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Julian Langer  
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2018

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# Wounded Healers

searching for questions

Julian Langer

2018

*A woman who was born in a tree and had spent her entire life swinging from branch to branch, never using her legs to run upon the forest floor, woke up and, for reasons that she could not entirely comprehend, decided that she would teach her friend, who had lived in the same fashion as she, how to walk. They both climbed down, scratching their faces, arms, hands, legs and feet on the tree's surface, and fell upon the floor, with their backs on the ground, looking up at the sun's light shining through the branches, breaching the leaf cover. Instantly they were aware of a myriad of strange creatures, that they had never encountered before, from the treetop, moving around them – not by sight, but by their movement over and between both their bodies. They tried to name them, classify them, so as to form pictures in order to understand these strange beings they found themselves immersed within. But as this ended in failure, the woman stated to her friend that they should stand and begin running. Using each others bodies for support, they attempted to stand, but fell back to the ground, their bodies now twisted together, and they start kissing and caressing each other, as eros fell with the gravity that brought them back to the earth.*

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This story has not ended, and it will not end here. If there is a story of this space, this is one whose picture reflects my experience of the space we are.

Most of us who find ourselves drawn to radical politics didn't arrive here because of well reasoned arguments, or because we found ourselves, due to privileges, in comfortable circumstances, that we'd very much like to end for entirely self-less reasons. We aren't the ones that the system that is this machinery worked for and provided what needs we desired being met. We almost certainly had to work outside or against the machinery to fulfil those desires.

We recognise the cracks in the machinery and the systemic failings, because we have lived within those spaces and as those spaces. The absurdity of this culture, the madness of the machine that is Leviathan<sup>1</sup> is something obvious to us, because we have fallen to the earth, and felt the impact of that upon our bodies.

My falling to the earth has involved many experiences that will be similar to many others within this space. I lived the violence of economics through finding myself caught between contradictory families of poor middle-class Italian-American catholic culture, who had once known great luxury and affluence; and wealthy working-class Jewish culture, that had migrated between many nations to find itself in London doing far "better" than they'd ever expected; while living with my recovering crack and heroin addict father, getting by on whatever we could. While I only lived it when I moved to Devon at 14 and encountered young people who had never met anyone of a Jewish background, my first sensations of the violence of racism was through learning of historical spaces of racial prejudice, in particular the violence of concentration camps.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'The Temple Was Built Before the City'

<sup>2</sup> ed. – see Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'

something you know nothing about? It is a space full of questions and the potential for healing and regrowth.

I lay here on my back. I'm staring at the sun through the leaves and the branches, amazed at its power and wonder "where am I?"

everyone fighting for the healing of the earth they are! Not necessarily for the answers they bring, but for the questions they embody. I'd like to think that there is space for a mad bizarre creature, dancing by the coast and under trees in Briton, who writes and talks about feral spaces, about destroying time/history and about creating as psychological warfare, within the medicine cabinet, as a space, not for answers, but for healing.

I have no illusions about everyone getting along<sup>34</sup> and I'm not seeking to prescribe anything. I'm just questioning whether or not any of us have any answers that are "the right answer" and be open to the possibility that, between the different spaces I've mentioned, and Ones that I haven't discussed and/or don't know about, there seems to be the greatest potential for healing.

In my piece published by G&R on my experience of technology as being a cancer patient I recounted different ways that healing was being brought to me, such as prayer, rieki, crystal healing, meditation, juices, radiation therapy, herbal remedies, steroids, brain surgery and more. As I stated in that piece, I don't really know what did anything and what did nothing. I know that I struggled to walk at various times during that process. I know now that I can walk whenever I want to do so, taking great pleasure in walking in the woods near my house and by the sea. While walking the other day, along the side of a steep drop into the sea, I looked out and saw that I was at the edge of a world, and what I noticed about that space most was that there were no answers – just lots of questions.

We are at the edge of a world. Whether it is systemic collapse, or runaway global warming, or a revolution, we are at the edge of this world, as the-earth-we-are becomes something we haven't known, there are no answers – how can you give answers about

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ments would be weaker if we were all anarchists. But those who push movements to create political parties, to participate in elections, or to imagine the revolution as the creation of a new state are putting us all in danger" (Socialism: Let's Not Resuscitate the Worst Mistake of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century).

<sup>34</sup> ed. – see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight'

My first experience of the violence of rape culture, where as a young "man" I was aware of what was going on, was when the very Christian IT [*information technology*] teacher, who years later got arrested and sent to prison for paedophilia, showed me extremely violent pornography, during a period of my life where I was openly questioning my sexuality and exploring homosexual identity. There are other experiences, some of which I have shared here before, but I will leave it as these for now.

