healed," and *powa'iwta*, "be purified, be back to normal," in other words, be restored to a state of balance, *suyanisqatsi*. Mischa Titiev wrote that "since insanity is the most obviously aberrant of all forms of conduct, it follows that all types of paranoia are regarded as having been caused by witchcraft" (1942, 553).

Thus, healers are conceived in terms of their opposition to witches, who by definition strike their victims with illness, misfortune, madness, and death. But medicine people are often held in suspicion because of the close connection between sorcery and curing (Titiev 1942, 552).[16] This is amply confirmed by my own experience. In fact, there are a surprising number of features that witches and healers have in common. Besides the use of power to transform, there is the whole ritual

side of both types, in other words, initiation rituals, the use of song, the types of implements used, and so on. But this should hardly be surprising, because both types simply use the same methods and rituals as are used in the normal ceremonies. Then there is the question of recruiting. In principle, healers are recruited voluntarily. However, one of my informants was already destined to be a medicine woman even before she was born. And she also had to suffer through many involuntary sessions of learning from her medicine man uncle as a child. She had to repeat these lessons correctly before she was allowed to go out and play with her friends. She thought that he was simply telling her stories at the time, but she came to realize that he was in fact educating her on medicinal plants, proper rituals, prayers, and songs as well as stories about spirits and power. The difference with a witch, of course, is that the child recruit is abducted without its knowledge.

The greatest difference between a witch and a medicine man is that the former has two hearts and the latter a single heart. This was confirmed in the 1940s by Titiev. Ekkehart Malotki quoted a Hopi contemporary who said:

> Medicine men can also have animal familiars. They receive the aid of game animals or other creatures that roam the land. As a rule, the animal called upon as a godfather is that which one desires to equal in power. With the help of this animal the medicine man then practices healing. . . . However, while medicine men will call on the powers of these animals, they never change into them. Still, they possess their hearts and may dress like them as they treat a patient. They have incorporated the magic skill of these animals. On the other hand, when sorcerers select animals as their godfathers, they really change into them and go about in their guise. (1993, 164–65)

My informant Annie, however, had a different opinion on these things. She was a highly gifted medicine woman with psychic abilities. She was constantly struggling with her powers to bewitch others or to cast spells. She made no secret of the fact that she had these abilities, and some even came to her to ask for them.

Once when I was sitting in the kitchen at her house below Walpi, a portly old woman came for consultation. She was Annie's grandfather's sister. They talked for a while, and the woman gave Annie twenty dol-

lars. Then the woman told me in English that some lady was flirting with the workers at the community building: "Her eyes are red, sometimes green and yellow. The yellow is the worst kind." After she left, I asked Annie what the old lady was talking about. She told me the following story. This woman has a son who was a recently retired career army soldier. He was employed as maintenance man of the village and was usually at the community building. He was also an alcoholic. The girl who was flirting with the men was a homely girl rejected by most men. She was really after the old lady's son. The son, however, wasn't interested in her except when he got drunk, and then he couldn't resist her. The old lady thought that the girl was a witch. She came to Annie to ask her to cast a spell on the girl. But Annie refused. Instead, she offered to counsel the woman's son! Annie told the old woman that her son and the girl met often, and so she would not interfere, if that's what they wanted. The woman told me about the girl's eyes because she thought they were witch eyes. Annie told me that she would warn the girl about the old woman because the latter was "sort of evil" herself and didn't care whether she hurt people.[17]

Getting back to animal familiars, I asked Annie once whether she ever went into the desert to get power from animal spirits. She replied:

> Yes, when I need power, I get it from the bear, you know, my clan animal. I get the wisdom from the spider to know how to help people. And when I have to go somewhere fast, I use the cougar. If someone should catch me, they would find a cougar. And if they would kill the cougar, they would really kill me. It's really me.[18]

I will restrict myself to two themes with short examples selected from the autobiography of this medicine woman.[19] The first concerns her healing philosophy:

> So that is what I am working with. People are coming every day. When someone is sick they come to me for help. And they come at all hours of the day and night. I am thinking of setting consultation schedules by appointment only and setting a fee. It's especially my families on both sides who misuse me and don't pay me. All of my patients interfere with my family life and disrupt it. I think I will put an ad in the paper.[20] Since the medicine man over at Second Mesa died, a lot of Second Mesa people have been coming. A doctor in Tuba is also sending Navajos to me.

