

5.

Ben

jamin

*Earth thought 146 of 365: A million year form of life. [. . .]
how it has weathered and been weathered.*

*

(untitled: text poem to friends)

I often wonder if or when
 the newspapers will stop
 —will they ever stop?
 The busses outside roar past
 a cold, November day.
 Coffee on in the kitchen,
 words on the steps,
 the courtyard.

All time in this city
 explains no thought.

[May 15, 2006, Paris]

*

I used to feel the sky's vastness unaffected by us. A
 slow moving glacier of light. Now things are differ-
 ent — effects we cannot steer just as we can barely steer
 ourselves.

*

Extinction

Like a nineteen year old with cramped feet, we
 cast off caution and made our daily rounds. Impossible
 to find the air nearer, it's
 cold,
 pale yellow on the old brick walls. Some say
 the day like any others, the heat came through
 the ventilated shutters. We watched a lecture on *scrape*.
 Song was exhausting, the otherworld quiet.
 My students scrambled. Where is the

box? I must find the box.
*came to a street. She told me about the
 cars swept by. I
 've lost my sense of
 emptiness. That should be good. Damn
 equilibrated touch when
 she walks through the door.
 The porch screen slams. Echo night along the block.
 Come to me in our room. Light from the hallway
 made your body a burning shade. You
 smell of soap and your hair is
 cooler than outside. Arms
 on backs this is
 the warm corridor of silence*

The bus's hydraulics squeaked. We
 descend.
 I have as many small things within my mind
 as an overcrowded table, a desk whose stacks of once-
 live memos
 became a folded range. *Why
 don't you make our dinner? I have to go and clean
 the backyard deck. What
 night are we asking the neighbors out to eat?*
 That six o'clock news speaks on
 small manners of new found things — like
 travel to the islands and
 how to make quiche. *Then
 I remember how it was when
 Carson felt little. He'd watch carrots
 fall to thin, neat piles beneath the life.*

*

Another Earth thought: Between character and conse-
 quence, decent people breathe in the gap. Thunder rolls
 daylong through the sky.

*

Benjamin

This Tasmanian wolf, or tiger, he died inside a cage.
1936 was 3 years after he was filmed, last known mem-
ber of his kind.

If he died in April, then he did the month my father —
Dave — was born.

Ten tens of thousands years have ended
when a studious man began.

Which individual's aware of wide disorder? As I
write now or live

the summer and the year, some form sluffs off,
a disheveled skeleton there in leaves against thick rocks.
Not even a naturalist would know, or sense,
the canopy in silence.

These are things that I do not own.

Benjamin ranged around these lands, haunches ribbed
from time's design.

His tail bent hard to tell a tale sent back.

*What was like your almost night? Dry
of leaves, the hollow where you slept, your Eucalyptis
forest,
tides of wind and hunger . . .
How was the riotous smell of everything?*

1936.

Hitler'd come to power. All eyes focused on his front.
The world economy spun and grandpa Bendik jumped a
truck
of elbows every dawn.

Able-bodied men did some such thing.

They dug, and the Thylacine knew
nothing.

Into Earth ran
its Holocene memory of cells.

moth-exter cast of unknown ch[...]acters

53rd St. In the 1990s, an integrated street in the Hyde Park neighborhood of the South Side of Chicago where the University of Chicago is. Malik Usef, on Common's *One Day It'll All Make Sense* (1997): cars "rolled to red octogons."

5.31. Walk Whitman's birthday, when he came out of the cradle, endlessly rocking.

Guillaume Apollinaire. From the beginning of the twentieth century, a French-Polish poet. "Zone" is his long ramble through Paris while processing historical and personal time ("Sur toi sur celle que j'aime sur tout ce qui t'a épouvanté"). It's also a work of compassion ("Tu regardes les yeux pleins de larmes ces pauvres émigrants / Ils croient en Dieu ils prient les femmes allaitent des enfants / Ils emplissent de leur odeur le hall de la gare Saint-Lazare / Ils ont foi dans leur étoile comme les rois-mages / Ils espèrent gagner de l'argent dans l'Argentine / Et revenir dans leur pays après avoir fait fortune / Une famille transporte un édredon rouge comme vous transportez votre cœur. / Cet édredon et nos rêves sont aussi irréels.") Samuel Beckett wrote the only good translation of "Zone" yet. I wrote an *axe de lecture* (close reading exercise) on Apollinaire's "Autumne Malade" (ill Autumn) as a Rotary exchange student in France, 1988-89.

Marcus Aurelius. A Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher who wrote spiritual exercises designed to do inner work that would change outer life indirectly. Resignation to our mortality was one of his themes.

Aurora. A village in Central New York. It borders Lake Cayuga and has the small Wells College in it.

Auto-de-fé. Death by inquisition, in a bonfire.

Benjamin. The last known living Thylacine or Tasmanian wolf (or Tasmanian tiger), a now extinct marsupial which used to range in Australia and New Guinea. He looked like a strange, striped dog, and died inside Hobart Zoo, Tasmania on September 7, 1936.

There is also the German literary theorist, Walter Benjamin, who used literature to do social philosophy and to criticize the oppressive contradictions of our capitalistic world.

The Blue Line. One of Chicago's elevated train/subway lines.

Buddhism & anger. Buddhism proposes that (1) we should acknowledge anger, that (2) we shouldn't act from anger, but from compassion, and that (3) ideally, we should come to feel only compassionate, not angry about injustices.

Rachel Carson. A science writer woke the U.S. up from its chemical slumber by decrying the misuse of pesticides.

Nick Cave. P-punk-raconteur / who got his start in / an Australian combo. *The Birthday Party.* Ritz thru them owt cuz Cave thru amplifiers in the pit. (A *Birthday Party* song → "Blast off!")

Ceremony of the Dead. A Buddhist practice of chanting and meditating in compassion with the dead.

Coffee in New York. Is often served inside paper cups with an ancient Greek theme on them.

The Cold War. Mid-1940s to the end of the 1980s. Rise of the slow moving, silent bureaucracy with long-range effect.

Corvette. A long car in the '70s, a swooning hood.

Willem De Kooning. An abstract expressionist painter of the New York School, mid-twentieth century. His painting was in layers, hard-etched, scrubbed, weathered and alcoholic.

Defense. The closing rite of a Ph.D. — the defense of one's thesis or dissertation before a committee of scholars, open to the public.

Julie Delpie. Starlet from the '80s and '90s, seen outside France in Krystoff Kieslowski's film, *White* (*Three Colors* series).

Dubai. City of extreme consumption whose logo is a sail-shaped building called the Burj al Arab. Workers from all over the world built Dubai, often on small wages in poor living conditions, but often better than those found back home.

Earth thoughts. Begun on December 24, 2009, numbered 1 then.

Folio. Inexpensive French brand of paperbacks. In kid knapsacks.

Andrew Forrest. Served in W.W. II. Deceased now. He taught regular and honors English at New Hartford High School near Utica, N.Y. for thirty+ years. Would read and teach a poem per day unless the work was long. *The Waste Land* was a month's analysis (April 1988). Even the reading took the hour. You could hear the silence when sound and sense left off.

Michel Foucault. Poster-child of post-structuralism, saint of Gay Liberation.

Anna Freud. Daughter of Sigmund, she shaped American self-psychology.

Grace Avenue. Does not exist in Utica, N.Y., although Grace Church does. There was an old men & boy's choir in it. I sang there.

Lars Helge Strand. A member of Lycée Corneille's *section norwegienne* (Norwegian section). The *section norwegienne* was established in the nineteenth century to honor Normandy's ties to Norway. Each year, sixteen Norwegian guys begin their sophomore year of high school in *pension* (dormitory) (the gals are boarded at a school in Bayeux where the tapestry of the invasion resides). Lars liked comics, loud beer, music, punk communes, and the environment.

The Lycée Corneille is a high school in Rouen named after playwright Pierre Corneille —whose statue has bird shit on it in the main courtyard. Stéphane Mallarmé taught there. The L.C. dates back to Napoléon.

Rouen, a larger, French provincial city about 80 minutes from Paris by train. Monet painted its cathedral at different times of the day. Maligned by Gustav Flaubert who lived there. Rouen's where Jeanne d'Arc was burned at the stake. The "ville de cent cloches" (city of a hundred spires): filled with gothic churches. A downtown of cobble streets. A central clock. She overhangs the street, a Medieval arch. Next to that clock in the '80s: a *brasserie* (beer bar) named "Big Ben."

High Art. A film of the late 1990s whose central character—a drug addicted, lesbian photographer—shoots photos similar to Nan Goldin's.

Hitler. The leader of the National Socialists in Germany (the Nazis) who rose to power during what, in the United States, was called “the Great Depression.” Most people knew who he was for many centuries until the mass extinction made his evil appear anachronistic. His was pure evil for most of the twentieth century while they mostly ignored the invisible war.

I stood on the shore, the ruins of Europe in back of me. The opening line of Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmaschine* which I first saw at the Yale Drama School in Fall 1989.

Impossible cities party. Going away and 38th birthday party in Dubai, May 2008. Each invitee brought an impossible flower, a story of an impossible city, or a memory of utopia in the frustrations of urban life. Many people performed while Zlatan showed videos on the wall.

Janus. “An ancient [Roman] deity, guardian of doorways and gates and protector of the state in time of war. He is usually represented with two faces, so that he looks both forward and backward.” (*Oxford American Dictionary*, Apple Version, 2005–07) I learned how to time-travel through him.

Lex. Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, New York City. The E train stops there at 51st.

The market. The job market for academic jobs—notorious among graduate students.

Munstitute. The nickname of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, a museum in Utica, N. Y.

Never stop. The name of a song by the band Deerhunter.

Rap. In the 1990s, a predominantly African-American musical and poetic form from ghettos with roots in African oral traditions.

Robin. A common bird, rust-breasted, in central New York.

Rococo. “Extravagantly or excessively ornate, esp. (of music or literature) highly ornamented and florid.” (*Oxford American Dictionary*, Apple Version, 2005–07)

Mark Rothko. Known as a “color-field” painter of the New York School. He said he painted “color objects.”

Second nature. Associated with Aristotle and his idea that habits, which are not instinctual, become second nature as if they were instinctual.

Shoegaze. A kind of post-punk, sometimes electronic music (*My Bloody Valentine* or sometimes *Sonic Youth* — post-punk shoegaze; *Scala* — the electronica variety). *Scala* was on Lars’s tape in ’98 (the album *Compass Heart*).

The sixth mass extinction. An alarmist worry, but you knew it was not impossible. It was caused by us humans. Alarmists thought it would be as deep as the deepest-cutting two mass extinctions in the history of life — the end Paleozoic extinction (250,000,000 B.C.), and the end Mezozoic one (65,000,000 B.C.). They were almost right.

