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A Pathless Journey

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29/4/2023

<https://ecorevoltblog.wordpress.com/2023/04/29/a-pathless-journey/>

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29/4/2023

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the way and do not pretend to. There are spaces where I may be able to guide others, should they wish; as well as spaces where I know I desire the guidance of others.

The wandering of the account I have presented here in writing has no aim, as I am not seeking to Cause anything for the production of a future. This wandering has been aimless but purposeful – the purpose has been catharsis for me and to perhaps affect an individual who reads this and might be struggling with their pathless experience. I do not know how it might affect them and am not expecting any particular affect. I am not waiting, but living – that is all I can do.

If you meet me on the road, kill me (and eat me – but please cook me well)!

Introduction

I am writing this following an invitation to write something on “punk” spirituality and theology. While I would never call myself a practitioner of “punk spirituality” or a “punk theologian”, I have been engaged in activities that I would describe as anti-authoritarian and DIY mysticism and meditation, which has something of a “punk” quality to it – ontological anarchy being my usual category of choice for a great deal of this.

This is not intended as a guide for anyone else, or a work on what I perceive as truth. I would like this to be received as a work of autobiographical and expressive writing. This is my attempt to communicate what I have done and what I am doing.

A Fertile Void

I was born to hippie, artsy, bohemian, mixed religious-cultural and drug addict parents, both of whom were very lost. When I think about my parents meeting and coupling I think of individuals desperately trying to survive amidst an existential abyss of 1980’s counter-culture, industrial-capitalist supremacism, London-urbanism, poor-life choices and families that were not fertile soil for meaningful relationships. I was my mother’s first child that she birthed and my father’s second. They were loving and unwell, often colliding against each other in rage-filled arguments, often making poor choices, but neither one having any ill intent. My father was in and out of rehabs and my mother died in the April of 1999. Dad relapsed, but got clean and has not used drugs since 1999.

While my father was in rehab, my sister and I were moved between different households in my family, eventually being placed in my mother’s parents’ toxic household. They were churchgoing Christians, who always wore their Sunday best,

while also being psychologically and emotionally abusive. Dad got involved in 12 step practice through rehab and became very focused on the importance of having a higher power and a religion to practice. When we moved back in with dad, after over two years of living with mum's parents, I came to take dad's positions that individuals need higher powers and religions as truth.

There is a certain sadness that I feel when thinking about my parents together and these earlier life experiences that I endured. I can also affirm that surviving these situations and events gave me the strength to endure other experiences throughout my life. More than this though, I feel to affirm here the single most powerful gift that my mother gave me, which is the most primal truth I have to draw from and that I hold to this day as core to my being – that I am loved and that there is love for me in the world. Her death has made aspects of this love harder to find over the years, but still I feel it and believe it.

Searching

At a very young age and for the bulk of the second half of my childhood, I became somewhat obsessed with religious belief and different conceptions of God. I took myself to different churches and religious temples, to try and talk to those there and find out their beliefs. I would sit at the computer and look through lists of religions and their beliefs, where they converged and where they differentiated. While I was doing this, I was also experiencing an identity crisis; I didn't know what religious identity to embrace, what sexual identity to call myself and was caught by this notion that I needed a higher power and collective to tell me. He hadn't intended to and was simply trying to pass to his children what he was embracing to keep himself alive, but my father's push for religious devotion had

breath (YHWH as breath sound), and who transforms me into a gigantic bug when I come to recognise them. I would not, in this moment, call myself a theist, but I feel far more comfortable with that perspective than I have for many years, with a very uncomfortable perspective on God/YHWH.

One of the strange qualities of coming back to theism is that it also involves coming back to the religion of my father's family. My great grandparents fled Poland for being Jews and the family became split between multiple countries. The geographic distance made cultural connection a real struggle for me growing up and was an aspect of my early identity crisis. While it was never an intentional aspect of my exploration of the unorthodox thought of Shestov, there is a sweetness about feeling close to something of my background, my roots, my ancestors, which I am glad to be finding.

This exploration is not finished and probably won't be for a few more years and I might not find myself inclined towards an unorthodox Jewish religious perspective at its end. Right now though, I feel the closest I have ever been to one.