Your fall to the earth might well be similar. You might have felt the impact of racism upon your being. You might have felt the impact of poverty and class-culture within your life. You might have felt rape culture touch your skin and violate who it is you are. Your experiences might have been worse than mine. The struggles I have lived might pale in comparison to those you have experienced. I am in no position to claim any monopoly on the experience of suffering, and I live now a life of relative comfort, as someone who fits the identity of white, male, heterosexual and many more positions that can be considered as privileged.

Regardless, we are survivors, and that is important. Whatever happened to us, we have survived whatever happened, as right now, here in this space, we are alive. If you are reading this now, as I was writing this in the space of now that I am living within, you are alive. You are alive as Life. Where we are alive we are the potential for what is impossible and, perhaps more beautifully, what is possible.

That is the strength that survival brings. What we can take as the value from our suffering is the strength that survival has brought us. Empowered, we are the embodied potentiality of possible, as we are not impossible. We have the power to create impossibilities, through the potentiality we embody and manifest within-and-as-the-world-as-being-in-the-world.

This strength does not come without scars though. Many of us still bear open wounds, as we continue to live within the machine that enacts violence upon our being. We are all the world, as we

are Life, and so we are all, in some way or another, impacted by the violence the machine Leviathan inflicts upon the earth we fall upon, as we fall into our being.

Within all our desire, I believe, there is a primal search for healing and wellness. To heal ourselves, and to help others heal. We all want to be the medicine-people of our tribes – many of us falling into the commercialisation of Siberian shamanism and fashion-revolutions, in our haste to be healers. As such, we become the woman from the tree, trying to teach our friend to run, when we have never walked before.

So as we go to bring what we can to facilitate healing, whether that is by confronting the enactor of violence, or by tending to the wounds that have been left, we bring with us the scars and wounds we bear as survivors.

It seems important to acknowledge that, for the most part, all memory of what it was to be healthy is, for the most part, lost to us, as we and the world we are is not what was and can never be so again: “an individual cannot quote the same Heraclitus quote about rivers twice, because it is not the same Heraclitus quote about rivers<sup>3</sup> and they are not the same individual” – Julian Langer [*ed. – author of the piece*]. The world that was has dissipated into impossibility, through the transient motion of the present. This space is forever changed. It also stands that we, as observers of the world, as the-world-observing-itself, desiring ourselves-as-the-world-healed, have an effect wherever we observe, from the quantum scale right through to scales of epic magnitude that we have no ability to comprehend, changing the topography of the space, from our observations as a wounded-world-observing-itself.

Whatever understanding we have of the world is never free-floating, never independent from the subjectivity we embody, as psychic-spaces, body-spaces and as space-as-community. So what-

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<sup>3</sup> ed. – “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

This is something that happens so much within our spaces.<sup>32</sup> It is sad to see it when it does – the relationships that fall apart, potential for beautiful creativity left no longer possible through hurt.

What do we do then?

I value G&R for being a space that is open to more questions than most. Rhyd knows that I am sceptical of the revolutionary approach he and many who share in that space prescribes. But Rhyd and the rest of those involved with G&R bring to the world a space that embodies the ecology of “monism=pluralism”, and I value them for that.

I believe that the greatest potential for healing goes with embracing a diverse scope of questions and the exploration of a medicine cabinet (monism) that includes a wide array of medicines (pluralism). I’ve heard Derrick Jensen being filmed saying “we need it all” on multiple occasions, and I agree; we need us all! We need trans-folk, queer-folk, radical feminists, anarchists, primitivists, nihilists, communists, anti-racists, anti-capitalists, anti-socialists,<sup>33</sup> environmentalists, anti-colonialists, and basically

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<sup>32</sup> ed. – see ‘Between Punishment & Vengeance’

<sup>33</sup> ed. – “In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, socialism and communism were largely synonymous, and as often as not they referred to the dream of a future without all the institutions at the service of bankers, landlords, and factory owners; a future without the State. Since Marxism crowded out the utopian variations of socialism, however, the term has come to refer to the authoritarian shift in the international anticapitalist movement. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century socialism referred to a range of state policies, whether these were states created in the course of revolutions or pre-existing states captured through electoral means by socialist parties. It is in reference to this experience that I say that socialism was the greatest mistake of the last two centuries, and if over the next few decades we do not survive the ravages of capitalism, the dead end of socialism will bear much of the blame. [...] I am not writing this argument to go around in the interests of dogmatism. I don’t want to make everyone think like me. On a neighborhood level, I’m fine working with people with terrible ideas, as long as they’re not calling the cops or doing other things that put other neighbors in danger. On a larger scale, I’m happy to work with people who aren’t anarchists, and I think our move-

nicating ideas and non-normative approaches to meaning-making) and radical hermeneutics (as interpreting the world and information in different ways to those that fit the overly simplistic problem-solution approach).