Luke Skywalker. Character in the 1977 blockbuster *Star Wars*. Blew up the Death Star.

Slovak. My mother’s heritage. Andy Bendik was my grandfather who worked a pick-up labor crew during the 1930s in the Great Depression in Southern Ohio.

Patti Smith. '70s feminist rocker — braless, bush armpits, “Rock N Roll Nigger.”

Herr Stern. “Mr. Star” in German; an intensive German teacher at Yale College circa 1990.

Stop signs. In the United States of America, they are octagonal, red and with white letters, “STOP.”

Strand Books. If you walked down University Street in New York City, you would have seen the sign: “18 miles of books.”

Symphony Space. A world music concert space in the 1990s on Broadway in New York on the West Side. World music is music from non-Western traditions played in the West, or Western music mixed with non-Western music. These were old, colonialist categories.

Andrei Tarkovski. & 12 miles of moving painting. *Offret (The Sacrifice)* was filmed in Sweden while he was in exile from the U.S.S.R. Edited in Paris on his deathbed, it was dedicated to his son. I saw it in Rouen in 1989.

Tenure. Old school practice reminiscent of Medieval guild apprenticeship. A university procedure whereby an assistant professor earns a life-long job, barring illegal behavior. Time to tenure after college: usually fourteen years. Odds against it.

The word comes from the French *tenir* from the Latin, meaning “to hold.”

Tom. A generic 1950s man. Mary is his wife. You don't know him? In 2010, their son was Carson.

Tragedy of the commons. Biologist Garrett Hardin created this concept to explain common resources

unregulated well by custom or by law. With such resources, it is rational for some people to take more than is sustainable for the whole community, since taking more will in the short term pay off for these opportunists, leaving others in the future to deal with the increasing scarcity. The planet's atmosphere is an unregulated commons whose resource is its ability to trap pollution. Our grandkids dealt with our pollution, but too late for the mass extinction.

Victoria's Secret. A mass-market lingerie shop begun in the 1980s.

Max Von Sydow. A Swedish actor, known for work in Ingmar Bergman films of the 1960s, Von Sydow appeared at the Nordic Film Festival of Rouen in March–April 1989, where *Offret* was screened. Under T.V. lights, he was inside a glass atrium visible from the street.

Wasteland. A long, overly-complicated poem influenced by French symbolist poetry — e.g., Stéphane Mallarmé, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gérard de Nerval (a proto-symbolist). The poem was about cultural extinction, among other things.

Weathermen Underground. A Maoist terrorist organization of the '70s. Militant against U.S. military intervention abroad, they destroyed government property. Once, a faction tried to kill policemen and their dates at a New York City dance. They blew themselves up by mistake.

W.B. Yeats. An Irish poet who bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His "Sailing to Byzantium" says at one point "soul clap its hands and louder sing." Shall we?

Exploded talk

4 / I WANT TO MEET YOU AS A PERSON

“My heart was a storm in me as I went.”
—Homer

In Kierkegaard and in the Enlightenment

I want to talk to you about freedom, freedom through self-reflection, and through this topic, I want to talk to you about what would be called “idealism” if it were not more simply imperfect, committed love. The way I want to approach this constellation of topics is through the morose, mentally ill writer and philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, who hardly survived—and then only until middle age—the abuse of his father and the genetics of his mind. He seems a strange choice. Since Isaiah Berlin (1997), Kierkegaard has been categorized as a counter-Enlightenment figure. But I want to ask a transformative question about him: What if Kierkegaard were instead an enlightenment writer who had surpassed the anti-authoritarianism of the Enlightenment and was instead interested in human deepening and maturity? This is not the way I want to talk about Søren Kierkegaard, whom I never knew, but who somehow managed through his writing and the effort I put into reading it to be a good teacher. As all good teachers, he did

what anyone given momentary authority in another's mind should do: he erased it, gave it up, did whatever he could to become irrelevant once the lesson became self-seen, self-taught. In fact, he took no credit at all: it was grace, it was me; no, *not* me; it was "life" — it was the reality of what I'd just seen as an intimate part of my life. I would like to talk about people like this as distant family, not as objects of academic inquiry.

A question about a historical moment and its relation to a cultural tradition may seem a dry question to ask, while the questions of love, self-reflection and freedom are real and interesting. Nevertheless, in this talk, I want to propose an interpretation of Kierkegaard's work under which he continues the Enlightenment, rather than discontinuing it, and in so doing, I want to explain how his version of Enlightenment self-reflection complicates the maturity involved in exercising one's own understanding. Kierkegaard complicated and developed one of the most central aspects of enlightenment, at least as Kant and the subsequent tradition has defined it. Kierkegaard was an enlightenment thinker (lower case "e"!). And therefore it is misleading to see him as opposed to the heart of the Enlightenment (upper case "E"). It is strange to think that he would be concerned with any of these historical distinctions. He seemed to want to meet people as people and to work their relationship out slowly with them. When I think of the way he deflected his lost marriage into an impossible intimacy he projected through his writing, I feel sad for him. His was a strange life. It reminds me too much of myself.

The Enlightenment — capital "E" — was a historical period. In it, so-called *Aufklärers* challenged people to become responsible authorities in their own lives, especially concerning matters ethical, political and religious. The key to this internalization of responsibility was considered to be the advancement of one's own understanding. People had to become connected to their

own capacity to know. According to Kant, this movement from accepting external authorities to using our own understanding was enlightenment—lower case “e.” The imperative beginning Kant’s essay “What Is Enlightenment?” (1996, 58) reads: “Have the courage to use our own understanding!” This is an elegant restatement of the central message of Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” in *Émile* (1978). Seen in this light, the tradition of enlightenment—lower case “e”—began as a tradition of self-determination exercised through our capacity to understand independently enough to own what we each believe, that is, to assert oneself.

This tradition was fundamental to our democratic culture, whether in the form of declarations of independence or in proclamations of human rights. The notion of asserting oneself is basic to democracy, because only in it do we each have a separate voice. On the reading of Foucault two centuries later, what the Enlightenment promoted philosophically was a self-culture found precisely where we displace convention’s authority enough to assess what we each believe ourselves. This was an *ethos*, a style of living. Foucault thought that the practice of enlightenment—lower case “e”—expressed an anti-authoritarian ethos by seeking to test the limits of what was considered possible in being normal. Foucault’s historical analysis of the normal was a way of showing us heteronomy. Here was a commitment to open up the world to a plurality of voices and of intelligences and to expose the fact that norms always depend on consent—that much that is normal is not normative. **I went into the academy to create with people and to understand. I think Kierkegaard preserved the personal and buffered me from the academic market’s competition. He made me long for relationships. And I also started to wonder: could something other than theory be at the core of academic knowing? What was philosophy, most humanly? Was it really just *theory*?**

Foucault's insight was to show time and again how systems of authority people take to be self-evident are normalizations of what could be otherwise. He showed how anti-authoritarian resistance could be joined with thinking the present as a set of historically contingent conditions on our self-conception—the limits of our possibility. And so Foucault (1996a) called “critique” the movement of authority to the side of what we take to be normal in the interest of pulverizing the norms that oppressed the real trajectory of bodies and sentiments between people when people are trying to grow up and to be free. Critique was an exercise of distancing oneself from the compulsions of the historical conditions that make us accept our self-conception automatically. Critique carved out a space where we could take distance on the automatic intimidation of norms. The brilliant move on Foucault's part was to see critical attitude as *room around* our practices by virtue of first beginning to see their contingency. Could they be otherwise? Here was the ironist's art. **Thinking about Foucault and about Kierkegaard makes me think about my marriage. The process of realizing that I could not keep the oath I'd taken involved seeing the contingency of marriage norms and demanded that I be intimate with myself in a way I never had been before.**

Foucault's picture underlined a point tacit in Kant and in especially the Rousseau of the *Second Discourse*. The standard textbook picture of the Enlightenment casts it as a critique of external authority—religion and monarchy—but may neglect to emphasize the purpose of this critique: to move the *locus* of authority to how *we* make sense of the world. *We, you, I, he, she* can ask:

Does this [claim, situation, relationship, practice, social form, even system of authority] make sense to me or to us? Does it work for me or for us? Does the “me” or “us” that we find ourselves stuck with work *for* us and make sense *to* us?

This is so very much like a relationship. We have to get space around our practices, first by seeing the contingency of their norms. Systems of authority, by virtue of appealing to authority, always have a space around them by which they can be questioned. The problem is often, historically, that there is fear or shame in doing so. *They are always open to question, but a shadow morality guards them in our emotions.* **This fear lives in the body, the site of our most personal memories. It lives in fear-voice.** In our emotions, our self-conception—the very “I” that questions authority—is likely to be *positioned* by norms we have not interrogated historically. What we ultimately fear in questioning authority isn’t just its reprisals or control, but also the loss of our selves we mistakenly think will occur by being abnormal. The normal resists being interrogated by being *self-evident*, if I may put it like that.

What is it to exercise your own understanding, when you have taken space on “yourself”—and you *feel* those scare-quotes? What is it to have something agree with your understanding when you can’t trust your emotions? Also—and this question is very hard to wrap one’s mind around—is there a space on yourself that isn’t simply itself an automatic construction of the historical problem of the Enlightenment, a problem where authority is in crisis and our minds cannot be trusted at first?¹ Is there a leave-taking of authority that is life-affirming and free?

The interesting possibility, I think, is to consider something Foucault did not address. What space can move our inherited authorities, not recreating them, but unsettling them once they have come into view in half light, now crossed by the shadow of a doubt? Where does the unsettling of history arise? This is tantamount to asking,

1 See Linda Trinkhaus Zagrebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (2012). She begins with the crisis of authority in the Enlightenment.

what unsettles norms and gives us the impulse to reconsider reasons? It is not enough to see that they are contingent. They must also be unfulfilling—they must jar with the sense of what is possible in a fulfilling human life. **It hurts to think about it.**

But then we will reconsider sense itself, the condition of our home. When fulfillment has been determined by the normal, abnormality seems anathema. To reject the normal out of un-fulfillment with it is to threaten our sense of life itself. That very sense of what is possible in a fulfilling human life is split in two and acts against our inherited sense of propriety. The threat is felt as a collapse of our world just as much as of a loss of self. We have to learn to lose to leave an authority.

In a dream, you came to me, although we have not talked in a decade. You asked me if I knew that, despite everything that happened, our time together was important to you, that you had loved me, and that I had been a part of your life. I do not have enough dreams like this.