A Pathless Journey

As I sit here writing this I notice that I have not followed a path, but have moved through spaces and journeyed far throughout my life so far. This lived experience of psychionomadism has helped me find a pathless practice, praxis and philosophy, which has emerged from me. This is no one's truth other than my truth and no one can take this away from me, without tearing the air from my lungs. Here I am; I am here. I move. I change. I am a transient presence, living egoistically and ecologically in the present. There is a definite DIY-quality to my finding my way through the world to where I am now.

None of this has been written to suggest a path for anyone else, or a practice for anyone else to embrace. I do not know

no way of knowing how little I “know” or “we know” of life on Earth – which is non-separate to me and part of me, whilst not being me. This brings my attention to holism, which is where I have drawn most from Morton’s thought. From a dark-ecological perspective, holism is implosive, subscendental and the whole is less than the sum of its parts; differentiating dark-ecological holism from that of the explosive, transcendentalist holism, common to deep-ecology and similar perspectives that posit that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The transcendental-holism works on the same basic ideology of agricultural-religions, that there is a God who transcends all of Earth and created Earth and all life and who could and would annihilate all life on Earth in an act of vengeance; and much of Gaia-theory and “Mother Nature is pissed off” rhetoric merely changes the gender, whilst retaining the revolting narrative – this is a great deal of Ramon Elan’s philosophy in *Wyrd Against the Modern World*. Subscendental holism, for me, begins with the depression of God’s death, moving into agnostic uncertainty and mystery, and finds sweetness and beauty in tribal/folk religions – moving between these like the tide.

Unorthodox Judaism

In November 2020 I began reading the works of the Jewish existentialist Lev Shestov, with an intention of writing a book on his philosophy. Reading his thought, I found a terrible and awesome philosophy, full of dark and wild thoughts. To really do justice to his thought, I am exploring other Jewish existentialists and philosophers writings, as well as reading the Torah – Kafka, Buber, Zeitlin, Spinoza and Abram are the main individuals I am reading for this. This project has brought me perhaps the closest to theistic belief I have been, since I was a teenager – though this theism is that of a radically monist, immanent, absurd and irrational God, whose name I say through

inspired a fear in me, fuelled by the existential terror of almost being rendered an orphan at 7 years of age.

There were periods when I called myself a Christian, a Zoroastrian, a Pagan, among others, but the religious identity that I adopted and stuck with the longest was Buddhist. My interest in Buddhism started when I took myself to a temple on Wimbledon Common when I was 14. I liked Buddhism because of the pacifism and negative-hedonism I found throughout the followers and practitioners. I started practicing Buddhism around the same time as I adopted an individualist and pacifist anarchist political position, in the second half of my teens – I was also reading Nietzsche, Emma Goldman, Emile Armand, Albery Libertad, Camus and other anarchists and existentialists. I was increasingly hostile towards the concept of God and those who believe in God, while repeating the “Buddhism isn’t a religion; it’s a spirituality” line. This was also a period of intense rage, without a process of expression and catharsis, and self-renunciation, as I felt increasingly hostile towards Samsara – the world of birth, suffering and death.

Then, on my 19th birthday, I was diagnosed with a brain tumour. My Buddhist practice during this period of my life was heavily influenced by the teachings of the monk Geshe Kelang Gyatso, with an emphasis on “happy” being the right way to be. I was quite dogmatically attached to a Buddhist inspired pacifist-anarchism, citing Gandhi as one of my go-to political heroes. I was very moralistic and attached the concept of karma, in ways that justified a belief that “everything will turn out the way it ought to” non-attachment/detachment. I loved it when people described me as being “zen”. I continued this practice right through cancer treatment and tried to continue it after, but could not.

Dying

Having a brain tumour is an existentially terrifying and agonisingly painful experience, which I would not wish upon any other individual. Hydrocephalus migraines render the rest of the world mute, as there is nothing other than that pain to give attention to. To say that the experience of having a brain tumour and being a cancer patient felt like dying feels true and while I am sure there are individuals without the experience who would call me dramatic, I am just glad that they have not had those experiences.

