

Reindigenising

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One of the first lies we are taught is that there exists something called "nature" or "wilderness". The reality is that there is just life, and we are all a part of all of that life, just like everything else. Instead, many people and many peoples live in ways that are fundamentally disconnected from non-human life. They maintain their relationships with "nature" through particular activities which fit into their lives, lives structured fundamentally around humans and human "civilisation". In contrast, Indigenous peoples understand that "nature" is not real, we are all a part of life, and our lives are lived *through* our relations with other living things, humans and non-humans. Indigenous peoples do not make space for non-humans in their world, they realise that we are taking up space in a world much bigger than ourselves. This understanding of the relationships between different living things is grounded in the land where people live. Not living on the land, not even living with the land, but letting the land live through us. This means to know the land, and all the things in it, which means spending time in it, with it. In learning the land, the land teaches us about ourselves. When we touch something, we create an interface. It is this interface that we each experience as touch. In this way, we never 'touch' any 'thing'. Instead, we become a part of a new thing, which is the intersection of a part of ourselves and a part of something else. And it is in being part of that thing, experiencing that thing, that we learn about both ourselves and others.

Many of us are not Indigenous. We are born into "civilisation" and from the very moment we are conceived, if not before, we are already entangled with civilisational materials like food supplements, ultrasound scanning, and sterile procedures. We are not born the same as rats and pigeons. Neither are many Indigenous people. Many are born in hospitals and clinics, or otherwise with the benefit of contemporary scientific medicine. And then they return to their Indigenous communities, to their ways of life as part of their lands, their homes. For those of us who are non-Indigenous, "civilisation" is our home, and we are never brought into a way of life which gives primacy to the non-humans around us. Instead, our life becomes characterised by a different set of material relations, and a different attitude to material relations. Consider the blanket you wrap your baby in. Did you buy it? Was it a gift? Was it made by the person who gave it to you? Is it made from things which grow where you live? How little we consider these questions, and how many things we need!

Reindigenising is a re/turn to the Indigenous, to Indigenous peoples. It is a re/turn to the development and maintenance of multigenerational relationships with lands, soils, plants, animals,

winds, rivers, and everything else. Reindigenising is *not* the incorporation of parts of Indigenous ways of life into our "civilised" ways of life. It is an attempt to create a way of life that we should have already had, that we should have already been born into. It is about connecting to a way of life that is inescapably always here outside under a naked sky: life as the basis of life. It is not about romanticising Indigenous peoples, or appropriating their practices. It is about learning about different Indigenous peoples, learning from and with different Indigenous peoples. It is about embracing ways of living in and as the interfaces between our bodies and our lands. It is about reconnecting with the practices passed down by our human and non-human ancestors.

One of the things which has fed into this work is Aragorn!'s Nihilist Animism, an attempt to approach "a spiritual practice where desire and capacity are mapped perfectly":

What I would propose, what a nihilist animism would entail, would be an acknowledgment that a spiritual endeavor must come from a sociable practice. This might be a conversation between seven of us in the woods, or different sets in different places but it has to pass the test of the I/we. If you can find a group of people who are willing to ride the tension of being individuated, having undergone the great pain of core alienation in the modern world, while not privileging one's own experiences in a group then you could begin. This would look like a long waiting, while the traffic passes overhead, while your devices beep, bop, beep in your car, when you could be doing other things, for the world around you to expose its language to you. This would not happen quickly. It would probably take years and then it could shape a set of principles, a path to walk, that would make sense to your set of people. This is why it is impossible to imagine in this world, the context has shifted too radically to imagine building a set of tools over years before even thinking about using them. The context has shifted too radically to imagine doing anything so long term with sociability.

– Aragorn!, *Nihilist Animism* (2016)

An animist is someone who sees the life in all things. For me, the idea and identity of the witch has offered me an entrypoint into deeper forms of reflexive and other-than-human practice. Julian Langer has written about "shinrin yoku as a therapy of rebellion-as-healing". Mapuche women ask for permission from healing plants before taking them while foraging. I am spending time observing different plants around me in order to develop a new calendar, inspired by the 13-moon calendar of the Syilx Okanagan people. And there are other projects like the approach towards an anarchist ecology by Knowing the Land is Resistance, attempting similar things and towards similar ends.

There are two key things separating reindigenising projects from recuperative ones. First, reindigenising requires learning from and with a multiplicity of Indigenous peoples. It is not work that can occur in a vacuum, absent of ties to a multiplicity of global ancestral knowledges. Anyone can craft a story, and reindigenising projects must not fall into the fascist trap of inventing paligenetic mythologies. Second, reindigenising rejects all preconceived notions about the ways relations operate or the forms they take. This means all relations: human-human, human-nonhuman, human-community, etc. "Civilisation" operates through processes of social reproduction. It is a self-reproducing cage, constituted of many things including all of our rules and ideas

about how we should act and what we should expect, Stirnerean spooks and Foucaultian governmentalities of the most mundane kinds. The alternative is what Donna Haraway refers to as "situated knowledges", "partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology". Ethics is about participation in located networks of accountability, not unquestioned adherence to arbitrary norms and structures. Reindigenising requires gentle attention, the development of trust, mutuality, leaving space for our non-human fellows to communicate in their own ways, and deep engagement with the things they have to tell us.

What are my next steps with this work? Part of it is seeking material dependence on the land, and material independence from "civilisation". I want to know where my food and water come from, I want to be close to them. At the same time, 'complete' independence from "civilisation" is neither feasible nor desirable. I have medical needs, and commitments to people and particular social worlds. Just as "nature" is an illusion, so is "civilisation". "Civilisation" is just what humans do and keep doing, over and over. Reindigenising is a stoloniferous plant for transforming "civilisation". We plant it inside ourselves, and it transforms us, and roots us into the land. When we bring others into our land-based practices, we offer a chance for the creeping runners of the plant to take root in new soil, to propagate and spread. It is in this way that reindigenisation will close the wound of the "nature"/"civilisation" binary, by reconnecting each of us with our land, and then spreading and interconnecting those reconnections. Roots and stems are made for the transfer of materials, food and water, signals. Be like strawberries. Be like spider plants.

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