I find Kierkegaard helpful here, because of the trace of body in his sense of virtue. Especially as the questions I've been asking become emotional, they blur the boundaries between the Enlightenment and its so-called opposition in Romanticism. And if we focus on the purpose of critique, we emerge with a view of the core of the Enlightenment that is, technically speaking, no different than what Husserl inaugurated when he claimed phenomenology as a rigorous science brackets claims to authority that have not been shown to make sense to our minds.² We emerge with a view that places Kierkegaard within the Enlightenment tradition. Here, then, would be a tradition running from the Enlightenment through

2 See Edmund Husserl, *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* (1965), and *Cartesian Meditations* (1988), meditation 1 on the *epoché* and the idea of "genuine science." See also Jean-Luc Marion, *Réduction et donation* (1989) on the "reduction" to "givenness."

Romanticism into twentieth century phenomenology.³ In it, we would attend to the body as an expressive space. The emotional body would hold open a way of becoming that could act out against norms in a refusal that allows one to re-orient ourselves to them. The body as intelligent flesh could throw off the constructing mind. Fear could give way to freedom. This would not be to separate body from mind, but to see them as modes of one, unified consciousness that exists dynamically, and it would be to look for an emotional location within the body that counteracts fear and anxiety about being abnormal.

What would such an emotional location be? Kierkegaard was aware of the body-memory of freedom, which he understood through the experience of love. Love involves a particular emotional nexus that can best be described as the rich and multi-dimensional experience of arriving home, in a true home. Love in this way is *eco-locational*. Its memory lodges within the body as a

3 What of psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century? The standard picture would make it the opposition to an Enlightenment legacy through its construction of the concept of the unconscious and the unconscious's subversion of our claim to authority. So the story goes, our unconscious acts like the authority, whether we recognize it or not.

But this story is confused, on multiple grounds. First, the unconscious does not present itself as any authority. Rather, it throws the category of authority into question by suggesting we act on the basis of experiences that are so buried as to not even be considerations, let alone reasons. Still, this correction would only strengthen the anti-Enlightenment story, once revised. But, second, what psychoanalysis classically understood does is to surface the unconscious as a cast of mind that, when one sees how it has set in, actually does have reasons. The surfacing not only brings these reasons out so that they first become reasons *to us* for the first time, but it also allows us to evaluate them. Seeing the reasons we've acted on without previously taking them as reasons, we can now come to terms with our irrationality or have sympathy for the way we were being, in a strange way, rational. But such a process develops authority over our actual, not idealized, lives. So it only deepens the Enlightenment aim.

counter-action against anxiety and fear that at the same time involves freedom without the pressure of conformity. It is too rich for conformity; feeling loved loosens the pressure of conformity as growth loosens past fixations. The issue is no longer about being normal or abnormal, but about being a *person*—and this gives one space to think and to be, to decide on norms that make sense. It is hard to break out of the adolescent cycle of the Enlightenment—one in which Foucault largely remained—but it can be done. Enlightenment—lower case “e”—is after all about growing up. It seeks a kind of maturity we have only anticipated.

Here, Kierkegaard surpassed current conceptions of body memory as a kind of practical capacity. Academics has for too long been focused on the relation between theory and practice, without considering *the relation between person and person*. The relation between people is neither merely theoretical nor merely practical, nor merely both. It isn't enough to know lots about you or to know how to manipulate you to be your friend or even simply your fellow human being! The interpersonal space is *neither objectifying nor calculative*. And the question is how to understand this. Kierkegaard had a way. For him, more than anything, the body's memory is a kind of *relational*, not simply practical, capacity. The body is *interpersonal*. In us is memory of me before or beside the authorized me, of you, before and beside the authorized you, of us, before and beside the authorized us, of *unique persons*. The pre-personal impulse to relate clears the way to reformulating relationships. He called this love's *ground*. It was an original source to humane life. The body-memory of love challenges any norms held between us as to whether they rest in intimate attention to our uniqueness and support us in growth and in fulfillment.

How can philosophical writing locate such an emotional center in people—that is, help us locate ourselves outside norms in a space of personal consideration?

Perhaps we can simply say that Kierkegaard *provoked*. But what is provocation? Is it simply offense or debate as eighteenth century *Aufklärers* — even sometimes Rousseau — seemed to believe? Is that how we speak *with* each other? No: provocation is a mode of *interpersonal address*. It is something other than debate. That the Enlightenment — capital “E” — did not understand this was its adolescent stance, and it is a stance that still grips intellectual culture to such an extent that we cannot effectively say we have left adolescent reactivity with it. **I think of my graduate school, and I shudder.**

Provocation employs what Jean-Louis Chrétien (1990) calls “the bare voice.” Writing from a position of interpersonal address, Kierkegaard provoked his readers to relate to themselves as real people who matter, who have lives of their own and who deserve love. He located the clumsy vulnerability in seeking to relate — not to theorize, not to manipulate the world to achieve our ends, but to find a home with others. The vulnerability was grounded in the body’s way of moving us beyond our consciousness through attachment to the people outside us who, though shaped normatively, are more real than norms and are centers of freedom who decide on norms. Here was a space introduced into history *relationally* by way of making authority lose its sting and become responsible to humane reality.⁴ Humane reality is a relationship. **I think of the times when all I wanted was for us to speak. There was no way to, however. Battles circulated everywhere in the space of your mind, and I could not address them without you feeling rejected by reasoning. The shame inside you was so intense. The emotions were trapped there, large and terrifying. Then you would flee or lash out, or try to fuse with someone approximating the memory of home, a home that you never had as an abused child.**

4 Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (1991).

And here was I, afraid of conflict from my own childhood, and, in the beginning, too easily re-traumatized myself, wanting to fix everything, losing myself in the mess and then being frustrated and mad.

I believe Kierkegaard's work of voicing expresses—and indirectly indicates—a bodily intelligence that is thoroughly interpersonal. His doing so isn't simply an attempt to bring emotion into thought, as a hackneyed Romantic interpretation would have it. It's an attempt to show how the body is already interpersonal and in that relatedness, free.

Landscape of you, of me before and beside me, of us, beside the authorized or scripted us, of the vibrant tendrils of the day in blue and water. There is a garden. It is outside history. Dust erodes the edges, the edges of categories blown into it. It isn't heard or seen. Right now, it is soft as grass.

Trauma in a room of notes.

Growing up by using your own understanding

It is worth circling back to what Kant wrote about enlightenment—lower case “e”—in order to see how Kierkegaard improved on it. Kant defines enlightenment as the exit from “self-incurred immaturity” (1996, 58). What is maturity, and how do Kierkegaard's invocations continue and deepen it?⁵

The thesis I am interested in is that *maturity is a personal and interpersonal deepening*. In other words, it is guided by relational reason more so than by theoretical

5 On the overall emphasis of Kant's work as work in growing up, see Susan Neiman, *The Unity of Reason, Rereading Kant* (1994, 5.v) and *Why Grow Up?* (2014). Neiman, who was a Rawls and Cavell student, has understood well the personal dimension of both a sense of justice and the claim of reason. See especially her *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-up Idealists* (2008).

or practical reason, which fall in behind our personal growth. In other words, to become mature is to become more of a *person*, and in that a subject of beliefs and an agent of intentions all guided by personal understanding. If this thesis is right, then it suggests that:

The primary area of enlightenment is actually in relationships between people and in our self-relationships by which we collect ourselves around being a person. Thus, love — not objectifying or object-pursuing reason — is the center of human reason.

These conclusions would align the Enlightenment virtue of humanity with love and relationship. Kierkegaard, I think, understood these points very well.

But did Kant? To answer this question, we'd need to begin by imagining what "self-incurred immaturity" could be. Kant's metaphor of being a "machine" helps (1996, 64). Kant contrasts maturity with the self-incurred immaturity of people who let themselves be treated or seen as "machines." It is an odd image, perhaps characteristic of the mechanism of the age that saw the universe as a giant clock and animals as machines that make noise. What is at stake in claiming that we are more than machines?

A machine is a tool that is constructed so as to carry out tasks for others. Mindless, it receives its program from without. It carries out the will of its user within the parameters of its capacity. For Kant, humans are more than machines, because we can judge for ourselves what we should do. To suppress this capacity when we have it is immature.

The body isn't a machine. Machines dream of body-machines, self-organizing, nano-technological complexities evolving as bodies do. Norms are machinic in so far as they limit the impulse of bodies. Bodies are impulses, machines are expulsions of swerve, anti-querian. Of course a machine could continue the impulse of bodies,

but then it would not be a machine. In the metaphor Kant used, we are already industrial. Our bodies allergic without knowing it, sifting to the side like sand, sprouting as grass.

To me, when you acted out of your abuse, you were never a machine. You were a weapon sent by your father and now focused through you in a repetition of a habit so traumatic you could not see that it was supplanting the possibility of home with the traumatized familiarity of a volatile space.

I repetitively responded, repeating my own familiarity with a volatilized and traumatic environment. In Tarkovski's *Nostalgia*, the poet/biographer tells a story while standing soaked & drunk in the ruin of the church of angels half submerged in water:

"A man goes by another man who is stuck in the swamp, seemingly sinking.

"He pulls the man out.

"'You idiot!,' cries the man. 'I live there!'"

So Kant is underlining agency grounded in subjectivity, the power to determine ourselves by what we believe without accepting a program from without. You can see how Foucault was developing just this thought. The entire critique of the normal is intended to open a space for subjectivity-grounded agency in this Kantian sense. But I think that Kant—and so Foucault—did not go far enough with the implications of rejecting a mechanical view of people. After all, the main way a person is not a machine is that a machine cannot love. And if what we called a machine *did* love, it would no longer be merely a machine—it would become a *persona*. Machines *qua* machines and not persons lack the freedom of *withholding* themselves and the commitment to *grow together outside of what any program or use could expect*. The heart of love is that it is not a program and is not a tool. Any relationship that is a program or merely a tool eventually breaks—as so many marriages do. Relationships require that we give ourselves to each

other and grow together, without a program and without using the other person. These qualities are found in the body, even in the hug, the embrace and the body language that frees us up to be together and makes us feel that we have the space and even the impulse to be who we are and to risk growing. The minute a machine could show affection of this sort, it would become a persona.