While the experience is awful, dreadful, agonising and not one I'd like to repeat, it is also utterly Real and true in ways that I cannot deny. Brutally-Real, the truth of my individuality and existential aloneness became utterly unquestionable to me. I was loved intensely throughout the experience, in particular by my partner, now wife, as well as my father, who was still trying to encourage me to become more "spiritual" and less angry.

During the months following treatment, I became increasingly suicidal, as I lost hope in karmic-morality and found myself unable to non-attach to the pain I had experienced. Buddhistic thought and the standards for how I "should be" were fuelling a desire for life renunciation, which I could justify through the history of self-mummification and self-immolation within the religion's ascetic practices.

After this, I returned to reading Camus and Nietzsche, and found myself re-invigorated with life-affirmation and falling back in love with individualist and existentialist thought. After reading Heidegger's essays on technology and enframing, I became increasingly interested in anti-technology philosophy and politics, which then brought my attention towards environmental matters. It was from this ground that I wrote my first book *Feral Consciousness* – a work of individualist-anarchist environmentalism, from a materialist ontological orientation,

in the potential of folk-horror stories as a means of perceptual attack and culture jamming.

The inspiration here from Bey comes from the paragraph in his *Endarkenment Manifesto* where he envisages a medicine praxis utterly different from that of the technologically dependent one that Enlightenment sciences have produced. This medicine praxis, as Bey describes, is not oriented towards prolonging life-spans, and for me is not about getting individuals back into work as quickly as possible. Rather, this is a medicine praxis oriented towards health, wellness and liberation. The crux of this is, as I see it, re-Earthing medicine-praxis, through practices such as anarchist-herbalism, village-hedge witchcraft, (yes) shinrin-yoku and other similar practices.

Timothy Morton's influence comes in no small part from his philosophy of dark-ecology. Morton describes dark-ecology as being like chocolate and moving through three different stages; depressing, into mysterious and then into sweet – I don't know if it is necessarily as definite or linear as this, but I share the perspective of ecological-awareness involving all of these experiences (as well as more). I am intentionally going to focus on the mysterious aspect of dark ecology here. Morton draws from Freud's concept of the uncanny, to articulate that dark ecology invokes something of strangeness (that is familiar) – I'd say becoming familiar with strangeness. While Morton describes this as invoking a form of eco-gnosis – as a form of gnosticism – I somewhat depart from him here, as for me this invokes agnosticism. Suddenly, through embracing endarkenment and dark ecology, I find myself immersed within a world containing invisible atmospheric pathogenic ecosystems, which I cannot claim to know, but encounter when I am ill; I encounter the potential for shadow biospheres, which may be present anywhere in the world on the microbial level (including my body) and potentially in non-assimilated spaces on the macro-level; which brings my attention to what is called the "unseen species problem" and the extent to which there is

Endarkenment

My initial desire, as I come to write about endarkenment here, is to differentiate endarkenment from “the Dark Enlightenment” and what I have come to call lightlessness, meaning a form of pessimistic-helplessnessism that claims knowledge of why it is best to give up and renounce life. Both of these modes of thought strike me as forms of gnosticism, claiming knowledge and with it certainties, which endarkenment, for me, is the inversion of. For me, endarkenment is active-agnosticism, as a passionate embrace of uncertainty. This invokes, perhaps unsurprisingly, an anti-Enlightenment will, towards both spiritual and scientific “Enlightenment”, particularly with regards to how both seek transcendence and the elevation of “humanity” above the living wild world, often called Earth. Through subsending and descending into the living wild world, endarkenment invokes mysterious and mystical uncertainties and desires for exploration of the world and self, in an eco-egoist sense of differentiation-without-separation; individualist-holism. Three of my main inspirations for this movement in my praxis were Giles Deleuze, Hakim Bey and Timothy Morton.