As far as our medicine cabinet goes, I value what both LBC (and Aragorn!, Ramon Elani and others involved) and John Zerzan (along with Black and Green Press and Kevin Tucker), bring as wounded manifestations of earth, (egoistically) trying to heal itself. I value the questions they ask and, some (not all), of the answers they provide.

A space, within the world of Facebook and blog discourse, that it seems has far too many answers and no where near enough questions, who revels in factionalist dramas (and has largely succeeded in alienating themselves from many others within this space – most noticeably those they were “friends” with), is the Spacegeist blog for The Glitchy Phantasm. TGP is someone who embodies so much that needs healing, within our space. From what little I know of who-they-are, while I don’t value the shit they dump into that world of discussion, (shit that is certainly the manifestation of the wounds they have undergone within their life,) I hope they manage to find a space-to-be that nurtures their well-being, as the well-being of the earth-they-are-manifest-Extensions-of. There was, and to some extent still is, a great deal that interests me about their creativity, but I hope they move away from some of the answers they have chained their-self to.

The space that I found myself most significantly disappointed by TGP/SG was in their attempts to blacklist the pagan space of Rhyd Wildermuth<sup>31</sup> and Gods & Radicals, through encouraging witch-hunts. The motivation for their attempting to challenge Rhyd and G&R is seemingly out of interpreting those spaces and not managing to see past their personal wounds.

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<sup>31</sup> ed. – see A New Luddite Rebellion

ever understanding we bring as healers will bring with it all that we are and all that is us.

I recently underwent an experience were two very wounded people were trying to bring healing to each other, one of which is a friend who is close to me. They ultimately ended up bringing each other more harm, as the situation became more and more abusive. One party became physically violent and the other stayed, knowing it would get worse, but hoping what they knew was wrong. Neither wished harm on the other – they were both trying to be loving and failed, because, like the woman trying to teach her friend to walk, they are both wounded people, trying to facilitate healing, with no memory of what wellness ever felt like. The situation fell apart, into hurt and anger; love transformed into something that neither of them had wished for;<sup>4</sup> and the best of intentions weren’t enough. Their wounds meant they were not strong enough to support each other. Where they ended up was somewhere entirely worse than where they had been.

I have noticed something similar when I have witnessed groups trying to provide group healing to each other, when they all bare similar wounds. My father’s been involved in 12 Step fellowships for the bulk of my life. All of his friends have been from within that space. They all look to each other for healing and support. There is something beautiful within that world, but the tragedy is that this goes side-by-side a cultish image of well-being, that amounts to psychic-vampirism. Sponsee drains sponsor and sponsor drains sponsee. They are all beholden to each other, out of moral obligation towards whatever their “higher power” is. Eventually most fall out of the program and relapse, which often leads to death by overdosing. Those who last the longest are those whose vampirism is able to be sustained the longest, sucking from the wounds of those who suck from the wound of whomever is suck from them. And

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<sup>4</sup> ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg46

I am yet to meet anyone from that space who embodies anything that resembles wellness.

The tragedy of both these situations is that there is no “bad guy”, no one to blame. Both involve individuals acting out of love, with beautiful intentions, but for the most part resulted in something awful and ugly. The wounds their bodies have been left with, psychically and in flesh, make healing within-those-spaces impossible. Eventually the space becomes impossible and everything falls apart.

Ontologically and existentially everything that is will be impossible and dissipate into nothingness. Everything ends and eventually healing becomes as impossible as being.

But as survivors, who know what it is to embrace the potential of possibility by staking a claim in what it is to Be-in-the-world, as in to-care, we know that in front of our experience of impossibility comes our experience of the possible. We know what it is to experience freedom. We know what it is to experience beauty. We know what it is to experience love. With all the suffering and struggle, the impossibility, there is what makes Life desirable.

There is an absurdity to the situation that seems inescapable. We know our projects will eventually become nothing. At some point all of this will be irrelevant. If the anthropocene extinction event<sup>5</sup> doesn't take all of us with it, whatever happens, at some point in that space called the future, which never arrives but is apparently coming, the sun will explode, taking with it the earth and all that lives there.

But we still desire healing. There is an irrationality to this that is instinctual, visceral, primal and seems to be manifest from the animal bodies that we are. Our wounded animal bodies, who desire our individualised bodies healed, as well as the body of the earth

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<sup>5</sup> ed. – For some troubling of this framing, see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4: ‘A Web of Relations & Tensions’

The publishers of my books, Little Black Cart, often get grief for being non-judgemental and for not giving hardline answers, that can be rallied around, while being more interested in exploring areas of thought not often questioned.<sup>28</sup> This though is what I value about them. I think we don't do ourselves any favours when we are quick to jump to answers and reluctant to explore questions.