The way I would like to put this, then, is that “immaturity” is *a pattern of world adopted without it being personal to you*, without it being loving and part of your love. *Immaturity is not living in or seeking a true home*. What you say you think and believe does not really make sense to you. What you feel does not feel loving to you. You walk about in a world of mysterious norms. You feel impersonal or depersonalized. The norms program you and you basically just go along for the ride or submit. You are a machine. You are homeless inside yourself. Maturity, by contrast, is fundamentally *nostos*⁶—seeking to make a home whenever we are alienated from one. **I have felt this way alienated from home so often as an academic in conferences like this one where people are pushed through a compressed time and an anonymous space to listen to bits of theory and to consider some practical applications while relating to each other calculatively. Only my friends at conferences have kept the personal alive. It is weird how, after you & me, I see abuse everywhere now in our most normal institutions.**

The point I am making is that maturity is deeply personal. This is the consequence of rejecting a mechanistic view of each other. Being personal, maturity depends on the solitary and the social—in relations to oneself that collect one as a person and in interpersonal relationships that we have with each other and which, in

6 The first part of *nostalgia*, which means literally the pain of home-seeking. *Nostos* is the home-seeking itself. Cf. Sarah Gridley, “*Nostos* poetics as eco-poetics” (2016).

assuming a life of their own, give us the space to be and to grow. I call this a “home.” Kierkegaard would seem to be a leading enlightenment figure at this point.

There is more, though. Kant puts the cause of self-incurred immaturity in “laziness or cowardice” — in lack of guts (1996, 58). This leads me to wonder, what kind of courage is called for when we become persons? What is the courage proper to loving? **A piece of driftwood settles out along the lake not far from the garden split by a cloud and ruffling in cold light. I hold it in your hands and know that everything is clinging to it. My tremor is gone when you run your palm over smoothness.**

It is with this question that I turn to Kierkegaard. I think Kierkegaard understood what it is to be called to responsibility by being addressed as a person. He understood that the kind of courage required by love is the courage to *show yourself* and to *give yourself*. **Both of which are *really* hard if you have been abused.** Fifty-nine years after Kant wrote “What is enlightenment?,” Kierkegaard’s first pseudonymous work ended with the following:

Ask yourself and keep on asking until you find the answer. For you may have known something many times, acknowledged it; may have willed something many times, attempted it—still. Only the deep inner motion, only your heart’s indescribable emotion, only that will show you that something actually makes sense to you. Then no force can take that from you. Only the truth that grows with you is truth to you.⁷

This famous passage assumes a wide space around an unsettled understanding, a missing authority, the decision to find it oneself. Addressing the reader’s body,

7 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, (1988, v. 2, 354). Modification of the translation mine.

the passage validates that what moves emotionally up through the reader's chest is where her understanding begins. In so doing, the passage assumes the lineaments of Kantian enlightenment: it underlines our own capacity for sense-finding — our “own authority” — in leaving sway an emotional movement traversing the charged fear and anxiety of “cowardliness.” The body-mind is responsible, and the body-mind helps the reader claim the authority of her own coming-to-find-sense. So she claims her capacity to grow.

But even more so, this passage shows *intra*-personally what is needed for growing *inter*-personally. Kierkegaard's summons addresses a reader and asks her to be *open* with herself about what she is feeling and to *give* herself the chance to be a person who has feelings and a view of her own. It is a *credibly* generous passage in this way — it gives the reader her own credence. The courage it thereby summons is the courage to be yourself by *acknowledging* your own personal outlook on life and the relationships in which you find yourself. It intuitively sidesteps the conformity of the normal to ask the reader to have the heart — even more than the guts — to feel for herself what makes her exist in a space where growth occurs, a home. Kierkegaard has shifted the discourse of the will — of guts — to the discourse of relationship — of the heart. And so the courage he invokes is the courage to give yourself as a whole person to a process both with yourself and, presumably, in your interpersonal life with others. **It's hard.** This seems obviously more mature than the connotations to what Kant suggested, which were adolescent. Yet it doesn't reject them — it deepens and develops them. Adulthood doesn't repress adolescence — it gives it consistency and care.

Sometimes I feel as an academic that no one talks with me in my university or at this conference in airplane hanger style rooms of personless rows and dreary lights. We rush around with our work, focused in industrial theory. Can we think of ourselves as persons here?

My heart shrivels when I enter this place, it turns into a metal clock. *Tick tock.*

...

..

.

Why did I lose you so many years ago? Why have I always been off track in relationships? The fog of my metaphors mirrors my depersonalization. I wasn't looking for a person, or seeing if I were addressed as one. There is a strange way in which I haven't been showing myself, foremost to myself. This fear, it lives in the body like the echo off a metal table. *Ting*

You see, what I think is important in Kierkegaard's address is its imaginative indication of an interpersonal address. This address does the work of awakening. It summons openness, prompts courage. Its effusiveness is giving—sentimental, yes, but also giving. It reminds us of a kind of intimacy that solicits our surfacing and showing our face. Kierkegaard's authorial voice figures a scene in which someone is speaking directly to you, meeting you as a person. This formal dimension of the rhetoric is actually the crucial philosophical point. To use our own understanding, we must be awake to it, and to be awake to it, we must feel that we are persons, and to feel that we are persons depends on others speaking to us as persons, *wanting us to be*. Kant did not grasp this relational condition of enlightenment, I would say, the way enlightenment depends on community by way of its dependence on loving relationships, that is, a situation in which we are at home.

But before Kierkegaard, Rousseau almost did. One thing that is distinctive about Kierkegaard's work is the way the body is always already interpersonal, or more technically, open to relational reasons. Rousseau glimpsed this point in his concept of compassion, but the interpersonal dimension of it is not focused except in the way Rousseau thinks of the voice of conscience. Because conscience is both a form of consciousness grounded in

the address and primarily bodily and emotive, Rousseau is very close to Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's interpersonal body-mind seems prefigured in the understanding of conscience developed in Rousseau's *Émile* in the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*.⁸ Reason, the Vicar says, knows the good; only conscience loves it (Rousseau 1978, 290). Conscience is "the voice" and "the instinct" of the soul (286). Its acts "are not judgments but sentiments" (290). What these sentiments do is to express the place where, addressing oneself, the soul cares, where our being is at stake to us, despite how norms might claim us otherwise. Conscience calls us to decide on norms themselves, decide on decision, so to speak. In this way, it is personalizing. Even more, though, conscience speaks in a way that is loving. And it is this point that Kierkegaard develops. Kant, by contrast, picked up on the subjectivity inside Rousseauian conscience. But that subjectivity is weirdly impersonal without the loving voice.

What is interesting, too, is that Rousseau was interpreting ancient Stoic *οικειωσις*; every living being's disposition to care for itself.⁹ Our being is shot through with care for our being, despite the pressure to be normal. Yet what is *human* being when we care for ourselves truly and deeply? It is becoming and being a person. As Theodore Zeldin (1994) has shown, humanity's history is increasingly intimate. Accordingly, *οικειωσις* in the case of humans should be understood through the logic of being a person, and that means through interpersonal relationships.

In this way, we might say that being a person is prior to being normal, even though norms construct the way

8 It is an interesting coincidence that the minister who writes the "closing words" of *Either/Or* examined here was said to be a religious man from an isolated country place—just as the vicar is said to be.

9 See Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, *Conscience and Humanity* (2002), chapter 2, "Rousseauian Conscience", 44.

of life of people. *The personal space around norms keeps them human.* Foucault's "critical attitude" might better be described as a loving one, something Lynne Huffer has suggested.¹⁰ By addressing his readers, Kierkegaard was using interpersonal connection to awaken the distinctly human *οικειωσις* of people. By stirring the person in each of us, he was throwing a wrench into the machine.

στέπνον, a storm in wondrous hunger

I have pointed to the body of Kierkegaard's text already — the way its form of writing manifests and works his point, summoning in the form of its address the enlightenment — lower case "e" — he understands personally. I think it is interesting how focused this formal dimension of Kierkegaard's writing is. It actually points to — or reaches towards — a location in the human body, where relational emotions — including anxiety — are commonly felt. It is important to me to state that this dimension of Kierkegaard's writing is not as conceptually focused as other parts — I can imagine human beings who empirically differ from the descriptions Kierkegaard suggests. Yet for all that, there appears to be widespread shared experiences of what Kierkegaard does suggest about bodily experience. Sorting out these matters would take a different study.

For the relational matters Kierkegaard *addresses*, where does his writing point in the body? Kierkegaard says

10 Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (2010). Huffer's emphasis, however, is on *eros*. *Eros* is too ambiguous relationally, however. It was conceptualized often in the tradition as a part of practical reason — of seeking some desirable. Relationships, however, do not admit of such objectification. They are interpersonal. Huffer has issues with the notion of the person, but I do not think she has been working with a relational understanding of the person. In fact, her lovely book, written so personally, suggests that she would value it.

that the “heart” is the place in the body where the relational logic he espouses resides. His is a metaphor, but it is also localized. We thump the chest, and in particular, the sternum to symbolize the heart with a gesture. Commonly, the biological heart quickens or breath increases or constricts as we near an avowal or a confession — the most personal matters. It is common to tell that someone matters in an especially personal way by the feeling the person leaves in one’s chest, not of fear or of agitation, but of excitement and longing. And this place in the body is felt cross-culturally to be significant. The psychoanalyst and phenomenologist Luce Irigaray also noticed this in her own work on relationships.¹¹ There appears to be something in the human nervous system where the anxiety of connection carries in the chest, or sternum. In what follows, I will claim that localizing this embodied center of connection — let us call it, of “relational reason” — helps one locate normative and relational drift.

“Drift” is the name I give to the garden.

A long time ago, I used to walk in Chicago for most of the day, setting out from the Loop and going in any direction that felt right into the North Side, turning down smaller streets I hadn’t seen before, sitting for a cup of coffee in the light, almost anonymous, sometimes writing notes as I went, walking down the long diagonal streets while the sun reflected off the windows of shops I could not afford, seeing women who were attractive and imagining what it would have been to have a normal life where I worked a job and we were married and one day would have kids, thinking how my twenties were so strange as a graduate student (whereas people I’d known in college who went on into business were looking like adults), eating a sandwich, thinking too much about some corner of an idea in Rousseau, or action theory,

¹¹ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History* (1995), esp. ch. 1. Cf. for instance in South Asia, the sternum is one of the seven *chakras*.

or phenomenology, walking more; finally, slowing down, I was too tired, took a train back, tucked into 53rd & Kimbark & collapsed into sleep later.