Drawing from Deleuze’s philosophy of dark-precursors – untraceable precursors that prefigure events, rendering their origins dark and uncertain – I found a means of describing my activist praxis as non-localisable localism. This is somewhat similar in ethos to what Klee Benally describes as being “unknowable” in his writing on indigenous-activist praxis. Being dark, non-localisable, unknowable, or what other term you might prefer, there is a becoming-uncertain that occurs. “How did that happen”, “why is that like that” or “I can find no reason for that to happen” are the sorts of desired responses to this praxis. The terrain becomes endarkened and ecological-absurdity manifests as the world is stranger. I see this as invoking something of folk-horror and I am increasingly interested

which I was advancing from a position of Nietzschean return-to-flesh. I had found that the world is dying from a cancerous entity, much like I was, and with that a fierce desire to affirm life and challenge the cancer.

Hylozoic Mysticism

Immediately after the publishing of *Feral Consciousness* I became intensely interested in philosophy of mind and radical-monist ontology, while also desiring an animist experience of the world. Becoming increasingly revolted by eliminative materialism (and other materialist ideologies), I came to embrace a panpsychist philosophy of mind, which I retain now. This movement away from materialism brought me to something of desiring an animist experience of the world, which I have seen individuals, such as Wildermuth, claim to have (and even offer courses on attaining, for a fee). The animist experience is not one I could claim to have, as I see animism as requiring an experiential depth of relationship with wild living beings and an intensity of immersion within a habitat, that the technologies that surround me and the socialisation I have experienced do not provide. It would be inauthentic of me to claim to be an animist as animism strikes me as requiring an intensity of lived experience lived by individuals who are indigenous to where they live, or have lived throughout their lives outside colonialism and techno-industrial apparatus. So I don’t describe myself as an animist. Many of the individuals I see marketing themselves as animists strike me as inauthentic and lacking sincerity – though I could be wrong.

Hylozoism means something very similar to animism, in that it is a philosophy that affirms that life is a quality of all physicality, but does not have the same connection to indigenous life experience. So this became a term I could use to articulate an understanding and perspective of the world, while

not posturing a lived experience that I do not have. I found this most valuable when writing *Feral Iconoclasm*, which includes a chapter that is a rejection of materialism.

Hylozoism has been a useful concept for me when reflecting upon my encountering the world in ways that I would describe as mystical experiences. What I mean by mystical experiences are those that have been ineffably beyond words, undeniably real and yet paradoxical, and also bringing me an experience of awesomeness for how alive I find the world to be. Standing by the edges of cliffs, staring out to the sea, I have had deeply hylozoic-mystical experiences, which I could never adequately describe in words and so shan't attempt to try. If I tried to explain it here I would utterly fail and the attempt to do so feels almost disrespectful.

Meditation

When I abandoned my Buddhist practice I said to myself that I was giving up meditation practice too. Perhaps this was true for what I thought meditation was – I certainly do not embrace the Buddhist mediation models I was seeking to follow during that period of my life. But I did not give up all that I have come to consider meditation to be.

My most active return to meditation came after a different health crisis and as a means of surviving with post-traumatic stress. This active return to meditation was an intentional and focused subsidence into the wild untamed habitat that my body and mind is. Feeling the blood moving through the rivers of veins that meander through my body. Noticing the experience of my skin as a landscape for micro-animals and insects, how it feels for the wind to impact upon this landscape. Remembering woods and forests in my mind and exploring them as energies to draw from while trying to survive amidst this techno-industrial death camp. While in woods, or by streams

and scream and be-with other living presences, here and now. I don't want to sacrifice anyone I love for the Cause of some imaginary future, or retaining some idealised past.

While these (anti-)political qualities to my presentism exist, there is an obvious and more meditative quality to the practice. When I am calm and not wrapped up in activity, experiencing where I am with greater attention, I notice the present moment with greater intensity. The present to me is all there is and all there ever will be.

Wild Magick

I use the term wild magick here specifically to avoid the (false) dichotomy and dualism of order-chaos, which I have continually found to be bullshit – I see no order or chaos in civilisation(/statism) nor wildness(/anarchy). I do not see civilisation and wildness as a dualism, as I encounter wildness as the radical-monism (which is a pluralism) that is Being – civilisation is, to me, a Realities that is an illusion and an illusion that exists, but is not Real. So, what I mean by wild magick is the magick that I encounter in the world, or rather the encounters in the world that I experience as magickal.