One of LBC's most persistent critics is John Zerzan<sup>29</sup> – another writer, like Derrick Jensen and Hakim Bey, who I have a sensation of love for, that is contrasted with my frustration over so much about him.<sup>30</sup> Zerzan's writings have had a huge impact on my perspective and writings. He is undoubtedly someone who questions far more than most, or at least has questioned more than most – as it appears that in recent years he has become more interested in providing answers, than questioning what is occurring in our present situation; (I would point out that, for the most part, John's explorations through questioning have taken historicised forms, where matters are, in an entirely indefinite way, definite through their linguistic form). My experience of John Zerzan, as he has been over recent years (particularly through his radio show), is of someone providing far too many answers to not enough questions and bashing people asking other questions (or exploring questions he also has explored), judging the world from rhetoric that assumes a free-floating world view, independent of his woundedness, as part of this world that is wounded by Leviathan. This was personally noticeable when John commented on an editorial piece I wrote for the @news Podcast, on not taking a mathematically reducible of problem-solution (or question-answer) approach when discussing our present situation, where I suggested, not as answers but as means of exploration, radical semiotics (creative means of commu-

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<sup>28</sup> ed. – see ‘The Position of the Excluded’

<sup>29</sup> ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg92

<sup>30</sup> ed. – Julian Langer's review of Zerzan's latest book ‘When We Are Human’ deals directly with some of the most toxic positions he has fallen into, while saving what's best.

We are this wounded world.<sup>27</sup> I, as earth, desire healing. Equally, I am wounded, like all of earth, and so bring with me into the healing my wounds, my subjectivity, my biases and all the rest of me. We are never free-floating, not even the “experts” and “doctors” whose *medical-gaze*, as gods, would seem to grant them the power of authority.

What Derrick, and many others within radical and non-radical discourse, does is to assume a position that can provide answers, like how we generally assume doctors can provide answers regarding any illnesses we have. This is quite comfortable and follows mathematically reducible pathways. Problems necessitate solutions, that can be solved and questions, like  $1 + 1$ , get answered (2, or so they say).

The issue I have with this is that Being is non-reducible and I’m not convinced the conversation should stop just because “they” have provided an answer. This is, again, something I have sought to bring with my writings – not answers, but more questions and explorations. And, while this might not make me popular amongst certain groups and individuals, I believe that the non-judgemental confusion of “I really fucking don’t know” is what we need most, as we explore medicines in our search for healing.

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*we had an economic system where we treated people based on how we actually felt about them. Nowadays, the work of destroying such ways of life is largely left to missionaries – representatives of those very world religions that originally sprung up in reaction to the market long ago. Missionaries, of course, are out to save souls; but this rarely interpret this to mean their role is simply to teach people to accept God and be more altruistic. Almost invariably, they end up trying to convince people to be more selfish, and more altruistic, at the same time. On the one hand, they set out to teach the “natives” proper work discipline, and try to get them involved with buying and selling products on the market, so as to better their material lot. At the same time, they explain to them that ultimately, material things are unimportant, and lecture on the value of the higher things, such as selfless devotion to others” (Army of Altruists: On the Alienated Right to Do Good).*

<sup>27</sup> ed. – see ‘Since Colonial Times’

we are manifest Extensions of. Trying to run, as we are learning to walk, as animals.

This is a space caught between hope and hopelessness, where both fall away into honest desire. Words fail to express this adequately. But we find we have to speak. We feel that we have to be like the robin who calls out in the morning with their song to announce the sun’s rising. So, still learning to sing, we cry out in desperation and defiance.

Someone who is obviously very wounded, but searches for healing and wishes to be a healer – sometimes achieving and sometimes failing – is Derrick Jensen.

If you know of Jensen you will likely either view him as an angelic figure, writing beautiful poetic pieces of environmentalist writings while seeking to be a force to challenge patriarchy; or you’ll likely see him as a demonic figure, who hates all humanity, most of all trans-people and queer theorists. In many ways Derrick deserves both of these identities. He also doesn’t likely deserve all of either.

Derrick has spoken and written openly about the abuse he, his siblings and his mother, underwent at the hands of his father. About his father’s violence towards them and the sexual assaults he underwent through childhood. The accounts he gives of these experiences are raw and will resonate with many of ours.

One of the aspects of Jensen’s writings I loved, when I first encountered his writings, was how he located abuse as systemic and located it within processes, rather than viewing abuse as isolated phenomenon. Coupled with his apparent honesty about himself and the pessimism that resonates with my own, I grew very interested in his writings. Books like *Endgame*, *Strangely Like War* and *The Myth of Human Supremacy* have become works that I personally value a great deal, because of their poetry, imagery and soberness, regarding the violence that Leviathan enacts daily. And through email exchanges, I enjoyed what I knew of his identity outside of writing and activism. Derrick is trying desperately to be a

medicine person within his community and to bring healing within the world.