What interests me about Kierkegaard's address to the heart is the way the address helps *move* the reader actually to engage with the emotional content of her life. Which content? Her *discontent* with being a person. I call this discontent "drift"—for its phenomenological and conceptual connotations regarding the problematic of enlightenment—lower case "e"—I have been exploring. Drifting is the main quality of this relational center pulsating in anxiety, excitement or longing to throw the normal into disarray in my mind, displacing me to regroup around what I feel makes sense to me *as a person*—as if, in the moment, I am coalescing as a person for the first time. Drifting leads me to begin *to sense the conditions of my senselessness*, that is, the senselessness of the normal here at this moment in this place and time. I didn't think of it this way at the time; the academy was so impersonal. It normalized my alienation from myself. But then it was not set up to help me see trauma. When you grow up with trauma, trauma seems normal. Then so much else that should make us profoundly discontented and which we should want to reject personally becomes something we simply put up with unreflectively. I could not feel my fear and how much I hated being afraid for much of my adult life. In everyday language, drifting shows me that I am not at home in such a profound sense that I feel that I am dispersed or lost as a person, at times even that I haven't yet been a person or feel that I cannot be a person under the conditions from which I've drifted. So—and this is the crucial point—drifting's emotional content actually involves personal dignity as an experience, an experience in which we want to collect ourselves in our own person or show up as a person with others. As I've said, the heart is about openness, and the way to openness is errant and abnormal in its quality.

What I like about this area in Kierkegaard's work is the way he links a conceptually necessary thing with a phenomenal experience that he actually tries to help his reader experience. Think about it. There needs to be a name for the emotional and personal zone that precedes collecting oneself personally. In this zone, we lose being gripped automatically by norms that can come under question but which at the same time structure our sense of what is possible. This zone is no longer unreflectively conformist, but it is not yet personal. It is pre-personal, eerie, unsettled, strangely exciting, expectant but unknowing, and many other blended emotions that circle around not being at home with oneself. This zone might appear suddenly or slowly. It might erupt in an anxiety attack or manifest itself over days of building aimlessness. It may appear in an elated feeling that you are not yourself, or perhaps even in wonder. There are many different ways for drift to appear. What matters is that we see it as a logical zone between conformity and collecting oneself personally.

Moreover, this zone has to be opened up for us to see how it is there. When we go about our normal lives, we don't consider that we could be lost as persons. To do so would be to risk losing oneself. Yet without experiencing such a loss as a possibility, we cannot be free to decide on what we think is truly fulfilling. We stay lodged in the normal, perhaps fearing or pushing away the extent to which we—or important things in our life—are abnormal, unfulfilling, unloving.

Drift comes only from a relational capacity in which our entire person is at stake as it really only is in love. This was Kierkegaard's insight. The embodied expression of its zone is a kind of storm-field in the chest. What builds in the sternum is the need to *communicate* or to *relate*. The key to the personal is being inscribed within the interpersonal in a way that allows one to be free while being open.

Voicing

I've done everything I can, and I can't do more. I am listening to my body. The minute I said I could keep working on it, anxiety ran through me like a nova. I slept on it. I hoped it would go away. But it got stronger and stronger, until my limbs were filled with electricity, pouring out into the air around me in my apartment and my mind would not rest. My body told me. My body remembered.

A car flipping over and over on a bare and blinding road miraculously lands in a swamp on all four wheels.

I torn free of the rule

ضمير, spoken with, as a person

Kierkegaard's summoning thereby goes beyond a focus on courage in Kant's sense. Kant is still too focused on will, but the key to having a mind of one's own is being free as a person. Accordingly, the *relational* needs to be addressed, not the practical. To be one's own person is not simply—or even really—a matter of guts. It is rather a matter of being free to be oneself with others and with oneself. This is the basic experience and condition of love. Kierkegaard does not upbraid or cheer on his readers; he addresses them, and his way of speaking shows that he imagines himself caring for his reader as a person who deserves love and in so being seen is respected at the most basic point as a human being with dignity.¹² I am interested in this address, especially as it clears our drift and, having been experienced in our bodies, clears into a realization about our becoming and

12 See the Latin *provocare*: to challenge forth by way of a call.

being a person. I am interested in what it is for us to actually talk with each other as adults.

The address comes from the possibility of home, from whatever habit or hope of free and genuine community we have inside us. I am thinking of Tarkovski's *Зеркало*, of the mother running down to fix the imagined, mistaken word during her time in the printing press under Stalin. Rain is everywhere, emotions colliding. She did not have a community until her friends heard her word. But trauma interrupted even that.

The way I want to approach this topic is through the perhaps odd—in this context—topic of conscience. It strikes me that, even more than in the case of heroic anti-authoritarian Enlightenment subjectivity, conscience matters in the quiet, interpersonal realms of daily life when we are mature enough to actually speak with each other as people. What draws on our consciences—our responsibility for who we are?¹³ Isn't it being addressed as a full human being, as a person? I am speaking of the form here, regardless of what calls us out (call that the “content”). The form has the structure of a voice speaking with us as a person.¹⁴ My thesis at this point is that Kierkegaard's formal innovations try to express, and so invoke, the adult scene between two people where they actually speak with each other as whole

13 It is common for people who have struggled with conscience to report how when they side with their consciences and commit to what makes sense to them, personally, they feel a great release, a calm, and a renewed clarity. They feel at home in the world. These feelings, moreover, coincide with a sense of enlightenment. In the calm following conscience, we are empowered to use our own understanding. After all, we just have, and in a kind of crisis. So the activation of conscience is the crucial scene of enlightenment, and to be an *Aufklärer* is to be conscientiously abnormal. We can search for home by using our own understanding. But the process begins in drift. Cf. David Shulman, “Non-saintly integrity in the South Hebron hills” (2014).

14 Cf. Jean-Louis Chretien, *L'appel et la reponse* (1992); Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (2002, 287).

human beings, that is, as persons. And the result is that, in being addressed as a person, we open our consciences to being stirred.

Here is a typical invocation to the reader at the beginning of Kierkegaard's most conscientious texts:

[My book's] finally met that singular one . . . my reader. . . It stretches out its arms. . . ¹⁵

Of course, this is funny. But in the form of this address, there is a memory of grown-up speech. **Giving-talk, you might say.** Kierkegaard is modeling the form of relationship. Kierkegaard reminds his readers of a form of life in which they are at home, because the elementary relationship in it is loving. To people keeping anxiety down in a depersonalized existence, he holds out the possibility of becoming again more of a person.

Buber called this the "primary word."¹⁶ He was talking about enlightenment—lower case "e"—very much in the Kantian sense. We might also call it plainly talking as adults with each other. It demands that you use your own understanding as you are necessarily exposed to another in your seeking to connect, your response to the call of a personal relationship with your own life as you become open to the presence of a person. That presence is intimated, or carried, in *the bare form of the address*. Address, which causes drift, works because it carries the

15 Søren Kierkegaard, "Preface" to "Two Upbuilding Discourses" (1990). Translation modified.

16 Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (1999, 15ff). It is also interesting to note that Buber, who was steeped in the neo-Kantianism of the Marburg School, came up with this way of speaking of a word while his contemporary Mikael Bakhtin did too. Bakhtin's most brilliant essay is called "The Word in Dostoevsky" (I have lost my photocopy, but I believe that it was a translation of Mikhail Bahktin, "Discourse in Dostoevsky" [1984], and Dostoevsky's "word" functions very much like a primary dialogical *relationship*. Bakhtin was also schooled in a similar neo-Kantianism during the same period.

primary word in its form — even more than speaking, we might say the address *voices*.

The point here is that we can help each other be ourselves as people by speaking personally *to* each other, that is, by talking *with* each other. This is an elementary, interpersonal form of “con-science” — “knowledge-with.” Or we can learn to listen to our personal consciences, which carries this form over in our lives, erupting through the moments where, built up, we have lost touch with ourselves as persons and come to a limit where what we thought made sense no longer does or where if we do not focus ourselves as persons, we will commit to something that compromises us.

Obviously, this hangs a lot of work on the form of communication. But the Arabic word for conscience helps in addition to the Latin root that I have already mentioned. Arabic speakers have a name for communication *from chest to chest*: ضمير. It is translated as *conscience*. The Arabic word is relational — it indicates a relation between one person and another, between oneself and God, or between oneself as struggling and oneself at home. And yes, this word is embodied in the sternum — from sternum to sternum. ضمير is often said with great earnestness, which befits the sense of personal responsibility in it. It does not communicate anything of content except what its form displays: *you are a person to me — be a person*. You count, and I do too. We are people, whole human beings. ضمير communicates the bare power of subjectivity, the “I can think” and does so through feeling, the “I can be.”¹⁷ The irony is that this is not egotistical. Quite the contrary: it opens up the space of a relationship in life, a sense of what could even make universal sense as a starting point.¹⁸

17 Cf. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991).

18 As in Kant’s categorical imperative. I do not have the space here to explain how this Kierkegaardian reading extends Kant’s point about sense from *The Groundwork* and *The Critique of Judgment*.

Kierkegaard's voice in the passage just read is not to be understood based on qualities it has — loud, soft, elegant, trite, cute, sharp, relevant, etc. Obviously, it is comically sentimental, too. Still, it's the kind of voice it is because of what it *does*: it addresses the “single individual” (redundant as that expression is). That is its function or use. That's its kind. Such a kind needn't be said; it is always, however, *shown*. The most provocative signal of Kierkegaard's voice is not in the said but in the *saying* — in the repetitions, gaps, emphases, and silences.¹⁹ In the body language, the gesture, of the writing. In a kind of action that conveys the work of address. That work is not sentimental — it is basically moral and plainly humane.

What I have been trying to show you today is *how* this role of embodied, interpersonal address is just as much enlightenment — lower case “e” — as what Kant advocated. Perhaps it is more. It is certainly more mature, having surpassed some of the adolescence that Kant felt he had to address and which Foucault refined two centuries later. Communicating — the voicing of address — is the kind of saying where one tries to connect with another, seeking the vibrant openness in her in which she comes alive as a person. In terms of this talk, it is a saying where the sayer tries to connect with the point in

19 Consider the morally beautiful writing, under pseudonym, in *Training/Practice in Christianity*. This work stages a moral-religious drama through the precise repetitions of expressions, the escalation of care in sudden “cuts” and in many other ways. Moreover, as Poole has shown in *Kierkegaard, the Indirect Communication* (1993), *Training/Practice in Christianity* is literally built with the architecture of his Copenhagen readers' main Lutheran church in mind. The work is both heart-breaking and love-provoking because of the extreme “materiality” of the writing. Truly reading it with one's own search for a world beyond evil, the text manages to carry one's conscience through a process that reawakens one's idealism and illuminates renewed possibility for moral relationship.

Post-structuralists have learned from Kierkegaard on this writerly point as well — Derrida more than most, and also Jean-Luc Nancy, although sometimes to excess. See the latter's *The Birth to Presence* (1993).

the other where her engaged responsibility for her location in the space of norms will emerge—where called, she will emerge out of the shadow of the normal and move out from drift by collecting herself in talk together or in conscience alone. This means that we must use emotional intelligence to feel out where the emotional field of the other is, and so too with ourselves. We have to mind the body's surprisingly clear language of feeling.

