Riane Eisler (born July 22, 1931) is an Austrian-born American systems scientist, attorney, and author known for her work on gender, family, economics, and social evolution. She pioneered the "partnership" and "domination" models of society in *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987). Eisler's research spans anthropology, neuroscience, and economics, advocating for caring-based economic systems. She is the editor-in-chief of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*. She leads the Center for Partnership Systems, promoting equity, sustainability, and social transformation. Eisler discusses her journey from childhood as a refugee to her multidisciplinary research on societal structures. She critiques domination-based systems, arguing that they perpetuate trauma and devalue care. Eisler highlights historical and contemporary examples of partnership-oriented societies, including the Nordic nations and ancient Çatalhöyük. She challenges economic models that ignore caregiving and advocates for a "caring economics of partners." Emphasizing the role of storytelling in reshaping cultural narratives, she calls for systemic change. Eisler concludes by stressing the need for a universal income within a partnership framework, arguing that it can transform societal norms and economic distribution.

Riane Eisler: She was confused. My childhood experiences as a child refugee with my parents, fleeing from the Nazis—when I witnessed violence, insensitivity, and cruelty—led me to questions that most of us have asked at some point in our lives: Does it have to be this way? Because we humans have such an enormous capacity for caring, sensitivity, and empathy.

It is part of our evolution. For creativity? So why has there been so much destructiveness, cruelty, and violence? Of course, I have not tried to answer these questions for many years. My life has been like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle coming together. But my calling was truly to answer that question. My work is multidisciplinary, and I emphasize multidisciplinary because it is about connecting the dots—something that is very hard to do in our siloed educational system, which we have inherited from more rigid, domination-based times.

We also inherited more violent, more rigidly male-dominated times, and they are all part of the same pattern. Those questions led me to my research, and my research, in turn, led me to the realization that I could not answer that question using the conventional social categories that we have also inherited from more rigid, authoritarian, male-dominated, violent times: right/left, religious/secular, Eastern/Western, Northern/Southern, capitalist/socialist. Because, for one thing, there have been repressive, violent regimes in every one of those categories. So, none of them tells us what we need to build for a more sustainable, equitable, and less violent world.

But perhaps most important is that all these categories—just like our studies of society—marginalize or ignore the majority of humanity: women and children, and hence, the family. In rigid domination-based times, women and children were confined to the family. We are all taught this.

Anyway, that is my introduction—both to myself and to my books, most of which emerged from my background as an attorney. My first two books, for example, stemmed from that background—one on the Equal Rights Amendment and the other on no-fault divorce, which I predicted would lead to what later became known as the feminization of poverty.

It was a very good law, except it played out in a deeply unequal and inequitable society. As a result, formerly middle-class women and children were plunged into poverty.

Jacobsen: Well, I have a side note: Are you one of the first people I have had as the opener? Usually, I start with a question. This is good. In emphasizing an ethic of care, how do you distinguish it from a transcendentalist, top-down hierarchy embedded in the God concept of most traditionalist religions, which may or may not have an ethnic supremacist overlay? And how does it differ from non-traditional overlays—such as the selfish gene concept—where some extrapolate a pervasive ontology based on a single slice of biology (genes) to justify an ethic of irrational selfishness? So, how do you distinguish an ethic of care amid this mishmash of floating ethical frameworks?

Eisler: Well, look.

First, we have been told a false story about so-called human nature. You mentioned selfish genes, which this is the same story as original sin. We must be controlled from the top—whether by a God-fearing structure or by an interpretation of biology that assumes selfishness as a fundamental driver.

However, modern evolutionary biology has widely critiqued and reconsidered the selfish gene theory. While Richard Dawkins' The Selfish Gene (1976) popularized the idea that genes act in self-interest, subsequent research in fields like epigenetics, group selection theory, and evolutionary cooperation has shown that altruism and cooperative behaviour are just as fundamental to survival.