This though was occurring more and more on the backdrop of learning why people dislike Derrick Jensen so much. Learning of how he fell out of favour with both primitivists<sup>6</sup> and anarchists, and the transphobia he is caught up with became increasingly uncomfortable for me. The Leninism<sup>7</sup> and prejudice of his organisation DGR [*Deep Green Resistance*],<sup>8</sup> who I had initially looked on as “interesting, but by no means perfect”, became something I struggled more and more with.

Eventually, I moved away from any involvement I ever had within that space, as I moved more into where I currently find myself. I had no ill-will towards Derrick or DGR, though I had less respect for them. What was apparent to me was that they obviously desired much of the same healing in the world that I do and that, while I might not believe in the same medicines as them, they

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<sup>6</sup> ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg92

<sup>7</sup> ed. – see ‘It Depends on All of Us’

<sup>8</sup> ed. – “DGR was in the news last year [ed. – written in 2024], when indigenous activists broke ties with the organization because of their transphobic position. This was not the first time this had happened. DGR is explicitly and unapologetically trans-exclusionary. Some in the group have compared gender transitioning to eugenics and genital mutilation, and described it as a conspiracy of the medical industry [ed. – see Nicolas Casaux, *Transphobe, is Lying to You*]. The DGR website states: “Gender is not natural, not a choice, and not a feeling: it is the structure of women’s oppression. Attempts to create more ‘choices’ within the sex-caste system only serve to reinforce the brutal realities of male power. As radicals, we intend to dismantle gender and the entire system of patriarchy which it embodies.” As Molly Taft at Gizmodo has observed, “people not well-versed in how modern transphobia manifests may skip over this sentiment or misread it for committed feminism.” But implied in the statement above (and made clear on their FAQ) is the belief that the trans rights movement reinforces the binary gender hierarchy. I would respond that any expression of binary gender theoretically reinforces the gender hierarchy, but that is as true of cisgender as it is of transgender. And in any case, it seems to me that transgender *actually breaks down that binary* – and hence the hierarchy – by embodying (literally) the permeability of those categories” (Jumping the Gap: Where Green Transphobia Leads).

(really) this world that is (to borrow from Sartre)<sup>25</sup> the freedom we are condemned to. I believe that, if we are to be part of the creation that is this living space, then we need to look to the responsibility we have towards our egoistic-welfare and entirely selfish desires, as a self that is a singularity within the multiplicity of earth.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> ed. – see ‘The Position of the Excluded’

<sup>26</sup> ed. – In fact, it may be more useful to think of altruism and selfishness as being something of a limited way of seeing things; “I do not believe that either egoism or altruism are somehow inherent to human nature. Human motives are rarely that simple. Rather egoism or altruism are ideas we have about human nature. Historically, one tends to arise in response to the other. In the ancient world, for example, it is precisely in the times and places as one sees the emergence of money and markets that one also sees the rise of world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. If one sets aside a space and says, “Here you shall think only about acquiring material things for yourself,” then it is hardly surprising that before long someone else will set aside a countervailing space, declaring, in effect: “Yes, but here, we must contemplate the fact that the self, and material things, are ultimately unimportant.” It was these latter institutions, of course, that first developed our modern notions of charity. Even today, when we operate outside the domain of the market or of religion, very few of our actions could be said to be motivated by anything so simple as untrammelled greed or utterly selfless generosity. When we are dealing not with strangers but with friends, relatives, or enemies, a much more complicated set of motivations will generally come into play: envy, solidarity, pride, self-destructive grief, loyalty, romantic obsession, resentment, spite, shame, conviviality, the anticipation of shared enjoyment, the desire to show up a rival, and so on. These are the motivations that impel the major dramas of our lives, that great novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky immortalize, but that social theorists, for some reason, tend to ignore. If one travels to parts of the world where money and markets do not exist – say, to certain parts of New Guinea or Amazonia – such complicated webs of motivation are precisely what one still finds. In societies where most people live in small communities, where almost everyone they know is either a friend, a relative or an enemy, the languages spoken tend even to lack words that correspond to “self-interest” or “altruism,” while including very subtle vocabularies for describing envy, solidarity, pride and the like. Their economic dealings with one another likewise tend to be based on much more subtle principles. Anthropologists have created a vast literature to try to fathom the dynamics of these apparently exotic “gift economies” [ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg53], but if it seems odd to us to see, say, important men conniving with their cousins to finagle vast wealth, which they then present as gifts to bitter enemies in order to publicly humiliate them, it is because we are so used to operating inside impersonal markets that it never occurs to us to think how we would act if



in some-sort-of martyrdom,<sup>19</sup> where sacrificing what they desire,<sup>20</sup> for the sake of some community they are both part of and equally above, is one that is incredibly off-putting, ultimately making the violence of techno-industrial civilisation far more desirable.