One such encounter is the breaking of a bay leaf and breathing in the phytoncides, noticing the calming affect this has on my nervous system and my immune system being boosted by these invisible forces released by the leaf. Another example is that of a robin who came to visit me minutes after I was in a car crash that could have killed me, just being with me for several seconds. I honestly could never list all the examples – I won't try.

A koan that I have played with, drawing from the Maya paradox, is this – Realities are illusions and illusions exist. This is of particular importance to me while thinking about technology and its impact on experience and perception. I invite you to consider this koan for yourself. Another example of where this koan is meaningful for me is when thinking about authority – I consider the Reality of authority an illusion, but it seems true to me that this illusion exists.

A mantra that I have often used in meditation is this – I am not waiting and I am not expecting. This mantra is one that brings my attention to the living present and the presences I encounter here.

Presentism

With the anti-History turn that my thought took just before writing *Feral Iconoclasm*, I became increasingly inclined towards presentist practice and philosophy of time – presentism could also be termed immediatism, as in the not-waiting-for-the-revolution practices of many rebels engaged in activities in the here and now, as well as what Hakim Bey was writing about in his book titled *Immediatism*. Presentism for me is egoistically, ecologically and phenomenologically obvious, as life resides in the present, here and now. It is spatially, geographically, situationally, place focused, rather than productive/narrative focused, (anti-)politically speaking; as an anti-History praxis. This was one of the main focuses of the aforementioned book and still remains a huge aspect of my philosophy and practice.

The positive affirmation of embodied living presence, which is at the core of presentist praxis, strikes me as so important, amidst the totalitarian negativity of the mass-extinction machine death camp of Leviathan/Moloch. I want to live and care and fight and laugh and love and rebel and cry

and rivers, or standing upon cliffs looking out to the sea, I began noticing the experience of the paradox of my being an absurdly small aspect of these environments alongside the egoist encounter of these spaces becoming and being extensions of my individual selfhood – with ontological anarchist defiance in the face of the law-of-non-contradiction, I have embraced this paradox.

With my hostility towards belief in God lessening and lessening over the years, at the point of returning to active and engaged mediation I began to embrace the label of fundamentalist-agnostic, becoming increasingly open to the idea of God, from a non-dual and radically monist concept. While I have always enjoyed Pagan aesthetics, I would not describe this opening up as anything more than an aesthetic embrace of Paganism. In Shivaism, a modest interest during the initial opening-up was occurring, and I would often chant to myself “om nama Shivay” (and still occasionally do). But this opening-up was more than anything else an extension of my subscendental meditation and playing with the idea of me being an aspect of God and God being and extension of me.

Gurus

As I began returning to active meditation and the literature surrounding meditation practices and techniques, as well as different traditions, I started becoming increasingly uncomfortable with and revolted by individuals who position themselves and are upheld as teachers and authorities on meditation. Cult leaders like Osho and those who I came to see as seeking to create their own personality cults, as wise-men with the spiritual knowledge, including individuals I had looked on as friends, were of interest to me – particularly with regards to the pitfalls and dangers of meditation cultures. (I feel to quietly and gently note here that one of the main motivations

for my movement away from collaborating with the project Gods and Radicals came from increasingly coming to view the main individual involved in that project as seeking to create their own personality cult, as a druidic-Marxist-guru figure). Likewise, individuals like Ram Dass and Sadhguru, who encourage mediation practices that encourage individuals to repress and alienate themselves from their experience of anger and other “bad” emotions, reignited the flames of frustration towards meditation practices and spiritualities in general. The commodification and mechanical mass production of mindfulness meditation practices and the spiritual-industrial-complex, spearheaded by the likes of Jon Kabat-Zinn (another public guru figure, seemingly amassing a significant cult of personality) likewise only emboldened my desire to rebel against the meditation-spirituality-establishment through refusing to participate. While I am loathed to mention him here, I notice how Jordan Peterson has become a guru figure for many looking to be shown the way by individuals who feel lost and want an authority to teach them the path to walk and feel revolted and despairing.