My uncle taught me about all these medicines: what time of the year you go get them, where you can get them. I gather these things for myself. My grandfathers and uncles are also medicine men. It is through them that I know these things. And it is with the help of my clan, the Bear, that I am doing these things. I work with his strength. And I work with the Spider's knowledge. And I work with the Cougar's strength. All these animals and the grass. And all these things that fly. They tell me what to do with their strength and their knowledge. And the earth, who is our mother, she is doing things for us. I am not doing these things myself, healing my people. I also pray to the one that is leading us and taking care of us.[21] I am always praying to him. It is to him that I come for mercy, for the lives of my children. If he feels that it is right, then the person is healed.

And if one is nearing death, I pray that he does not suffer before he goes home. When someone is nearing the end of his life, and I find out, then I try to make a path for him so that he does not suffer. Life is hard, and when a person comes here on earth, he comes only once. Once he is gone, he will never come back again. So I have put the life of people first.

My uncles used to tell me, "If somebody comes into the house, make them feel at home. When you have something, feed them. Or give them something to drink. Have them sit down. Take care of the people right." This is what they tell you. "Don't hurt them. Don't hurt the people, have respect for them. Because they are the ones that are asking you for help. But if you hurt someone, then you must pay for your crime. If it is someone evil that is fighting you, then you have the right to fight back. That is his misdoing, and he will pay for it. You are working for life, so you mustn't be temperamental. If you are temperamental, you will break lives." All these things were taught to me. And I think about these things as I work with someone. It is for saving and helping their life.

The second theme concerns how she battles witches:

One time my husband and I went to see my assistant lead a ceremony for his first time. His uncles were all envious of him because they didn't get the responsibility. None of them were thought to be good enough: one was weak-willed, another was always drunk and so on.[22] But that didn't prevent them from wanting to harm

him. They always bugged him about how he should do this and that. When I saw him coming, I became afraid. I felt light-headed and my eyes twitched. This meant that someone had evil intentions for him. I told my husband, and he asked if I had my medicine along, which I did. When one of the uncles walked by, I blew my medicine at him, and then I felt alright. The dance went perfectly, and after the fellow came back, he said that his uncles no longer bothered him.

The next example shows how she deals with bewitchment:

Sometimes people suffer from bewitchment. They tell me, "Oh, he has put a curse on me," or they say someone has put a curse on him and he does not feel well. Then I start to break the spell that they had cast on him. It is his life that I am working for. But for some, there is no hope. But I at least try to help them. I tell them what to do and try to get them to eat their supper so that they will not suffer too much before they go.

Some days ago this man came to see me here. He wanted me to heal him. He said that someone was bewitching him from somewhere. He didn't feel good, he didn't know what he was doing, and when he went somewhere he didn't realize he was there. I guess he would be walking around somewhere without realizing it, until his mind would come back to him now and then. When he would regain his memory, he would wonder why he was there. All these things were bothering him, so he came to see me. He wanted me to examine his life. And he wanted me to find out who was hurting him, who had put a curse on him. Or maybe it was he himself. So I worked on him. He had lots of things to worry about. It was his mind and the worrying that was bringing him down. He drank quite a bit, and all these things were bothering him. He had a good job, and he worked, but all he thought of doing was running around having a good time. He had lady troubles too. I told him about these things as I worked on him.

So I was talking to him and encouraging him with his life, what he should do so that he won't miss his life again, to stop drinking, to put his family first. All these things I counseled him on. If he didn't do these things, he would be the one who would end up lying somewhere. You look up to your Father for things. It is your Father that takes care of you. All these things they don't realize and

don't want to know, so they don't take life seriously. All they want to do is have fun. All these things I was making him realize as I worked on him. And things that were bothering him I fixed, and then he went home.