This fits the narrative that environmentalist writer Daniel Quinn<sup>21</sup> describes, where the voice of this culture calls out “the progression of all of this is the best we can ever have. Ergo anything that deviates from that pathway must be less desirable”. As a response to this, Quinn argued we need to be talking not about getting less of what we need, but more – not about “saving the world”, but of getting more of what we *really* want, what is most desirable.<sup>22</sup>

This is something I have attempted to bring to environmentalist discourse in both of my books and many of the essays and articles I have written. A wide-egoist perspective includes ecological-welfarism in its practice, because we-are-the-world-we-are-immersed-in-and-Extensions-of – as Deleuze and Guattari<sup>23</sup> put it “monism<sup>24</sup> = pluralism”.

The idea that environmental welfare is a form of bondage is not only false, but dangerous, as it puts people off striving for the freedom and beauty that is the living world Leviathan violates. If we are really selfish about our desires and needs, then wildness/nature/ecology/primal-anarchy seems inescapable, as we cannot escape

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<sup>19</sup> ed. – see The Revolutionary Importance of Celebration & Cyclical Time

<sup>20</sup> ed. – see Memory as a Weapon; ‘The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine’

<sup>21</sup> ed. – Quinn himself was allegedly a ‘healer’ very much showing wounding towards the end of his life, apparently working on a book suggesting blocking food access so as to starve some six billion humans to reduce population to his preferred level. While having not identified as an ‘environmentalist’ during his most famous years, ironically his concern throughout his work with this question places him with some of the worst of them; see *Unruly Edges*.

<sup>22</sup> ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of *Return Fire*; ‘Centering Relationships’

<sup>23</sup> ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg55

<sup>24</sup> ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg43

are working towards challenging this industrial nightmare that is violating us and the earth we are Extensions of. Equally, what was also apparent was that Derrick Jensen and many (if not all) of his followers are still struggling with their wounds, trying to heal, and trying to survive, in much the same way that many of us are. I’m not saying Derrick or DGR bring nothing with the potential to provide healing, but the known side effects of this approach worry me.

It is sad to think that systems and circumstances have affected him/them so as to come to this, that wounds have left that space having such a will for wellness, but unable to move past its own hurt. It is sad that Derrick and DGR can be beautiful in many ways, and yet so ugly in others.

Derrick has written and had published, a new book titled *Anarchism and The Politics of Violation*. This book will have undoubtedly have been written out of Derrick’s desire to bring healing to the space that ecocide and patriarchy<sup>9</sup> has left us with. That said, how he is seeking to do that is an immediate concern, as this work seems to be, for the most part, not a critique of issues within anarchist theory, but a bash against egoism<sup>10</sup> and queer-culture/queer-theory.<sup>11</sup>

Discussions within queer theory regarding age of consent laws have, unfortunately, stained its image within some areas of

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<sup>9</sup> ed. – At the distance of seven years since this was written, it’s clear that any kind of feminism or ecological revolt is no longer the motivation for DGR’s essentialist hatred, if you can judge from the allies they appeal to; both Jensen and Keith have featured on a variety of far-right white nationalist media, and through a front-group Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF) work with militant anti-abortion Christian groups, trying to elect Republicans and appealing to the United Nations for anti-trans legislation. Then again, feminism has always featured struggle between right-leaning women and the rest of us, even before the famous ‘second-wave’ ‘70s-‘80s collaborations with the Christian Right to further criminalise sex work and porn, so new alliances with the ‘Make America Great Again’ crowd shouldn’t lead us to acritically defend it.

<sup>10</sup> ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.5 pg18

<sup>11</sup> ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg21

discourse. This is very similar to how the image of the “violent thug” has had an impact on anarchist theories within discourse. It is very similar to how the image of a “Mao-supporting<sup>12</sup> Stalinist,<sup>13</sup> defender of gulags” has impacted on Marxian ideas within discourse.<sup>14</sup> It is very similar to how the image of the “crazed lesbian screaming about castrating all males” has impacted on feminist arguments within discourse. It is very similar to how the image of “racist, nationalist supporters of ethnic-nativism” has impacted on environmentalist ideas around tribalism and falling in love with the land you live in.<sup>15</sup>

The image of queer theory being the “paedophilia defender theory” is by all appearances the dominant idea Derrick is pushing through this work. This is apparent by the rhetoric he has used in discussions around the content of the book, where he allocates anarchist ideas as being supportive of paedophilia, as anarchists support queer-culture.

Before challenging Derrick’s depiction of the situation, I’m first going to address where he right – not to advance the uglier aspects of his argument, but so that, here and now, we can move past it.