Largely for his anti-authoritarianism and hostility towards guru figures, when coming back into meditation practice and coming to create a practice for myself, I became fond of listening to Krishnamurti speaking. This affection was more like heroism than looking to him as a teacher or provider of wisdom or knowledge. Like how I treat individuals like John Africa, John Moore, John Muir (yes 3 Johns), Henry David Thoreau and Edward Carpenter as individuals that I am impressed by and respect a great deal of what they did, while not considering them to be authorities on anything or providers of “the path”, my relationship towards Krishnamurti is more one of heroic appreciation, than of a follower adoring or venerating a teacher.

An individual occupying something of a guru position, who I have struggled to balance my appreciation of and feelings of

violence of annihilation from this culture, but I am committed to doing my best to care for living beings as a rebellion against the machinery of mass-death.

One of the aspects of this medicine-person practice that took particular focus during COVID-19 lockdowns was an amateur herbalism practice, largely comprised of drying leaves and making herbal teas. I have given the teas out to friends and loved ones as gifts.

I notice, again, something of being close to something I dislike. Medicine-practitioners outside of the industrial-medical-complex, particularly traditional and indigenous examples, are often given the identity of “shaman”, following from anthropological use of the term, which originates in the Germanic and Russian languages – I believe its original use was in reference to Siberian medicine-people, but I could be wrong. This blanket use of the term “shaman” has seemingly all but erased the multitude of different medicine person practices. Not only this, but the term has been capitalised upon by individuals, groups and organisations to market neo-shamanism as pathways and practices for individuals to follow, courses to undertake and so on. I notice individuals like Barry Goddard adopting guruist like positions, under the identity of “shaman”.

As I am not drawing from any traditional or indigenous culture’s medicine-practice, and am not a Siberian tribal medicine person, it would be utterly inauthentic and a lack of integrity for me to call myself a shaman, or neo-shaman. I live without an indigenous culture where I live and am here due to diaspora. My emerging medicine-person practice is something that I am learning and self-creating, for myself and those I love.

Mantras and Koans

I have enjoyed mantras and koans, for meditative purposes.

die long before theirs too. With this I was thrown into the experience of my personal ecological-absurdity, along with the enjoyment of my silliness and an intense feeling of love for these wild-beings. While this feeling brings me something of sobering, there's also something of mental-liberation from the type productivity-consciousness that I see as very normal in this culture, without the transcendentalism that often goes with trying to get out of productivism – subsistence, in my lexicon. While similar to both; eco-absurdism, for me, lacks the top-down/above-it-all God's eye view of Thacker and Zapffe-type cosmic-pessimism and the meanness of Jeffers-type inhumanism, lacking its certainty. When encountering my ecological-absurdity I notice, with my uncertainty, the uncertainty of others and a particular unreasonableness. This occurred yesterday through a moment of relationship with a tiny holly plant. I couldn't know how they came to grow from where they were, why they had taken root there, or what compels their will-to-life – I could adopt an absurd-reasoning and seek to construct a story, but that wouldn't be truth. The truth I felt in that space was an intense love and care for the small evergreen. Their evergreenness held (absurd) meaning for me; when considering how they grew in ecological-absurdity and how much decay and collapse I have seen in inhumanism and cosmic-pessimism – friends embracing a form of helplessness that I do not. While this walk was done purposefully (or perhaps with absurd-purpose), I did not have any aims or goals in the process.

Medicine-Person Practice

The decision to train as a shinrin-yoku guide came alongside a desire to find a medicine-person practice that I could engage in and care for the living as I live amidst mass-extinction machinery. I know that I cannot save any living being from the

revolt towards, is Peter Lamborn Wilson(/Hakim Bey). While integrity brings me to wanting to affirm that I have drawn a great deal from Wilson's writings and value a great deal of it, I am choosing here to focus on the aspect of his thought that pertains to him occupying a guru-like position of path-provider and my rejection of that path. The paths that Wilson positions as the-way are the TAZ (temporary autonomous zone) and escapism through Amish-like religious-communes – these are not entirely separate in his thought and theory, but I am differentiating them for the sake of clarity. That the TAZ has been assimilated into this culture so intensely through events like Burning Man festival renders it little more than a false promise to me – I largely see TAZs as TTZs (temporary totalitarian zones). Likewise, I do not trust in the promise land of the religious commune as anything other than a totality of capture. I cannot deny that I feel some level of appreciation for Wilson's thought and writings, but find his guruism and path revolting and utterly undesirable.

