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Rachel Carson

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John T. Molloy—*Again!*

by Marien Helz

John Molloy became famous in the 1970's with his book, *Dress for Success*, which told men how to get ahead in their profession. He turned the concept into a regular newspaper column in which he gave advice to millions of men on how to dress in the workplace to be successful. His advice was based on extensive and solid research which let men know what to wear and not to wear if they wanted to advance in their careers. Some of the advice was surprising: women shouldn't dress their husbands—in the figurative sense, that is. Women who wanted to choose their husbands' clothes tended to go for fashion. In the workplace, men who chased the latest fashions were considered light-weight and frivolous. Promotions were not likely to come their way.

He told young men how and what suits to wear and how to tie neck ties. He let them know about the business "uniform"— kakis and a blue blazer. He showed employers why sloppy dress in the work place damaged the company. He knew when suits weren't appropriate: medical doctors shouldn't wear them, he revealed, but should wear the white coat. A suit signaled to patients that he was interested in money more than in them and wearing a suit would be more likely to result in lawsuits.

Molloy became known as the "Dress for Success Guru" and "America's First Wardrobe Engineer."

Not too long after helping men climb the corporate ladder, Molloy turned his research toward women. He learned that women should wear blazers and carry briefcases. He let women know exactly what jewelry they should wear and how they should wear it—the less the better in most cases, and no trinkets. When Molloy began his research, it was difficult for women to find decent blazers. Because of his work, upscale women's stores carried blazers as a staple. Nearly all professional women wore them. After he had effected the change in professional women's attire, Molloy and his wife were stopped at a light beside a car of four professional women all wearing blazers, and his wife called out, "Look what he's done to you!"

The multi-billion dollar fashion industry did not like Molloy because he proved that paying attention to fashion was costly in more than monetary ways. Some believe that pressure from that industry caused newspapers to drop his successful column.

John Molloy is a dynamic individual with an insatiable curiosity. He began to study broader techniques for generating success from the point of view of both companies and individuals which resulted in his book, *How to Work the Competition into the Ground and Have Fun Doing It*. Since he had a son at that point, he included what he learned in his research about making your children successful. I had invited him to speak at several events shortly after that book came out and as I drove him from one speaking engagement to another, we were discussing kids and homework. Molloy believed strongly in getting homework done and had, in addition, confirmed through research the importance of instilling the work ethic in children early on.

He related an incident about his son who was about twelve years old at the time. I don't remember the exact number of pages of a paper that the boy had written, but it was a sizable paper for a child of that age. I also don't remember the number of spelling errors that Molloy found in the paper—the number was significant, certainly, but the paper would have been quite an accomplishment for a child of twelve nonetheless. Molloy was horrified by the errors.

"So I tore the paper up," he informed me. "And it was midnight."

"My wife!" he exclaimed as he flung his hand high in the air and let it fall to his knee.

I'll bet his wife! Imagine having your child's other parent tearing up a paper at midnight that's due the next morning—in addition, his wife had been a nurse and would know the value of children getting their sleep. On the other hand, that kind of insistence on children maintaining a high level of standards and performance is bound to serve them well in the long run.

Molloy is extremely interesting largely because he is so interested—in everything. I hadn't heard about him in a while, so I web searched him several months ago in an attempt to find out what he's been doing. It was a surprise to find that he had turned his attention to helping women learn how to "land the husband of your dreams." In an earlier book, Molloy mentioned almost in passing that a young man had asked him how to have more success with women, and Molloy managed to discover how and help him out. The book *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others* is far more extensive than what he discovered for the young man. It involved the most rigorous research.

Molloy explains that he undertook the project, which he had no interest in doing, because one of his best young women researchers had had a devastating experience, and she and her sister, also one of his researchers, pressured him into the undertaking.

Initially, such an enterprise seems frivolous compared to his other work. After getting into the book, however, one realizes how significant the issue is. Molloy refers to men who

string women along as *dangerous*—a term which on the surface seems to be an over statement. As the book progresses, however, he points out that women who get strung along by men like that lose all the possibilities that life promises: home with a caring partner with a shared past and planned future, children, and grandchildren. They often end up sitting on the bench in the game of life. Molloy states that he has been accused of being a male chauvinist for appearing to promote the myth that marriage benefits women more than it does men. He responds:

> While researching this book, we ran across dozens of women who lived with men for decades and thought they had no need of a marriage license. A number of them found out the hard way that they did. These women could not even visit their dying partners in the hospital, because they were not related. Some were kept out by a wife who had not seen the man in years, and others by children who were raised by the man's ex-wife. They moved in and claimed estates these mistaken women had helped build and thought were theirs.
>
> There are many reasons to marry, but the most important is that marriage dramatically increases the chances the relationship will last. While half of all marriages end in divorce, by my estimate fewer than 5 percent of other living arrangements last a lifetime.
>
> Finally, children from homes with two parents do better in school and in life than those raised under other circumstances.
>
> If you are a woman who wants a traditional marriage with husband and children, do not let anyone talk you out of your dream. It is not only romantic—it is also very practical.