Body language

Perhaps we are not even talking about voicing or address anymore. Perhaps we're rolling with body language. The entire body is the voice. Body's vocal (χρόνος).

What I have been calling "voicing" refers to the interpersonal dimension of a text that engages—hooks onto—the response of the reader in his ضمير. With ضمير, responsibility for the norms of my existence crystallizes around my speech. ضمير is the locus of care in speech—the place where conscience emerges as a voice in our voices. Kierkegaard's authorship (a) is a work in voicing and (b) is intended to locate ضمير in the reader. I think of this location as *eco-locational*, seeking the storm of vibrant space in another's sternum that produces drift and *nostos*—the search for home.

Voice has gotten a bad rap in the last half century. Influenced by Derrida's reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* (1976), some might want to explain Kierkegaard's fascination and use of the spoken word—even indirectly in his pseudonyms' theatrics—as neurotic nostalgia for self-presence that attempts to repress existence's contingency and our constitutional inability to be completely self-transparent. This interpretation would stress, for instance, how Kierkegaard repeatedly urged his readers to read aloud so that they might hear their own voices. The idea would be that hearing your own voice activates original presence, which itself serves to make up for the

contingency of meaning in speech. Voice then supplements the diffusion or scattering of meaning. φωνή “supplements” λόγος.²⁰ Even though one might not understand what one reads completely and might not gather the intention of the author, one still auto-stimulates²¹ oneself as a giver and receiver of meaning. According to this line of criticism, the problem is that such auto-stimulated meaning—much like Rousseau’s famous “supplement”²²—is empty. It’s the mere form of subjectivity without object. And hence it isn’t even subjectivity. And hence Kierkegaardian voicing cannot work to obtain meaning at all. Meaning is not obtained. In fact, Kierkegaardian voicing covers over the mystery of meaning. We mean things only with others and only by being subjected to the grace or tragedy of meaning in our contingent existences.

But when one reads aloud, one does not read to hear oneself read. One reads to capture the gesture or act of the reading. This act helps locate one in reflection, just as both seeing and hearing the words do. There are two processing systems working together. They help one triangulate the content of the writing—not fix it with certainty. Better located, one is slowed down to think more carefully, opened up to the context that comes with acting an imagined role (the “script,” so to speak, of this other), and one is better able to stop and go at the speed and ability of one’s own understanding. In short, reading aloud is part of the act of understanding. And as a means to that end, it is a form of response—not an auto-stimulation. Its goal is not certainty or “self-presence,”

20 “Phonos” is ancient Greek for “voice” and “logos” is Greek for “reason”, “understanding” or “speech”. Derrida makes much of Rousseau’s use of the word “supplement.”

21 See Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie matérielle* (1990).

22 Derrida explores Rousseau’s famous onanism as supplement: the suggestion is that Rousseau’s text itself is plagued by a constitutional ideological onanism. But why is masturbation empty? Derrida is oddly conservative here—and disembodied.

but engagement with the “outside” which is most simply expressed in my dealing with a text that was written by *another*: me (the *object*, not the *subject*!). There is body language in reading out loud, a body language that reminds us that we are not alone in the world, not even *with* ourselves.

On the other hand, what is true about the Derridian-inspired criticism is that speaking out loud does activate oneself as a being in time who cares and has a presence. Doing so is an extremely basic way of feeling what Rousseau called “the sentiment of one’s own existence.”²³ But it is precisely such a sentiment enabling conscience to speak: the circuit of simple responding to the text helps build up emotion through body language, i.e., the simple body language of speaking out loud, of hearing the words as they pass through one’s mouth. **This is the most basic affection of words the trace of a human community of bodies, not of propositions.** In this pull of words that are embodied again, one carries over the body memory of words spoken between people. Reading aloud therefore drifts toward—not self-presence but—reaching out into the space in common where care lives between people by virtue of the common being held open at all.²⁴ Voicing therefore embodies you in the space of care—this vibrant spacing that emerges from the chest just as the voice actually does. Yes, this is purely *formal*,

23 See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1998, 5th walk).

24 See Rousseau, *Emile* (1978, 291) for a hint. The full argument would take too long to work out here. It goes like this: conscience speaks for *amour de soi-meme* most basically (an *amour de soi* expanded with *pitié*). The sentiment of existence is a first expression and condition of a truly functioning *amour de soi*. Conscience therefore speaks out of the sentiment of existence, “the silence of the passions”—this being echoed in the entire phenomenology of conscience on 291 and also in the *Second Discourse* discussion of “the voice of nature.” See also Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (1991), especially “L’amour en éclats” (“shattered love; bursts of love”).

but it is extremely important to a view of humanity that includes persons in the space of norms—singularities who organize our communication not semantically but in primary words, that is, in relationships where norms become human rather than abstract to people's real lives and where everyone has the power to understand in her own way.²⁵

So voicing is none other than a kind of body language. Here, I am shaking off an overly disembodied view of voice, namely, one that sees (not hears) voice as part of a narcissistic circuit bound up in a metaphysical pathology, as Derrida did in reading certain moments in the philosophical tradition to bring out their narcissism. But body is significant and significance is embodied. So, too with voice.

Voicing is an extremely basic form of responsibility for the human kind of life lived in the space of what is meaningful to us personally and together. It is an activation of conscience within a context of communication. And this activation of conscience is tantamount to entering into one's own process of maturing, as we have previously seen. Kierkegaardian selves become only with others.²⁶ That is the deep and mature enlightenment point—lower case “e.” To the very stuff of the often abstract and always anti-authoritarian debates that the late eighteenth century considered Enlightenment—upper case

25 See Haagi Kenaan, *The Present Personal: Philosophy and the Hidden Face of Language* (2005). Also consider Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1997). Reading the prospectus of Kenaan's book really “clicked” with this point about persons for me. As his commentator Karsten Harries writes, “Of course we experience persons. But the seeming obviousness of this fact loses sight of a problem that has shadowed our all too often inhumane age. Kenaan succeeds in showing how such blindness is tied to a widely accepted understanding of language and reality.” See the book's dust jacket back cover.

26 Anne-Christine Hubbard (2002, 165–87). See also Michael Holquist (1990).

“E-” it adds a register of personal intimacy and genuine, interpersonal relationships. What others do for us in plainly addressing us is to stir our own coming to terms with ourselves.

The Kierkegaardian idea is that your enlightenment—lower case “e”—begins when and only when your responsibility for the norms of your existence crystallizes around your affection in the vibrant space of an anxiety provoked—or remembered—through the bare form of community. In this philosophy, you become a person out of love which, *unsentimentally and not-at-all romantically*, is perhaps best found in *plain talk with each other*.

Plain talk

So I conclude. This is a conference on Kierkegaard’s journals, his way of marking time. The question I just touched on about how a solitary voice relates to itself is therefore redoubled. Yet Kierkegaard wrote his journals aware that they could be read by others. What place did Kierkegaard’s journals have in his everyday life?

It is possible that the journals manifested a form of what Foucault calls “the self’s relation to itself,” a form of “writing the self” that allowed Kierkegaard the human being to embody his words enough to be at home within his conscience. Being thus a person, he would strengthen his capacity to be in relationships with others.

Yet encouraged by Roger Poole’s (1991) study of Kierkegaard, I think it isn’t irrelevant also to imagine a man of flesh and blood,²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, who wrote at night ascetically, who wrote each manuscript three times and then spoke it out loud, each time, as he went—word by word—who spent a significant portion

27 See Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations* (1978, chapter 1).

of his days out in the streets walking and talking with the many people whom he knew. He was many-sided: loafer, neurotic, judgmental jerk, comic, sad — even desperate — man hidden behind philosophy and genteel manners, devout soul; brilliant wit, writer, and thinker; well-meaning person, hetero-normative male inflected by patriarchy, good friend, loving family member by all reports, rebel vis-à-vis the Danish State Lutheran Church.

Well, this man also kept a journal. There are bodily and soulful practices for someone dealing with trauma as well as for someone living a philosophical life. There are everyday and plain forms of enlightenment — lower case “e” — that continue the wish of the Enlightenment — upper case “E.” Far from being mainly a *technique du soi* in the service of *critique*, to echo Foucault,²⁸ journaling was daily work in becoming a person. It was a prolegomena for *a more humane reality*. People grow up by learning to speak to themselves and by learning to speak with each other.

28 See Foucault (1996a, 1996b, 2012). See also Charles Larmore *Les Pratiques du Moi* (2004), winner of the Grand Prix de l'Academie Francaise for philosophy, 2004. These studies could provide a very useful starting point for a comparison between S.K.'s journaling and ancient philosophical practices of memory and “self-writing.” Such a comparison would allow one to further develop the “aesthetic” moment in Kierkegaard: the forms of training by which he “subjected” himself to the demands of enlightenment and the commands of his religion.

25 / I CARRIED
MY TEETH
IN MY
HEART
Recording of an act

in bed with wooden posts

in a while, crocodile

dark
snow

orange halo
 &
 their shadow

a door, the hall, it closed, lines

of light

There was a long hedgerow by the road.

In summer, I would crawl inside
especially when the shadows were long.

People would walk & I

quivered

holding my laugh.

There is an orchard in the mind

beneath the mind!

I grew up in Aurora, Ithaca, and New Hartford, New York. Every school day, my dad and I walked down Cascadilla Gorge trail. I went to school in the basement of the stone church at the bottom of the hill. Before arriving, water flowed over green algae and burst into white off ledges. (*The sound of the water was everywhere!*)

Within most forests breathe forgotten things.
Formless and transparent, filled with restlessness,
they flood surrounding static with their song,
then are gone.

Even the loudest justice
quivers beneath the sound that shakes its instance.

In the still undercurrent, luminos ity
Breaks in to frag ments of mul tic olored g las s

the animals, even, shiver with longing.

If the deep rock caverns,
the sunfall,
the algae covered light

Often, later, I remembered what she'd told him,
like the secrets grown inside their hands

or the days begun without a word but fingers crossed.
In the night air, when stillness tells the world there's
still life

inside the quiet, we hear the city coming together
like the bar I went to last weekend, singing,

or the stadium shouting out the match,
and the families, even, more beautiful than loneliness.

If I occlude the hour, shift sideways,
or smile instead of words,

it's only that a subway moving underground
has come and gone.

I remembered how
he'd hold you.

all the philosophy books sit silent

granular
eddies
on the L

this world not
like that world

and how do I

become a person

Sometimes, at daybreak, the light tunnels were endless.
Reaching through the courtyard, true, they woke
large starlings in the upper reaches of his dream.
These populated wells along old interstates and spoke
a thousand languages ancient pathways broach.