My latest book, Nurturing Our Humanity, co-authored with Douglas P. Fry and published by Oxford University Press in 2019, explores these themes and challenges outdated assumptions about human nature.

Because the issue is not genes. It is gene expression. Speaking of red herrings and distractions, this whole argument between nature and nurture is a distraction. It is not nature or nurture—it is nature and nurture.

Neuroscience shows—and Nurturing Our Humanity draws heavily from neuroscience—that which of our genetic capacities are or are not expressed depends heavily on what children first observe or experience.

And indeed, we have very malleable, changeable brains throughout our lives. People can change. You have seen that, haven't you? You have experienced that. I have experienced that.

I have been many women in my life. I have continued to grow because I was able to turn the traumas of my childhood into my calling, which gave meaning to my life. My relationship with David Lloyd for forty-five years gave me the understanding that what I call partnership—which is not sameness but equity—is about mutual support and mutuality.

That is more pleasurable and helps us not only thrive but survive. Because I was very ill when I first met David, it was his love and caring that helped me survive. I had always identified with the women who died in their forties—the women who rebelled, so to speak, in fiction. I thought, Well, I'm going to die in my forties—and I almost did.

Speaking of self-fulfilling prophecies, we live by stories, don't we?

Jacobsen: I agree with Margaret Atwood’s quote on that. Yes, we are our stories. We not only live by them. We are them. Eventually, we will become everyone's story somewhere.

Eisler: Well, the question is, should we be someone else's story, or can we fashion our own stories? And in a partnership system, we are more able to find meaning in our lives, aren't we? To flourish?

And that is the yearning for a caring connection, which is biologically rooted in our total dependency on caring. When we are born, we cannot take care of ourselves. We are not even born with fully developed brains.

And we know from orphanage studies—whether in Romanian orphanages or among Chinese orphaned girls—that the brain does not properly develop in children who receive only rote care rather than genuine, nurturing care. Most people are unaware that domination systems sustain themselves through trauma; they are, in essence, trauma factories. This applies in families—I'm going to hit you for your good—which is an utterly wild idea, yet one that persists. I explore the psychological dynamic behind this. Denial happens. And then it manifests in other ways: COVID denial, election result denial, climate change denial. It is trauma leading to an inability to process reality.

Jacobsen: Yes, that is correct. In my background, my father was an alcoholic. He passed away last December. I have one portion of his ashes right here. As long as I knew him, he struggled with substance misuse. So, I am well aware—through his experience and upbringing—of how deeply these struggles can impact an individual. And beyond that, they shape relationships, potential partnerships that sometimes never come to fruition.

Eisler: But I have to interrupt you. We are conditioned to focus on the effects on the individual, but my work focuses on the effects of norms on cultural and social structures. That shift in perspective takes us to a different level—one that includes women, children, and families. Within these larger patterns, the question arises: Are there any exceptions to the rule? Are women, children, and families always bound to a dominant ethic in systems that perpetuate trauma across generations?

Well, my first book drew from my multidisciplinary, cross-cultural, transhistorical research—including prehistory. I had a teacher in Cuba, where I spent part of my childhood after my parents secured an entry permit. For some reason, this teacher included a course on prehistory in the curriculum. When I say that my life has come together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, I truly mean it—because I was fascinated.

In my research, I examined not only humanity as a whole but also the intimate relationships that shape us—our families and the environments where we are first socialized. Psychology and now neuroscience confirm how crucial these early influences are. However, I also studied prehistory, which provides an essential context for understanding social evolution.

That brings me to a place called Çatalhöyük. Have you ever heard of Çatalhöyük? My goodness. There has been a surge of books recently challenging the traditional narrative of prehistory, reframing what we thought we knew. Because when we examine places like Çatalhöyük, the old story—that early societies were inevitably structured around hierarchy and domination—does not hold up.