Now, while I have been disgusted by him in many ways, one of my main influences, in thought and praxis, is Hakim Bey/Peter Lambourn Wilson. I find many(/most) of his ideas brilliant and engaging, but hate that I have had to encounter them on the backdrop of his advancement of “boy love”, through periodicals like *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. Bey, as someone who has an obvious desire to be a healer through confronting the wounds/disease this culture inflicts, experimented – as far as I know, only conceptually – with what he thought could be a medicine, but what he advanced is dangerous and toxic. He and those anarchists who supported him in that, while acting out of a desire to nurture healing and

<sup>12</sup> ed. – see ‘The Position of the Excluded’

<sup>13</sup> ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies*

<sup>14</sup> ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.5 pg11

<sup>15</sup> ed. – see *Lies of the Land*

hand-in-hand with his moving more and more towards Leninist-type Marxist politics and rhetoric, as he has distanced himself from the anarchist and primitivist conversations and activities.

I’m not convinced that a practice of purist illegalism would be a way of personal healing or worldly healing, but that doesn’t mean that it cannot be part a collection of medicines, all available as of nurturing health and survival. I think that probably individualist anarchist Emile Armand said it best when he said “*I am not an enthusiast of illegalism. I am an alegal. Illegalism is a dangerous last resort for he who engages in it, even temporarily, a last resort that should neither be preached nor advocated. But the question I propose to study is not that of asking whether or not an illegal trade is perilous or not, but if the anarchist who earns his daily bread by resorting to trades condemned by the police and tribunals is right or wrong to expect that an anarchist who accepts working for a boss treat him as a comrade, a comrade whose point of view we defend in broad daylight and who we don’t deny when he falls into the grips of the police or the decisions of judges ... It is understood that the majority of anarchists submit. “We obtain more from legality by rusing with it, by fooling it, than by confronting it face to face.” This is true. But the anarchist who ruses with the law has no reason to brag about it. In doing this he escapes the dangerous consequences of insubordination, the penal colony, the “most abject of slaveries.” But if he doesn’t have to suffer all this, the submissive anarchist has to deal with “professional deformation”: by externally conforming to the law a number of anarchists finish by no longer reacting at all and pass to the other side of the barricades. An exceptional temperament is necessary in order to ruse with the law without allowing oneself to be caught up in the net of legality.*”

One of the things that concerns me about Derrick pushing anti-egoist rhetoric is that he is perpetuating a narrative within eco-radical discourse that is one of the reasons why people find our discourse so off-putting. The idea that environmentalists are engaged

This is the closest encounter I had with paedophilia within my childhood. As a child-care worker I worked with many young people whose lives have been impacted by it. My experiences of it have been far removed from queer-culture. The teacher wasn't gender-queer, but an old-school Christian man, living a very "normal" life. Like-wise, the backgrounds of those young people weren't of them being abused by non-binary or trans-individuals, but by people who would, for the most part, be considered normal.

Confronting what is "normal" and the hidden violence within that space, is to a large extent what queer theory is about. Living lives that do not fit the immediate stereotypes that "normality" present is what queer-culture appears to be about. The lives of queer-individuals isn't a theory, which Derrick Jensen can argue them out of, but a lived experience of attempting to survive within this culture, while not being violated by it. Like Derrick's environmentalist and anti-patriarchal work, theirs is a process of survival and healing – with theories facilitating space to discuss what is occurring within the world.

Like the space of queer-culture, egoist praxis is one of the areas of anarchist thought that Derrick seeks to challenge within this work. He has done this most noticeably by challenging the concept of illegalism.<sup>18</sup> Illegalism an approach to anarchist activities that, in the pantomime display many take to be its true form, would appear to be mostly about bank robberies and open violence, (but is almost certainly more the embrace of what would usually be considered "petty theft" – shop lifting – as a means of surviving this culture).

It surprises me that Derrick would bash illegalism, when he himself is famed for having been an open advocate of illegal acts of resistance, as a means of healing and supporting survival. When I first encountered Derrick I was immediately drawn to his critiques of property, pacifism and the rejection of the pieces of paper that grant illegality to certain acts. But this move to bash illegalism goes

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<sup>18</sup> ed. – see Memory as a Weapon; 'The Fantasy of a Well-Oiled Machine'

challenge the violence of the machine of Leviathan, fucked up, in the way that people who experiment with medicines can fuck up. I hope any damage caused by this course of treatment was minimal.<sup>16</sup>

One of my favourite concepts Bey has used is that of psychionomadism, which forms a great deal of my personal praxis – including how I encounter Derrick Jensen's arguments. Psychionomadism can be seen as a form of movement between systems and ideas, embracing certain aspects that hold personal value/usability, and leaving what has nothing desirable to bring, or is dangerous. It is my belief that we all do this, to some extent or another, in that there (really) are no ideological purists or orthodox practicers, just people wishing to paint an image of purity – the only Christian died on a cross and all that. This is something I have sought to bring to my relationship with Bey/Wilson's ideas, while remembering that he is undoubtedly wounded by his experiences of the violence of the machine that is this culture, and how much that will have had an impact on the manifestation of his ideas.