At night, I would undo the marks the evening's walk-
ways make.

Like a sand-erased shore, a firmament, I talked
aloud in my sleep to the emptiness. Never
ever it was there without me, the open life.
And inside the forgetful hours, new substance broke
up far along the stone-blocked lake
where people rode bicycles and ate cold ice cream in the
dark.

I stepped from the curb into moonlight
and heard suddenly the streets awake
of white winged moths.

like you they flew
somewhere aimlessly with a sign
behind them that
they cannot see

Busses outside roar past
this cold, November day.

Antoine's coffee on the stove steams.

I heard words on
the steps, then in the courtyard.

I feel the time
 in the city.
We become a silver sky.

The riots broke out while I was there.
You never know when you are in a plane.

Abu Dhabi is beautiful, because it is calm,
different passengers think.

Typical to modernity, nothing fits.

A steward in the bathroom lost his wits.
Some are praying. Others passing time.

When I saw you off—
you
disappeared down
the block.

a dress of roses
when we talked

I can be philosophical
as a fish
that swims in
visions
vaguely remembering touch.
Or love wisdom
when a cat, instinctively, goes
to
sleep.
O
*the world is made of maggots,
Aurelius.*

Through air, clouds and time:

I walked.

sudden glare

yellow slope brick walls

I was climbing up a hall that went in turns, wide
and ample,
toward the hillside's plateau,
halls like galleries slung from *Russian Ark*,
but in some cathedral
with spots of rain soaking through
in stains along
the ceiling and faded carpet stretched within
the ascending stone.

And only one woman praying at the top,
an upper balcony, the church seen in
fragments below.

Then another woman, more solitary, far, also
deep in consolation,
"God" both with her and away.

The first showed me the direction to depart
the church atop the Heights,
and
I did. It was
grey outside, typical French weather in Normandy.
The outer plaza was abandoned
and rose in waves of stone-made hills.

I walked among them and awoke.

Sometime later, I wondered where
my thoughts had gone. It was early morning,
with the dog beside me leaning on my leg and pressed
into the arm of the upholstered chair. I felt
that there was too much time and
there were too many broken things. I felt
that I had wasted out.

The porch was made of splintered talk.
Like age, it had become a place for people to
remember
the event that is the sprawling finitude of our lives and
even
of the truths, words, systems we
take to be everything that is and *couldn't*
be!

We sat there for a while in the sun.

Take me to a time that has become *unreal*.
Late adolescence will do when in my 20s
I imagined I was near adulthood
and all my closest friendships carried the glow of
completeness.
It was like this to be alive and free
enjoying the outer skin of intimacy,
but we were not even brothers to ourselves
at least in talking,
where our conversations were so limited
in terms of our sense of our fears
and of our needs.
I want to place these chapters inside a book.
A book about becoming unlike
so many that pass for philosophy
in the rows of graphically undulating
spines of
new translations.

When “great philosophies” are first perceived,
their systems (or un-systems) are like clouds,
apprehended in the air momentarily as aesthetics.
And that begins to mean
as perceptions only, while their joints of bodies
and of acts go largely
underthought. People
everywhere underplay
the seriousness of the everyday
when a festival comes to town
in every bookstore.

My creed, of course, is that the ordinary is not a fantasy.
Common sense with luck.
When the broad scale's laid out, we find eddies
of agreement in scars,
also pulsing, distant stars. A map that dissolves
makes our hands involve other people's
memories of times
we've never touched or nowhere go.
People are there in the absence. What we call
"language," "society," "self"
is upsurging, slowly collecting vomit and squirt of
stuff — all meta-
physical
gestures called "names" which do not name
or mark or tell,
but
daily meditation. Open a space within the well.
We call the upswell the "field." Our "life." This
"city."
"Now."

And then the solidity sways.
We come back into the worn comfort.
Say, "I love." "You." "Come
home."
These freed from Philosophies capital "P" are zones of
reference. Are
humilities,
ironies that put all concepts off. The way of the plain
tethers which moral sense is close to it,
quivering.
The bend of things is made of leaning.

But we are also aching and most as we go along. We
come upon it after the fact.
Our bodies do fool up and throughout.

This time, it was an auditorium inside a club for faculty and graduate students.

Part athletic center, concert hall, every space was near blacked out.

People moved through the dark around
what few lamps there were —
emergent, — or emergency? — lights . . .

One of my old advisors was there talking vociferously about how to manage a charitable board in transit with a British colleague with whom he — *cheerfully* — disagreed.

At stake was a philosophy of philanthropy.

Should I have told him

that we are headed toward the “post-human”?

I went through corridors with shifting students, adult, pressed in that half-made mode we call “bright tutelage.” It was a veritable sampling of the books to come.

The lockers
sweating with steam and the dormers half asleep
in the hall with a toothbrush.

I climbed toward an auditorium again high up
inside a balcony.

More people were there this time but still the stage was dark.

It was a carnival inside, a very mellow party of subdued talk, but you could feel the anarchic excitement in low, focused tones.

Time is on my side, and so I dig my own grave.
This is the kind of view that can get you loaded.
But the question is
 with what? My poetry
 is no alcohol, zone
 of my flesh.

Later, we talked about marriage in the fading, winter
noon.

The final time, I was in a synagogue, largest in the city,
full-up with people who talked in different groups
among many levels of seats,
the balconies staggered, shuffled, pillars blocking views,
but multitudes of possibilities
presented themselves each in side-
conversation.

I lost my friends as we found our places. I suppose
that happens
when we all grow up. But there were others
in the rows next over curious about
my leanings. And I remember feeling nervous
that I would be found to be
unchosen.

The shifting weight of self is unforgiving when
understanding is needed of
a sort.

It swings effortlessly from the limbs of mind,
but there beneath the intellect, the orchard
inside the roots and in the soils,
shifting life. I shush in the dark, between lights.

My mouth is underliving. It dismembers things
before I think them.

Saltines or Somerset, Cadavar, or colospecnic.

I've been reading journals —
the odd quarterly touted for its sound and sense.
City made of *scrape*.

But the day is mild in seven-o'clock sun.

It's
better to be unmade by the lime-green hush of the
forest.

The climb was made not knowing
that the divine is clown.

No, I am not better.

In Syracuse, New York, the literary mind
is wounds not

tops on cherries sinking lower into cream.

Finite mercy loves the dark.

& I run uphill in a memory along a street

nothing more than youth and nowhere the either side
of which is heaven.

Where's comfort?

This place that's ever moving — a shifting mark.

I was sitting on our couch at 616 DeMong.
An early hour.
We will be wedding in three days. I'm
unready.



he abandoned the slow, ascetic suffering in the solitude
of dim offices

early
morning on
a bare and blinded road by
headless sun

... steerless, he swerve d &

the swamp's smell sifted through the chassis

space of gl as s—
st eam, br ea th

solar

ze ro



There was a valley beneath the emptiness.
It lay round and cool as night fell in purple time.

Neighboring houses had clapboard sides
when she froze. The golf range hadn't been built.

There 1800 feet compacted inside green paint
while outside, a big tree.

The wind, whine of appliance

HE

She climbed the tree

* *

SHE

the defiant

* *

HE

* *

Forty years hence, her head still struck concrete.

In the evening,

she'd tense each day at that time.

* *

I left the valley in my car.

I'd found emptiness.

*

I love the atmosphere higher than the lights of the city.
It's warm with the sound of rain
straining the universe to consider
the gamma rays of iniquity.
What small portion of the problem
can we consider in our rooms? But
the warm, red memory of the origin
pulses inside my mind
and fills my body with time —

When I let go of the bad,
it is good.

When I remember the winter,
it is slight.

Tell me where the cars are sliding past values,
and I will think about how we can listen.

There is not much to be said about categories;
they keep us from what is unique,

but they protect the unconditioned.

Forest person, wood-lined in the cabin of your
thoughts,

do you remember the body you used to share?

High along the altitudes where the ice caps break
small fissures design figures of a coming life.

You anchor your teeth in night,

sing flat melodies in a soothing voice,

child of age,
finite circle,

strife's disappearance from the stars.

& "we" was well invented, we
were faded mosses along the rocks & lichened shores,
wave-ended, froth begun.

Please do not tell me that in a certain "our" inside the
hourless space of dark
you don't reach upward and inward at once
like an arborescent shell beneath the canopies of pines.

The tedium we carry in our daily habit of rest
evaporates like birds that seek new climes —



3

6 / WE ARE

5

A

STORM

IN

WONDROUS

HUNGER

Aphorism journal

Monday, January 11, 2010

Earth thought 1 of 365: I am enmeshed, although I act like I am not. I live in a context.

2: My actions are inconsequential while their patterns are not.

3: Holocene Earth gave me a chance. Do I deserve it? This sounds harsh. But I have a job. I earn it.

4: I used to see the sky, a vast silver glacier of light not unlike a heaven. Now it has changed in my mind: it continues us, is in part our effect. Vast, slow moving, long lasting.

5: We well-meaning people and our horrible consequences. There's a gap.

6: I read about Palestine (Abunimah 2009), that gross injustice. I pattern it out to a much more insecure world. Why do we build walls? I have to stop the sea-level rise in my anxiety.

7: It's foul out. But even foul weather is livable. It's foul inside me. I become disillusioned.

8: In academic philosophy, "Who am I?" has been asked for thousands of years without starting from our ecology.

9: She tattooed *Argus Pheasant displaying* (Attenborough 1979) along and across her back.

10: Holocene Earth says goodbye.

11: To identify with Earth life is not to understand it.

12: To wish is not to know.

13: They streamed over the border like a flash flood. Run-away climate change.

14: The look on my parents' faces the night before their 45th: they are serene together. They made it.



Syracuse, December 2009.

15: I turn to justice. But its most significant theory in the last century, *A Theory of Justice*, does not consider ecology (Rawls 1971). Yet Earth is the biggest “overlapping consensus.” Everyone with a “life plan” needs it.

16: “I heard kids playing today on a concrete yard next to traffic: ‘One skip, two skip, three skips warm. All our towns are under storms. Oceans up, oceans down, oceans everywhere we drown.’” Then I woke up in the pollution-filled morning.

17: When the economy is milked by managers who crash it and are then bailed out and given bonuses, managers who next become leaders of bail out organizations by the government's choice, how *can* we count on foresight? Reckless with impunity, this society of organized irresponsibility (Jackall 2009).

18: I turn to population dynamics. Maybe a world with fewer people? My students talk about not reproducing. There is no imperative to, but the problem is an unecological economy and massive gaps for exploitation of the many by the few.