For one thousand years, Çatalhöyük—the largest early Neolithic or early farming site ever excavated, blending foraging and farming—thrived in what is now Turkey, in Anatolia. You can read about it in The Chalice and the Blade, where I discuss it in depth. But recently, Çatalhöyük

has become fashionable as an example of human potential—often without the crucial context of what made it what it was.

For one thousand years, there were no signs of destruction through warfare. The size of the houses and the so-called grave goods—artifacts buried with the dead—show no indications of massive inequality. Instead, the archaeological evidence suggests gender balance.

Ian Hodder, a Stanford archaeologist who excavated Çatalhöyük for many years, wrote in Scientific American that gender balance was a defining feature of the society. In Çatalhöyük, being born a man or a woman did not determine one's status. This challenges the dominant narrative of prehistory—the caveman myth—where men wield clubs in one hand and drag women by the hair with the other. That cartoonish image is a complete fabrication.

As I mentioned in my latest book, I invited the anthropologist Douglas Fry to co-author with me. He is one of the world's foremost experts on foraging societies. He had previously written an article for our Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies—an online, peer-reviewed, open-access journal at the University of Minnesota—in which he described foraging societies as the original partnership societies.

After about seven years of research, I invited him to co-author Nurturing Our Humanity. My books take a long time to research because they require connecting many dots and filling in critical gaps—especially those that have long excluded women, children, and family structures. However, our research makes clear that Dominance systems are not inevitable.

The evidence is overwhelming—warfare is a relatively recent development in human history. It only emerged about 5,000 to 10,000 years ago, and it coincided with the shift toward what I call a domination system.

But if we look at contemporary societies—whether the Mosuo in China, certain Indigenous communities in Mexico, or even the Nordic nations—we see societies that are either still partnership-oriented or have returned to partnership-based models.

But the Nordic nations are not socialist. They are not socialist. They have thriving market economies. What distinguishes them is their orientation toward the partnership system. And it's not because they are small. Many small societies worldwide function under domination-based models, even relatively homogeneous ones. The key factor is their orientation toward partnership.

For instance, in Nordic countries, there is still some violence. Still, violence is not embedded into the system to enforce rigid top-down control. They were the first countries—beginning with Sweden—to pass laws against family violence. Today, many nations have such laws, though enforcement varies. They were also the first to introduce peace studies as a formal academic discipline. None of this is coincidental—it is part of a pattern.

Women hold 40 to 50% of national legislative seats, and having female leaders is no longer an anomaly—it is the norm. This demonstrates that societies can shift toward partnership. However, as we are witnessing now, societies can also regress toward domination. That is the struggle for our future.

Jacobsen: I've been engaging with futurists recently. One of my former academic colleagues, Professor Kristen Monroe, may have been my first introduction to the umbrella of an ethic of care. Adding a partnership perspective also provides an important nuance.

What can we say about contemporary leaders with a dominator style and historical figures? How do we identify a consistent transhistorical trend of dominator leadership—one that originates in deep trauma from early childhood, between birth and age five?

What happens to individuals at that stage of development, and how does it shape them later in life—even when they reach their fifties, sixties, or seventies?

Eisler: Well, we can see the outcome before our eyes. They grow up to be individuals who equate violence, domination, and the stereotypes of hyper-masculinity with real power. They believe that is what they must be.

This is not a matter of women against men or men against women. Due to our biology, women may have a greater inclination toward learning nonviolence—we give birth, lactate, and nurture. However, violence itself is learned. And much of what children absorb happens in their early years before their brains are fully formed.

This is something neuroscience continues to confirm. We cannot examine this issue solely at the individual level. We have to analyze it within the broader context of society, economics, and family structures.

Jacobsen: To follow up on that—are there variations in how dominator leadership manifests? Do we see differences between those who are cold, calculating, and devoid of empathy—who look to exploit others—and those who project grandiosity, filling every room they enter with their overwhelming presence?

Eisler: Well, we have been taught that anything relating to gender stereotypes is dismissed as a women's issue. But, of course, there is now a men's movement as well. I am friends with Gary Barker, the president of Equimondo. His work focuses on caring men.