Another guruistic individual who I have mixed feelings regarding the work of is that of Ramon Elani. Elani has written both brilliant and dreadful pieces of writing, from a perspective undoubtedly similar to mine. I also consider his affirmation of global warming as a presence not to try to transcend, but one to be lived through, to be both brave and brilliant. However, I equally encounter his quietism and esoteric-elitism revolting. I write this feeling disappointed to be doing so – doing so has been done out of my desire to write with integrity and authenticity.

While I've been writing (and editing) this, there has been a spectacle regarding the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, and this has got me thinking about auto-iconoclasm – when a religious figure, cult leader and/or guru destroys their own image, usually by forgetting who their audience are. Regardless of whether or not his interactions with a young boy were abuse or normal Tibetan cultural practices; the Dalai Lama has a

large audience of westerners, who his books have been sold and who he has become largely popular amongst, who have had their image of him destroyed – partially or entirely – due to him forgetting that his audience is one who will see his actions as abusive. Thinking about auto-iconoclasm, I notice myself trusting that many individuals do just destroy their own image as authority-to-show-people-the-way. Those who don't tend to have churches, organisations and institutions to defend their image. This brings my attention to Derrick Jensen, who I see as embodying something of a guruistic figure, who has, at least partially, destroyed their own image in auto-iconoclasm, and the efforts his marketing organisation Deep Green Resistance go to attempting to not let that collapse. A friend who has Derrick Jensen as a friend on Facebook told me the other day that Jensen mostly uses his account to post anti-trans and other politically-right wing rhetoric, which suggests to me that he is somewhat committed to destroying his image as a valuable voice and writer, within the anarchist and environmentalist discourses that he previously sought to reach individuals through – this would make sense given his movement towards anti-anarchism. (Jensen blocked me on Facebook several years ago, so I have not seen these posts for myself.)

Purposeful Aimless Wandering

My walking practice began initially as a means of exercise and regaining strength after cancer treatment. I took to hiking for miles in the areas around where I was living, exploring the woods, valleys, river and streams surrounding my home in particular. While I didn't call it meditation at first, there was definitely a meditative quality to the practice from the start. I was drawing from my the inspiration I found in Thoreau and

Nietzsche and took walking to be an activity for contemplation, noticing, thought and philosophy.

With my return to active meditation practice, my walking practice became more actively meditative and less about exercise and walking significant distances. I became increasingly interested in the practice of shinrin-yoku and in August last year (2022) I began training as a shinrin-yoku guide. How I'd describe the meditative aspects of this walking practice is purposeful-aimless-wandering, with the activity not having a destination to reach, but having the purpose of deeply experiencing being-here.

As I sit here writing this I notice the potential for me to be accused of being a hypocrite for training as a shinrin-yoku guide, for having just shared hostile feeling towards the authority of the guru. I don't claim to live without contradictions that could be grounds to accuse me of being a hypocrite. Even so, I do feel that there is a difference between a guide and an authority, with one offering advise, help and invitation, and the other offering direction, instruction and commands.

As part of my shinrin-yoku course, I need to do at least one all day meditative walk, done whilst fasting – the course calls this a “medicine walk” and/or “vision quest”. I am intending to do three of these and yesterday (as I write this paragraph) I did my first of these. It was an utterly beautiful and intense experience, walking and meditating through the East Lyn River Valley all day, having only eaten a small amount of food before heading off and only eating again as I foraged wild garlic at the very end of my journey. For an hour I sat inside of a dead tree, which was mostly dried out, and shortly after this, whilst sat on a rock in the river, was joined by ducklings going for what appeared to be their first swim. One of my main thoughts/reflections/observations from yesterday was noticing how tiny and inconsequential I felt before the rocks, river and trees surrounding me. The physicality, body, that I am is far weaker and easily breakable than theirs, and will hopefully