Whether someone likes Molloy's conclusions or not, it's pretty clear that he is far from biased against women. He includes a section in the book about internet dating and recognizes that it is a trend that won't disappear, but advises women on necessary safety precautions if they are going to engage in the practice. His relationship with his young female researchers reveals a lot about him. We know from the incident with his son's spelling errors that he will not tolerate slackers, but he allowed the young researchers whom he respected to push him into doing research he had no desire to do. In his talking about his researchers he appears to be, not exactly a father figure, but something like a favorite uncle in the way he seems to relate to them. In this book, he does what he has always done: he looks around at life, investigates its questions, and gives people answers that are useful to them. His interest in assisting women achieve their goals while emphasizing the importance of safety makes this book helpful even to people who are not, nor likely ever to be, in the position of looking for a husband. It speaks to people who are fascinated by the human condition.

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COLUMNS

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Chaos

by Charles Miess

In the minds of the ancient Greeks, the universe began as a vast, dark abyss. The eighth century B. C. poet, Hesiod, called this state of being, *Chaos*. According to him, Gaia (the Earth), Eros (Love), and Nyx (the Night) sprang from Chaos. Gaia was the mother of many squabbling immortals including the sky-god Uranus. For the most part, she ignored her offspring's petty rivalries but could not ignore Uranus's sexual attraction to her. Their union produced the first generation of true gods, known as the Titans. One of the Titans, Cronus, grew up to despise his sex-crazed father, who spent every waking minute smooching it up with Gaia.

Although Gaia probably stimulated Uranus's desires by lying around all the time being fertile, she soon grew weary of his obsession with her. So, she fashioned an iron sickle and gave it to their son, Cronus, figuring he would know what to do with it. Cronus went out looking for his father and found him in his usual preoccupation with Mother Earth. With a powerful swing of his sickle, he sent his father's offending member across the ocean in a spray of foam. But Uranus's influence was not quite finished. Far to the east, the foam and member magically conceived the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite.

Meanwhile, Cronus was involved in a bit of incest himself and had six children by his sister. He was concerned, however, that his children might perform the same kind of surgery on him as he did to his father. So, he gobbled up each child after it was born. His sister finally got smart and spirited their last child, Zeus, off to Crete. Then she dressed up a stone in baby clothes and fed it to Cronus. Cronus was none the wiser and wolfed it down. Zeus grew up

to rule as one of the most powerful gods, and banish the whole lot of rabble-rousers to the underworld. His troubles were by no means over, but he managed to create a semblance of order among the new breed of immortals.

• • •

The word *chaos* was originally used in the English language in the Greek sense, meaning a great gulf or void. Then during the Renaissance, it gradually acquired the connotation of confusion and disorder—understandable, considering the lawless activities of the gods before Zeus came along to spoil their fun.

By the eighteenth century, the new definition of chaos was firmly established. Poets and writers spent many hours musing about chaos, seeing it as a powerful force in opposition to God. They saw God as the creating force for order and light, Chaos as the un-creating force for disorder and darkness. In addition to its literal sense, the word light was used as a metaphor for reason and intelligence, and that of night, for obscurity and ignorance. Some thought that intellect of humans would eventually eliminate chaos from society. This is exemplified in Alexander Pope's epitaph to Sir Isaac Newton:

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
> God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light.

But Pope also shared the view of many of his contemporaries; he was pessimistic of humankind's ability to use its intelligence and reason properly. He felt that society would eventually slip into chaos and never return. In the fourth book of The *Dunciad* he concludes with:

> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word;
> Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
> And universal darkness buries all.

The eighteenth century optimists explored the possibility of establishing perfect order by eliminating chaos. The pessimist believed that humans will allow their passions to overcome reason, and chaos will eventually reign supreme. The prevailing theme of both, however, was that order is godly and chaos is opposed to God. Order governs the universe, they said, and "Order is Heav'n's first Law" (Pope, *Essay on Man*). But when they said "man created the town and God created the countryside," their logic fell apart.