Again, I want to emphasize that domination systems are not good for men. Consider that throughout history, men have been expected to give their very lives simply because a leader—Putin, a dictator—wants more real estate. Yet, men are given a consolation prize in domination-based societies, aren't they? In the family structure, they are positioned as the authoritarian leader, the household autocrat.

So, it becomes difficult to acknowledge the reality: domination systems inflict trauma on everyone. We all experience some form of trauma—death, disease, natural disasters like earthquakes and fires. However, the trauma built into domination systems is different. That is something we can mitigate and prevent. It is not inevitable.

Not everyone who grows up in a domination-based family perpetuates it. Some people, thank goodness, reject it and say, No. I will not do this to my children. But most people perpetuate it—because that is what they were taught.

And this is precisely where the devaluation of care comes in. Because what do children see in their families? In a domination system, they learn—again and again—that caring is devalued.

And that's why gender and childhood are central to understanding the pattern of domination systems. Gender has been dismissed as a women's issue, but in reality, it is a primary organizing principle of social, economic, and family structures—both in domination systems and in societies moving toward partnership.

What do children observe and experience? In a domination system, they see that care is systematically devalued—because it is expected to be performed only by women, for free, within a male-controlled household.

Both Adam Smith and Karl Marx perpetuated this. They classified caregiving as reproductive rather than productive labor. That framing remains entrenched—it is still taught in economic and business schools today.

It is absurd. The economic models we have inherited—both from capitalism and socialism—completely omit the three life-sustaining sectors.

I explore this in my book, The Real Wealth of Nations—yes, a play on Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations. Our current economic system, particularly GDP, reinforces these blind spots. Think about it: a tree, which we depend on for breathing, only becomes part of GDP when it is dead when it has been cut down and turned into a log.

Jacobsen: A tree, essential for our survival, only gains economic utility once it is extracted from the commons—once it is dead.

Eisler: The same disregard applies to the work of caring for people. Though increasingly performed by men as some regions move toward partnership, this work is still not recognized as productive labour. Even though caring for a young child requires work from dawn to dusk—and often beyond, before dawn and after dusk—it remains economically invisible.

If you do not account for the natural economy, the household economy, and the volunteer economy as part of your economic system, you will have an uncaring system. That is the reality we face.

But I want to make an important distinction here—one that is deeply connected to the idea of universal basic income. Fundamentally, we do not live in a society where people lack empathy entirely. Rather, we live in a system dominated by in-group versus out-group thinking. So when we talk about empathy, we are not saying that people lack it entirely, but rather that they only extend it to their perceived in-group.

They have selective empathy. They direct care and concern toward their in-group but not toward those they view as part of the out-group. And what do they do to the out-group? They blame them. That pattern is deeply ingrained in our cultural narratives.

Take Eve, for example. She is the prototypical out-group figure. And the Bible states, "Henceforth, woman shall be subservient to man." But what about before the henceforth? That question haunted me. What was it before the henceforth? Nobody wanted to talk about it.

I also wondered—why would a woman take advice from a snake? That seemed bizarre to me as a child. Women don't usually ask snakes for advice.

But later, as I studied history, I discovered the deeper meaning. The snake was a powerful symbol in ancient traditions, even after Greek civilization shifted toward domination-oriented systems.

Remember the Oracle of Delphi? She was a priestess—a Pythoness—who worked with a snake, the python. This was part of an older reality where the snake was not a symbol of evil but of wisdom.

In that older context, it would have made perfect sense for Eve to consult the snake. But as the domination system took hold, that story was rewritten to cast the woman as the problem.

It was only when I conducted research for my first book, The Chalice and the Blade—drawing from multidisciplinary, cross-cultural, transhistorical research—that I finally found the answers to both of my childhood questions. There was a time before the henceforth. It wasn't perfect, but it was certainly a hell of a lot better.