My final example is an account of an actual battle with a witch:

I had a dream last Saturday that someone had given me a paper bag with the heads of two rattlesnakes in it. It was like the rush to the kiva that the people have for the night dances, and someone threw it at me, and it landed on my chest above my heart. The snakes bit me there and on my fingers. Then the areas swelled up and became blue. Then my husband's uncle came and was squeezing the poison out of my fingers. And Grandma was forcing the white venom out of my chest wound. While she was doing this, the uncle was saying he was sorry he had done this, but someone had caught him doing witchcraft, so he had to hurt someone in his family in order to save his own life. I told him that I was glad that he had saved his life, but why did he pick on me? I was different than him.

Then he came back and offered me a buckskin as payment, but my grandmother stood behind me and told me not to accept it. So I told him that I didn't want it and that he would have to be paid back double the pain he caused me.

That is why I walked right away to the plaza that time we met you near his house.[23] I just didn't want to go into his house and wonder all the time, "Why did you do that to me?" or "What are you going to do to me?" I have blocked him so that he can't do harm to me or my family. And I prayed that if harm should be done, it should not be too serious.

WITCHES AND MEDICINE PEOPLE

Clearly, then, witchcraft conceptions help regulate social relations. We saw examples of young men with alcohol problems, neglecting their wives and children. The counsel they get makes perfect sense in terms of domesticating young males. But there are many other social aspects such as the old woman whose motives for wanting to cast a spell on her son's girlfriend were in need of countermeasures. Or take, for instance,

the problematic relations between a young man and his in-laws, as in the case of Talayesva. The problem of women falling ill because of family problems is another example. Such matters are eminently social and absolutely crucial to a well-functioning society.

Medicine people, it seems, are right in the middle of witchcraft dynamics. The question is whether witches actually exist. No, let me restate the question: the question is, *How* do witches exist? Are they simply in the minds of the people? Or are they part of the stock and trade of healers? Or do they exist in a free-floating body of oral tradition, told for reasons unknown from generation to generation? Traditions told, perhaps, to deal with the problem of evil or with subsidiary problems of spite, jealousy, envy, murder, rape, violence, debauchery, vanity, greed, covetousness, dishonesty, misogyny, adultery, deceit, hypocrisy, slander, fraud, scandal. . . . Isn't it incredible how many words we have for the worst sides of being human? And would it not make sense that in societies where law and the arm of the law, as we know them, are dealt with in other ways, that crucial individuals such as medicine people play a significant role in dealing with the dark side of humanity? Whether or not medicine people are the perpetrators of a nonexistent body of witchcraft lore is not relevant here. This may or may not be the case. We know, however, for a fact that there are people in the world who deliberately do evil without the slightest qualms. For that, each culture has its own explanatory framework. For the Hopis and many other peoples, it is witchcraft. For Europeans and Americans, it is psychopathology, sexual deviance, or senseless crime. What is relevant here is that social relations and social affairs happen without regard for order, harmony, or equity. What is at stake are ancient, powerful human motivations that reach far beyond the appearance of *Homo sapiens*, yes, back to our emotional and violent sapient origins, where the rules are on another order altogether.[24] The calm visions of social order and justice first came to light rather late in the history of our species. Our large brains didn't exactly turn us into benign Mahatma Gandhis. On the contrary, we became more clever Machiavellis, and we have consequently had to fight at great odds for the causes of mahatmas all over the world. No, institutions and individuals must regulate human relations and affairs in order to raise society above the default mechanisms of survival, violence, subjugation, revenge, and personal gain.

Have the Hopis solved these issues? No, of course not. They haven't

done any better than anyone else. Their solution might not even be particularly worthy of emulation either. But it is their way of trying to deal with problems universally attested and, unfortunately, tenaciously immune to eradication from our species.