Things in town are fashioned by people to fulfill their sense of order and rhythm. The flowers in a town garden, for example, are color coordinated, artfully arranged, and free of weeds. Those in the country are a chaotic mixture of wildflowers haphazardly mixed with grasses and shrubs. In a natural wood, trees grow in an orderly fashion while dead limbs and old tree trunks lie disorderly on the ground decomposing—uncreating so to speak. If the countryside is a creation of God, we must conclude that He has an equal fondness for both order and chaos.

When it comes to social order, we should consider that most eighteenth century poets and writers were people of wealth, position, or power. They stood to gain the most from an orderly society. They depended on the labor of the lower classes for the goods and services that they were unwilling to produce themselves. Chaos and instability among the lower classes were a threat to

their lifestyle. The dregs of society, on the other hand, found chaos preferable to the order that kept them shackled to deplorable conditions. Perhaps it is no accident that the greatest nations of the world are those that tolerate a measure of dissention and disorder. If we are a creation of God, we must conclude that He intentionally added a bit of unrulyness to our nature to help keep things equal.

How about the universe? Is it governed by order? The stars are always in their correct position with respect to the seasons. The planets move with an orderly precision across the sky. Eclipses of the sun and moon are predictable centuries into the future because they are governed by seemingly irrefutable laws of physics. Yet, occasionally, a star explodes in a spectacular supernova —an enormous, unpredictable, chaotic event beyond comprehension. For millions, perhaps billions, of years the star's remnants are in a chaotic state before they congregate to form new bodies and a new order. Our solar system is one such example of order created from the chaos of a supernova.

In the primal oceans of Earth, a chaotic mixture of elements and energy led to strings of molecules that would eventually evolve into millions of species of life forms. In a sense, chaos was, and is, the driver of evolution as each species struggles for survival in a chaotic environment. The proliferation of new life across the Earth was only possible with the uncreation of the old.

The Abduction of Psyche
by William-Adolphe Bouguereau

Humans, with their intelligence and reason, have sought to eliminate chaos, and in some respects, they have succeeded. In a civilized society, people inclined to chaotic behavior grudgingly suppress those inclinations for fear of punishment, or they are put in jail or have been relegated to ghetto areas. They are suppressed or separated, but not eliminated.

The chaotic byproducts from the manufacture of the goods and the processing of foods that make life more orderly is piled high in dumps or flushed into rivers and lakes. It is out of sight and out of mind, but it still exists. We have separated ourselves from it, but not eliminated it. This general concept is probably best illustrated by specific examples in a poem by Jonathon Swift. First, we must picture the epitome of order: a pleasant eighteenth century home in London. A dog is lying next to the hearth; the aroma of Yorkshire pudding and turnips is wafting from the kitchen. A table is set for the evening meal. The patter of rain echoes on the roof, while a gentleman sits quietly, reading his evening paper. Swift describes the other end of London, perhaps a ghetto, in this excerpt from "A City Shower."

> Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
> Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,
> Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood.

And so it seems that humankind reduces chaos in one place or time, by concentrating it in another. In God's creations, it appears that order and chaos are equally distributed. In addition,

we have seen examples where order breeds chaos and chaos breeds order. Perhaps order cannot exist without chaos any more than joy without sorrow, elation without disappointment, or beauty without the ordinary. Chaos is neither good nor evil. It is a part of nature and a part of life. We can fight it, but Zeus would probably warn that it is a battle never-ending.

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Classic Poetry Readings

Click on the name of the poem to hear the reading.

Christopher Marlowe 1564-1593
The Passionate Shepherd to His Love
Read by Charles Miess
Sir Walter Raleigh 1552-1618
The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd
Read by Marien Helz
Recorded September 1, 2007

William Shakespeare 1564-1616
Sonnet 29
Read by Charles Miess
Recorded September 1, 2007

William Shakespeare 1564-1616
Sonnet 138
Read by Charles Miess
Recorded September 1, 2007

Robert Burns 1759-1796
Of A' the Airts
Read by Charles Miess
Recorded September 1, 2007

Western Wind
Written by an Unknown Poet
in the 16th century
Read by Marien Helz
Recorded September 1, 2007

William Shakespeare 1564-1616
Sonnet 73
Read by Marien Helz
Recorded September 1, 2007

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