Second, in the older worldview, it made sense for Eve to seek wisdom through a snake. Have you ever seen the Minoan artifacts from Crete? Minoan Crete was one of the last civilizations that retained elements of the partnership model. It was an island society that lasted well beyond prehistoric times, surviving past the broader cultural shift toward domination systems.

Minoan Crete was surrounded by societies that had already oriented themselves toward domination, yet within Crete itself, we find statues of priestesses or goddesses standing with their arms raised and snakes coiled around them. This imagery reveals a different relationship with the snake—one of reverence, not fear or deception.

This is why a systems approach is so important. Pieces of the puzzle only fall into place when we stop looking at isolated elements and instead analyze patterns.

Jacobsen: New mythologies are built on old ones, sometimes improvised in real time. I worked on a book project with someone who had left a cult rooted in the World War II healing revival movement—which was influenced by the teachings of William Branham, a controversial preacher who died in a car crash in the 1950s.

After World War II, a wave of new religious leaders emerged as much of the Western world searched for meaning in the aftermath of destruction. As far as I can tell, nearly all of them were middle-aged white men claiming to be new prophets of God, each offering their own interpretations of biblical texts.

Branham, however, did not appear to have read the Bible much, if at all. As far as I know, he may not have even been literate. Yet he constructed an entire cosmology on the fly, adapting mythology to create a new theology.

For example, he claimed that Eve had sex with the snake and that this act resulted in the birth of Cain. According to Branham, Cain's descendants were the intellectuals, the academics, the atheists, and the secular humanists—essentially, anyone who valued critical thinking and scholarship. He built an entire religious framework around this fabricated myth, and remarkably, two million people still follow his teachings today, long after his death.

Branham even created arbitrary lifestyle rules. For instance, he told men, "Don't name your kid Elvis." He had a personal gripe against Elvis Presley, though the reason remains unclear.

Eisler: The impulse behind these myths is the human need for new stories.

But the story of Cain and Abel is itself a distortion of history. According to the biblical narrative, God favoured Abel's offering over Cain's, which ultimately led Cain to murder his brother.

But what is the actual history? DNA studies now show that, at least in Europe, the story does not align with reality. The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas—who studied Old Europe—demonstrated that the real historical pattern was one of nomadic invasions. These invasions were led by herding societies—the Indo-Europeans—who migrated from the Eurasian steppes.

These groups, which Hitler later idealized as the Aryans, brought with them the domination system. They overran the more settled, agricultural societies of Old Europe.

So, in reality, the historical pattern was not that the pastoralist was the victim of the farmer—it was the other way around. The nomadic warriors violently imposed a domination-based system onto more egalitarian agricultural communities.

But in discussing these myths, I sometimes get momentarily tangled in the details—who was the farmer and the nomad—because the story itself has been rewritten so many times to fit a particular narrative.

Eisler: But—God preferred the burnt offering, you see?

And so, Cain did not kill Abel—it was the other way around. There you go. That is the real story, the one archaeology tells us.

Strangely, we often hear about the shift from foraging to farming, yet we rarely hear about the shift from foraging to herding. We hear a little about animal husbandry, yes. But what is missing from the conversation is this: the earth was not a fertile mother in the arid steppes where these invaders came from. It was not a place where farming could thrive. The only viable form of subsistence was herding, not farming.

Right now, I see two key paths. The first is changing the norm—recognizing that caring is what humans need and want.

Look at the Nordic nations, which have moved further toward partnership-based models. They donate a significantly larger percentage of their GDP—through NGOs—to people they are not genetically related to. This is a powerful indicator of the human capacity for caring beyond kinship ties.

Consider the two physicists who won the Nobel Prize for their work on entanglement. As you probably know, their research demonstrates interconnection—our oneness at a fundamental level.

Many trends show that human nature is rooted in caring connections. Nurturing Our Humanity is a long book that lays out the case in depth: the craving for caring connections is basic to human nature.

So, changing the norm—so that caring is widely recognized as a fundamental part of humanity—is critical.