NOTES

This article is based on a paper read at the conference "Image and Word in the Mind of Narrative" in Aarhus, Denmark, October 3–4, 2003. For further information on Hopi religious thought, see Geertz (1986, 2003, 2004b). Except for place-names, I follow the orthography and spellings of the *Hopi Dictionary* (Hopi Dictionary Project, 1998).

1. For further details on conceptions of Hopi witchcraft, see Titiev (1942), Malotki (1993), and Malotki and Gary (2001).

2. For further details about the term *powaqa*, see Malotki (1993, 151).

3. Recorded on December 2, 1978.

4. By request, I have changed the names and locations of all my informants.

5. The Hopi term is *sotsava*, "olivella shells," one of the sorcerous weapons used by witches. They also use porcupine quills, cactus thorns, bits of bone or glass, shreds of graveyard clothes, and so on to cast at their victims or opponents. A standard procedure in any treatment by a medicine man is that he locates a pathogenic object in the body, usually a *powaqat ho'at*, "sorcerer's arrow," and removes it. See Malotki and Gary (2001, xx–xxi).

6. The term for cursing is *sóyakna*, "bewitch," "hex," "curse," or *sotsapmu'a*, "shoot someone with a shell." But my informant consistently uses *hintsana*, "do something to," "affect." A medicine woman whom I consulted translated the term in different contexts as "curse," "hurt," and "trap." See my discussion of the use of a term with the same root, *hintsatskya*, as the technical term for performing a ritual in Geertz (1986, 41–42 and n. 7).

7. He uses an alternative term for witches, *nuunukpana* (sing. *nukpana*), which means "evil people."

8. My informant does not use any of the terms for gossip or slander. The usual terms are *lalavaypi*, "talk," "gossip," *koliyaw*, "gossip," "rumor," *koliyawlavayi*, "gossip talk," and *yaw'i*, "hearsay," "gossip," "rumor." White Hawk simply uses the term *a'ni hintsatsna*, literally, "they are [intensifier] doing something," meaning, saying something awful. The Hopi dictionary has an example: *Pumuy a'ni hintsatsna*, "They said a lot of unkind words to them."

9. An important theme throughout this interview is that witches use gossip as one of their primary weapons.

10. The term used here for a "mean person" is *a'ni unangway*, "hardhearted," "cruel hearted," "mean."

11. Here we see that the social source of greatest comfort is also the source of greatest evil.

12. This interview was recorded in Hopi on October 12, 1978. Redundancies and two paragraphs have been edited out.

13. This subsection is an edited translation of Geertz (2004c, 47–51). For a more detailed discussion of religious narrative, cognition, and culture, see Geertz (2010).

14. See discussions on this topic in Fivush (1994), Miller (1994), Ochs and Capps (1996), and Siegel (2001).

15. For more detailed information on these terms, see Malotki (1993, 163–64).

16. Titiev uses the term "shamans," as does Malotki, but I am not convinced that shamans have ever existed among the Hopis.

17. This exchange occurred on January 31, 1979.

18. This exchange occurred on January 30, 1979.

19. The unpublished autobiography was recorded on February 5–6, 1979, in the Hopi language. It was supplemented by a number of later interviews conducted in English.

20. Her charges in 1979 were two dollars for babies, three dollars for older children, five dollars for adults if there were no complications or if no extra things needed to be done. Patients had to pay for the medicine too. She encouraged people to call for appointments and to come in the evenings between 8:00 and 10:00. Sometimes she hung out a sign saying "no clinic."

21. She did not mention him by name, but she meant the Hopi tutelary deity Maasaw.

22. This is a common situation. Even though a number of public offices are by heredity, the Hopis are very pragmatic when it comes to giving people positions of power. Perusal of the history of the village chief position in Hopi society clearly supports this view.

23. Here she is talking about me.

24. See Frans de Waal's fascinating work on ape morality and social behavior (1996, 2000). See also Høgh-Olesen (2010) and my own ruminations (Geertz 2008a).

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