In a talk Derrick gave recently [*ed. – this piece published in 2018*], which you can find a video of on Youtube and includes discussion around his book on anarchism, he gleefully enjoys poking the anarchists attending, to voice protest and criticism towards his transphobia, with a series of references to queer-theories relationship to paedophilia discussion. The reference I found most noticeable was how excited he got to describe Gayle Rubin's work *Thinking Sex*, which includes content on politics surrounding paedophilia, as the foundational document of queer-theory. Whether *Thinking Sex* is the foundational document for queer-theory or not, if it has any significant impact on queer-culture or not, if queer-theory and queer-culture as-the-lived-experience-of-queer-

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<sup>16</sup> ed. – Another sympathetic reading of Bey that articulately points out the utter incompatibility of Bey's own theory with Bey's old position on 'boy love' can be found in Andy Robinbon's essays on him: search theanarchistlibrary.org

individuals-and-not-ideas-within-discourse are one and the same process or not; what Derrick misses is that paedophilia is not foundational to queer experience, regardless of whether or not they both involve transgressing social-norms. Derrick's use of rhetoric here is simple – muddy the waters and then describe the ground underneath the pond to someone looking at the muddied water.

But as I write this I remember Derrick's experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of his violent father, which instantly brings to me an empathic experience of why he would be so keen to try to eradicate something that might seem to him to be justifying the violations he underwent.<sup>17</sup> And a memory is brought to my mind.

As I mentioned earlier, during my early years of puberty I underwent a period of considering whether or not I found myself as someone who is gay. During my early childhood most of my family had assumed I'd be gay, if not a priest (of some description). I had spent a lot of my time in my early years being dressed in the clothes of my aunts and female cousins and having make-up put on me. Upon being diagnosed with dyspraxia when I was about 5, my mum put me in ballet classes, which helped contribute to my social groups being dominated by female friends. As such I had a very "feminine" male identity for someone of my age, which went with the camp-theatricality that is still a feature of my personality and the "sensitive nature" I've often been accused of having. All of this, coupled with the emotional difficulties I was having regarding

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<sup>17</sup> ed. – Jensen's supposed good intentions are less convincing in light of he and DGR's new bedfellows, the far-right groups denouncing 'LGBTQ+ people' as "groomers" while repeatedly themselves embroiled in legal cases over their own pedophilia. As the author/s of 'Second Member of Neo-Nazi Group Famous for Attacking LGBTQ Community as 'Groomers' Arrested for Child Pornography' mention, "[s]ystematic sexual abuse of children is a real problem, and perpetrators have been exposed in institutions such as the Catholic Church, far-Right evangelical churches, organizations like the Boy Scouts, and at the hands of law enforcement – institutions that the fascists all seek to up-hold and valorize."

about my mum's death and absentee father, were spaces that led me to actively consider whether or not I was gay.

(Also) as I mentioned earlier, during this time I found myself having to confront a situation that had a severe impact on the next few years of my life. When I was 13, the, devout Christian, IT teacher at the school I was attending, knowing I was at the time calling myself gay – I was very open about it with people at the school and in most other areas of my life – during a lesson, when all the other students were doing something on the other side of them classroom, showed me an image of extremely violent pornography (a man bent over, cheeks spread open, cuts across his anus, with blood dripping on to his testicles). I had no idea how to confront what was happening to me. When I got home I told my father what had happened and he called the police and school and an "investigation" occurred, but it ultimately concluded that Mr Miller had been searching for something and stumbled across it by accident. Little over a year later, when I had moved from London to the countryside in Devon, I heard from one of my old school friends that Mr Miller had been arrested for paedophilia, as he had tried to sexually abuse one of the younger students.

While I am not a fan of prisons and police-culture, and would prefer that Arthur Miller had been able to be dealt with directly by the loved ones of those he abused, in as painful a way as possible, I cannot deny that I am glad that he has not been able to wound anyone else. I know moral anarchists, who like to paint black and white pictures of what is and isn't acceptable within anarchist space, through universalist-type platitudes, will find my comfortability with his being locked up unacceptable. But, to be honest, I don't care. Like Derrick, I don't care if it is through the use of laws that forests and rivers are protected – I just don't see that as a lasting means of "winning". If it acts simply as a pain-killer, that might make possible greater healing in other spaces, then that is something.