In terms of a guaranteed income, it must be structured equitably. The income should go to both women and men in families, including those in same-sex or transgender families. It must go to both partners, including the caregiver who stays home.

Because caregiving is work, it is productive labour. It produces what mainstream economists—who seem to live in an alternate reality—claim is the most valuable capital in the post-industrial, knowledge-service economy: high-quality human capital.

Now, I do not use the term human capital myself. I prefer to talk about capacity development, as Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen does. But regardless of the terminology, the reality remains the same: Caring is productive.

And what does it produce? It produces people—the most valuable resource of all. Through the Center for Partnership Studies, I have two initiatives related to the four cornerstones I mentioned earlier.

One is the Peace Begins at Home Initiative—we are launching a summit on October 29.

The second is a contest for creative professionals—primarily filmmakers—because storytelling is a powerful tool. Film, animation, and visual storytelling can reshape narratives in ways academic texts cannot.

For example, Cartoon Saloon, the renowned animation studio, was inspired by this work in one of its latest shorts, which won an award.

For the contest, participants must read all my books and then develop a creative product based on them. Hopefully, that will lead to a real transformation of what we call entertainment—which is currently saturated with violence and the eroticization of violence.

I explore this in my book Sacred Pleasure, one of my favourite books, because it foreshadows much of what I later wrote, including economics. But here is something crucial: a guaranteed annual income cannot simply go to the so-called head of household or be allocated to the household as a unit.

One of the issues my work addresses—something that is often ignored but must be taken into account—is intra-household economic distribution. This matters because resources are not always distributed equitably within households.

For example, a Brazilian study found that $1 in a mother's hands had the same impact on a child's well-being as $10 in a father's hands.

Why? Not because men are bad. Men are not bad. But men are taught that their identity—their so-called masculinity—entitles them to certain behaviours. They are conditioned to believe that they have the right to gamble, engage in prostitution, or indulge in other self-serving activities. That conditioning is learned.

So, to shift this paradigm, we must change the norms. Creative professionals—storytellers, filmmakers, artists—can play a crucial role in reshaping those norms. But doing so requires being bold, persistent, and willing to challenge established narratives, especially when we examine the stories we have been taught—fairy tales, for instance.

My God—talk about learned helplessness! Look at Sleeping Beauty—she cannot even wake up until a prince arrives to kiss her. And Cinderella? She remains a drudge until, once again, a prince rescues her. Notice the patterns. Her father is absent, while her stepmother and stepsisters—other women—are the villains.

This is part of a long tradition of myths that blame women. Eve. Pandora. The message is clear: Women are the problem.

Jacobsen: What myths do you consider symbolic representations of something more equitable?

Eisler: There are so many trends moving in that direction, but we lack the framework to counter those pushing us back. Take the Taliban—their entire ideology is rooted in gender control. Or fundamentalist Iran—another example of how gender is used as a mechanism for social control.

But we are not taught that gender oppression has long been a tool of authoritarianism.

Did you know that Nazi Germany legally lowered women's wages compared to men's? That women were barred from becoming judges? These were explicit policies designed to reinforce male dominance.

And yet, we claim that women and children matter. But do they? The American Psychological Association has condemned spanking, and the United Nations has issued similar statements. Yet, 80 to 90% of children do not live in safe environments.

Jacobsen: That is a shocking statistic. I assumed it, but I wasn't aware of the precise numbers.

Eisler: And why is that? Because we are not made aware of anything related to family, children, and women—as if they should be controlled by men from the top, overseen by a male God, of course.

Jacobsen: Even fictional depictions reinforce this—whether it's the bearded man in the sky or more abstract theological concepts. Even in seminaries, where scholars use sophisticated terminology—aseity, hermeneutics—all divine terms remain male at the end of the day. Lord of Lords. King of Kings. These are authority-based male constructs.

