

So There Were These Three Cave-Folks:

A short simple story about wealth: by Rod E. Keays

So there were these three cave-folks, Glim, Glock and Glee. One day while they were standing around the water hole Glim says, "you know, I am so fed up with going hunting now-a-days. There is almost nothing to catch". Glock says "I know what you mean, I had to go out for three days before I could even get a squirrel. What's going on?" Glee agreed and said, "Even the fruit trees are bare, what are we going to do?"

After a long silence Glim added, "You know, something strange happened this year". "What's that?" said Glee and Glock. "I did my fall cleaning and swept out the floor of my cave, and in the spring there was a little tree growing in the same exact spot where I dumped all the debris from the floor. How did the tree get there?" An even longer silence was felt as the three friends mulled over this strange occurrence. Glim spoke first "You know it is exactly the same as the fruit trees I get my apples from". Then Glock retorted "I wonder if we could all grow fruit trees near our caves?"

Well that set them off like a pack of mad-people, all sweeping out their floors. Nothing happened. Eventually they went to the trees themselves and tried to figure out how they grew. Glee found a small one and pulled it out of the ground. Taking it home he planted it in the same kind of location as it was found-surprisingly it started to grow. The Mad folks set to work again planting little trees all around their cave entrances. In a few years they were rewarded with fresh fruit and they gave thanks and they partied like royalty.

Glock had noticed since planting the trees that more and more animals were coming around to eat the fruit too. At first all three hunted them from their caves until Glee thought if the animals were kept here and we gave them fruit we could have both meat and fruit right at our door. More parties and great royalty-like celebrations followed.

Years later, all three were standing around the water hole when Glim said "You know what? I am going to have more food than I need for this winter. What am I going to do with all the rest?" Well, that particular year Glock and Glee were not going to have enough food for the coming winter and were afraid for the first time in their lives. They both asked Glim to share the extra food with them, but Glim was strangely silent. They pleaded with Glim to be the good friend they had always known Glim to be, but Glim refused, saying it would be safer kept since a bad winter had been foretold.

Glock and Glee met secretly and decided if they were going to survive this winter they would have to get Glim's extra food somehow. If Glim would not give it to them then they would have to....take it.

From this fictional story grew the modern world civilization that we know today. There were many different takes on Glim's decision, other Glim's in other times and

other places decided to share the surplus with neighbors; in others, Glim requested a trade of some kind, like a tool or a piece of metal. Three main solutions were fashioned from all the different decisions on that decisive day. They were the Collaborative (freely sharing the surplus), Individualistic (trading the surplus) and the Raider (stealing the surplus) philosophies and all co-existed with one another to some greater or lesser extent.

The Collaborative communities recognized that there were always going to be talented people in their communities and they considered how could they reward them so they would not become Individualistic or like the Raiders. So they decided to shower them with flattery, do favors for them and always speak highly of them to their friends and families. In exchange for this the wealthy were obliged to give away all or most of their wealth to the community. With all this flattery and favors coming at them the talented people became wealthy much quicker than before and had to give it all away again. And so the community prospered and all the people grew wealthy and happy.

Eventually the Individualistic community, believing everyone should be able to become wealthy independently and would never recognize all the support they had inherited, intentionally used Raider strategies to win out over the Collaborative communities and stole the land, along with the animals and the plants they depended on. They also poisoned the water and the air leaving it infertile and barren. The Collaborative peoples grew sick and started to die off in large numbers. The Individualists and Raiders were everywhere. Everyone was at each other's throats and millions had died in huge wars all because they would not share their surplus.

Then a funny thing started to happen and three workers were standing around a water hole saying there was no food....

We have another choice. What are you going to do this time?

Notes:

Bookchin, Murray. (1991). *The Ecology of Freedom*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
Maybury-Lewis, David. (1992). *Millennium*. New York: Penguin.

Part Two: A Supportive Process:

In Part Two, we begin our work to understand our thoughts and reactions to the story of the Three Cave-People. To begin, please do not decide yet how you feel about it as we are going to develop a sense of trust within the group. I invite you to join with me in a trust circle. It is simple and safe. We stand in a circle, turn to the right, tighten up the circle until we are quite close, then we as a group sit down on the knees behind us. Being in a circle we find we all have a pair of knees to sit on.

The effect is that we all have someone supporting us and someone we support-just like life.

Now I invite you to think about your reactions to the story and your experience with the trust exercise. When you have a sense of your intention I would like you as a group to find a place on a imaginary line on the floor, with the Collaborationists at one end and the Raiders at the other. This exercise requires you to debate with the other participants where you are on that line. I suggest you do not form bunches but in the end stand shoulder to shoulder convinced this is who you are and what you believe to be your true expression on sharing.

I will give you timely warnings so you can make up your mind.

Now that everyone has chosen a position on the line I request participants to discuss the reasons they chose this particular spot and how it feels in comparison to the other participants.

Now that you all have expressed your thoughts about your chosen position I want to remind you that there is no right or wrong answer and every position can be justified. Do you agree or is this the place where enemies with victors and losers are formed? Is it possible to live on this line without making enemies? Do enemies really exist?

Remember that it just might be possible that the most insistent Collaborator might lack world experience or that the most daring Raider might be someone whose talents have gone unrecognized by other societies.

Is it possible to recognize and honor the talents of people who have harmed us, while at the same time honoring those of us who throw caution to the wind?

If we can say yes to both of the above extremes then sharing becomes a natural phenomenon, and cannot be seen as extra-ordinary. We can all become prosperous and healthy because we see everyone has a gift to give; one that might not be appreciated at first.