Eisler: And the messaging begins early. Remember those fairy tales about princes? Boys internalize the idea that those on top are meant to control others. And what do girls learn? That women are to be controlled. That men are entitled to control them.

But things are changing. Look at the movement against racism, the movement for gender equity, and the environmental movement, which is challenging the long-held belief in man's dominion over nature.

The question is: Will we push forward toward partnership? Or will we allow domination to reassert itself?

Eisler: They are all part of the same struggle—it is all about challenging the domination system.

Take the anti-racism movement. What is it challenging? The supposed divinely ordained right of a so-called superior race to rule over an inferior one. Each of these movements—anti-racism, gender equity, environmentalism—challenges traditions of domination. But they remain scattered instead of coalescing into one broader movement to shift from domination to partnership.

And that—that is precisely what my work is about. That is what we must bring to the forefront. Because without a frame, we are vulnerable. Those pushing us backward have a frame. They pay very close attention to family, gender, and economics, but always from a top-down perspective.

The problem is not capitalism. It is top-down economics, which has existed across cultures and time periods. Whether it was a Chinese emperor, a Hindu pasha, an Arab sheikh, or a feudal lord, the structure was the same.

And what is neoliberalism?

It is a brilliant deception.

Jacobsen: The terms neo—meaning new—and liberalism—meaning freedom—have nothing to something new or freedom for most people.

Eisler: What we call neoliberalism is just top-down economics. And we are supposed to accept it? We are expected to learn to accept—even be grateful for—the scraps that trickle down from the wealthiest.

But this is not new, and it is not liberalism. It is domination economics. It is feudalism by another name. In feudal times, the wealthy threw scraps from their opulent tables to those below them. The structure has not changed—it has been rebranded. We must connect the dots.

Jacobsen: We need a frame to do that. How do we best encapsulate the distinction between dominator-based and partnership-based perspectives? Because when people observe a particular system—a family, a society, an institution—what is the best way to determine whether it is more dominator-oriented or partnership-oriented?

Eisler: The frame is essential.

People who have read my books—starting with The Chalice and the Blade—have told me, again and again, how it has changed their entire worldview.

I have received countless letters, emails, and comments—especially when I used to give keynote speeches at conferences and even now through Zoom or other digital platforms.

Once people understand the partnership-domination scale, they see the world differently. Because this scale is biocultural. Remember what I said earlier? We have been told the wrong story—either nature or nurture. But in reality, it is both.

And that—that understanding—is the key to transforming how we see and reshape society.

Eisler: It is both nature and nurture. One powerful example of how strong nurture is? Research has shown that men who are born with a gene associated with a predisposition toward violence will only express it if they have had adverse childhood experiences. That is powerful.

Jacobsen: Yes, it is.

Eisler: But this is exactly why we need a frame—to connect the dots. Because every one of us can do something. And this is why the idea of a universal income is essential. What is economics for, after all?

Not to serve some assumption of scarcity! The real issue is not scarcity. It is resource distribution. We have hoarding at the top. We have destruction through warfare. We have a failure to invest in caring for people—starting from birth.

We must shift toward what I write about in The Real Wealth of Nations: a caring economics of partners. Because poverty itself is a source of trauma. I can personally attest to this. In my early years in Havana, I witnessed the stark contrast between those at the top and those at the bottom—among whom I lived. The disparity was horrendous.

And this is where we must clarify something: the alternative to what we commonly call patriarchy is not matriarchy. The real alternative is partnership. We must learn that, and this new frame offers that. It is a frame we can all use.

Jacobsen: Riane, thank you for your time and expertise. It was nice to meet you. I hope you have a wonderful rest of the day.

Eisler: Well, I would love for you to write more about partnership—if that interests you.

Jacobsen: It does.

Eisler: Yes. I'd love to read what you write, especially if it's for *The Humanist*. Because it is difficult to discuss universal income in a vacuum. A universal income functions very differently within a domination system than within a partnership system—because the norms in each are entirely different.

Jacobsen: That's true.