19: Not just this species or that. Loss of families. Loss of genera. A species is like a poem. We lose genres. *Burn sections in nature's library.*

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

Earth thought 20 of 365: Beyond the ego, the universe. Beautiful anonymity. I am in pain.

21: We say that pre-modern man was *dirty* (Sterling 2007; Elias 1978). But modern man is too. There! He lives in his pollution. It floats through the air unseen.

22: Following the earthquake in Haiti, I remembered how the environment exceeds us and how we are tested to show common humanity when it does.

23: "Next to [the] living are the dead. Covered in blankets, their ash-covered limbs poke from beneath makeshift shrouds" (Davis 2010). I do not live in a beautiful world.

24: The paradox of cities is that they are the most sustainable while inside them the Earth is invisible.

25: There were knife fights in Haiti over food and water. Wound as I am these days around the climate, I thought of Darfur and desertification around Lake Chad. How will climate change strike the world system? That some guy like me, somewhere even now, will think he has to defend his family with a gun.

26: The best way to focus ourselves on the future and on goodness is to cultivate love for specific people now. Looking into the face of someone you love erases thoughtlessness better than terror.

Hold plausible risks in your mind.

27: I need a literature that speaks to me and makes me feel at home on Earth — neither philosophy arguing, nor poetry wishing, nor religion preaching. A voice like a family member's, reflective at the pace of Earth time, arising with the part of us that isn't destructive or blind.

Friday, January 29, 2010

Earth thought 28 of 365: "In what sorts of places do they sleep?" (Williams 2003, 24). Out in the open, with blankets as shrouds. And a thousand miles away in an air conditioned room, a designer bed from Room & Board. Hello, it is morning.

29: Boy/girl — s/he sees mom and dad's disordered world, thinks, "Why?"

S/he lives on the internet, eats local, patches her recycled clothes. She adopts-a-species, vote-drives against compromised politicians. S/he demands legal change as decade-long work.

This is new. This is old. S/he's both inside and outside the order.



Carl Schurz Park, July 2016.

30: The body is a river infused with fresh water and debris, runoff, oilfilm, rain, and cleansing marshes. Do we want purity in it so that we can keep *something* clean? Is purity possible?

What is upstream from my body?



Mahall's, Lakewood, Ohio, January 2016.

31: In Haiti, most people are peaceful while aid agencies are fearful (Price 2010). The knife has a long shadow. Anxiety the distorter.

32: Patterns are hard to remember. Turning off the lights, shutting off water, not idling or gunning the car. Do these matter?—Only in a thousand iterations in a million lives. But they also matter for my integrity.

33: New patterns open up the future.

34: "I heard the ocean on the shore. The ruins of Europe in back of me" (Müller 2001).

35: Patience in the crisis.

36: Ocean, lake, or pool. I float in my original element.

37: We built this pattern. Drinking from the tap, I tasted clear.

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

Earth thought 38 of 365: "What if everyone did that?" (Kant 1988) leaps from an average U.S. life to climate change — then to adaptation.

39: What fossil do we sink into the future? Or will the roots absorb the corpse? — Hurling the absence.

40: A clear face in fresh water, Lake Ontario. She's happier than I've ever seen her. Don't say the elements have nothing to do with this. Don't stop my identity at my body's edge. The lake swells as Elaine in it, and clouds drift inside me as the sun.

41: Kant (1965) says this is an article of rational faith: virtue will one day bring about happiness — and vice, unhappiness. But presentists don't mind future generations. Presentists will die before the grief and outrage.

42: I take my map, my internal map, with me. It's outdated.

43: On cold nights, I worry about the homeless. It is an indignity to me that there are people unwillingly exposed to the elements.

44: Would I be more in touch with our planet if I were less enveloped by machines that smooth life?

45: "My heart was a storm in me as I went" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, IV, 572).

46: Open a void for words.

47: "Everything is backwards now. The true life is out there, while in here is the dream" (Cameron 2009).

48: The surface. Undertow.

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Earth thought 49 of 365: The Ignatian approach to error asks the self-examiner to confront missed opportunities. Holocene ecology is the opportunity that makes our opportunities.

50: How do we think a thousand years ahead? Cathedral thought.

51: My end is another's beginning.

52: A city of open houses. Life passes through, like utopia. Yet this city is real, over a billion years old. The doorway is the species. A species is evolution's doorway for the ongoing stream of life. It is where evolution happens, what lets evolution through. When we make species extinct, we slam doors shut. Mass extinction closes most of the city for millions of years.

53: When we feel loved, we stop chasing after gratification and turn our minds to those who outlast us.

54: Today, I remember my grandmother, Miriam, who died nine years ago and whom I loved very much. Only the pure things stand out today like branches in winter.

55: The not-so-distant explosions of that region, and the indignity of my countrymen and women fighting an unjust war. So we miss the battle against inertia and time, the battle to adapt.

56: Did you see the environmental devastation caused by “Shock and Awe”? Destroy and degrade.

Monday, February 22, 2010

Earth thought 57 of 365: “Managers think in the short run[,] because they are evaluated by both their superiors and peers on their short term results” (Jackall 2009, 89).

58: Look onto the future that pessimistically, sad man (McCarthy, *The Road*, 2006).

59: “Industry is just as much a part of nature.” What is its time-scale? But, yes, it’s in the history of *our* nature.

60: How will conserving life serve us? How is goodness beneficial? I give up.

61: The Winter Asymmetry (*in memoriam* Miriam Keymer): “I won’t sacrifice someone else; I will make reasoned sacrifices.”

Tuesday, March 2, 2010

Earth thought 62 of 365: Youth is overflowing. It gives. But near middle age, different thoughts scramble through the night like bones. What good will I have done by being alive?

63: “What if the world is sick, mama? I don’t want the world to be sick.”—A four, almost five, year old.

Let’s not worry in front of them but give them reason to hope by our creativity, courage. It’s rough right now, but *this is what we can do*.

64: What is more important to learn in school—how to make a living or how to change a law?

65: Individualism in the ’70s made the world inside the rage. Around us all, industrial production spewed junk into the sky.

66: “All one needs is a system. Once a day, to do some small thing. Fill a glass of water from the tap. Flush it down the toilet—only that. The world would have to change” (Tarkovsky, *The Sacrifice*, 1986).

67: “What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality” (Plutarch 1992).

68: Aphorisms, a glass of rain poured down a storm drain daily.

69: When youth protects intrinsic value and old age sees beyond itself, they see each other.

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Earth thought 70 of 365: The activist parent and the conformist. Both sacrifice their children.

71: This kid needs a home.

72: After being plunged into the river by the psychotic John the Baptist (Mark 1:9–13), Jesus lost his mind. He lived for “forty days” with “the wild beasts”—finally calmed by “angels.”

Rhythms of animals

Wind patterns and stillness in the sand and rugged trees among the rocks

73: “The mountain mind / from invisible time” (Broadcast 2000).

74: When I was a teenager hanging out in the May air with nothing major to do, I enjoyed the sound of trees. I didn’t realize that we were wrecking the environment.

75: I’m setting the thermostat at 62 degrees Fahrenheit. But it’s wasted energy to think about one individual’s wasted energy?

76: A virus wrecks the ecosystem called “my body.”

77: “I like it when I’m simple”—we’re watching ice break off the shore of Lake Ontario.

78: Philosophy books like kids with toys but thinking that they toy with nothing. So un-kid-like. Thus: childish.

The kid more adult than the book. Life a morning in the sun. Through shutters, it rests on the wall in solidarity, playing slowly. Isaiah plays.

Saturday, March 20, 2010

Earth thought 79 of 365: “The message sent / was of discontent, / from incline to incline” (Broadcast 2000).

80: Living in Syracuse and teaching at LeMoyne College, I am absorbing this Jesuit school with my atheist mind. What are atheist “discernment exercises”?

81: In the seventeenth century, physics mechanized *physis*. In the twenty-first century, *physis* returns as we acknowledge ecology’s complexity (Gorke 2003).

82: Political ecologies are complex.

How does communism’s ownership of the common distort the Winter Asymmetry? I cannot *force* the common.

And capitalism’s revolution of desire? There is nothing *lasting* to my whims.

I’m in search of free commitment to the human community.

83: The legions of the lost in the mechanized bureaucracy of the present. This was true in totalitarianism, now in capitalism concerning the future.

84: Be fruitful and multiply: biblical capitalism. What is fruitful?

85: The long, gray winter. — Now a day of sun! No longer think or write. What is fruitful?

86: It’s ironic how I always have an excuse to ride an airplane.

87: A conceivable human future is not one in which we see Earth recover from a sixth mass extinction. The last recovery took tens of millions of years. Our recorded history is ten thousand years.

Sunday, March 28, 2010

Earth thought 88 of 365: The Holocene mind is echoed in time. Atom of *Adam*, are we powerless not to grieve it?

89: In the United States of America, we've given each other health care but not yet environmental health.

90: People say that they have to think of their children, but they ignore their children when thinking that their children do not want parents who are fair to the future.

91: Is vice this symmetry: holding others to what I should demand only of myself?

But without law, environmental problems won't be solved. The evolutionary record is clear. Humans have a tendency to wipe out species around them and to over-use resources for present interests (Ridley 1998). Laws correct this tendency and introduce foresight.

Fully human only if *anthropomic*. So vice is a kind of asymmetry.

92: Law needn't be what the State calls "law." In ancient Greek, *nomos* included custom. Anthroponomy — *accus-toming* humankind to collective responsibility.

93: For at least ten thousand years — some say fifty — we have eradicated species with our technology. Technology + population = dead species.

But I am trying this. Democracy + *nomos* = anthroponomy.

We don't live in a true democracy.

94: Nothing misanthropic in being truthful.

95: I sit inside myself and worry. It is fruitless. Then I talk with George, my neighbor. I reconnect.



Queensboro (Ed Koch) Bridge, New York City, July 2016.

Monday, April 5, 2010

Earth thought 96 of 365: Cyclical time seemed endless. Blue season came and went — gold, rust, wool and green. Species became dry skeletons inside trees.

97: Absent wood doves when feral cats cry in heat, a red maple surrounded by grub-brown grass.

98: The rain ticks as the radiators click. Small streams trickle across pavement.

99: Romantic environmentalism coincided with the industrial revolution.

It overlay colonialism — made “wilderness” out of long-labored, indigenous environments!

100: Yesterday, I saw the bees in dozens around a circular patch of yellow and purple crocuses.

101: James Lovelock (2007) tells us to *enjoy* ourselves, because we cannot save the Holocene Earth. With him, moral thinking is as obtuse as the “science” of a climate change denier.

102: Surely, the best thing about us is not that we can calculate, but that we can relate.

103: I am beginning to look at the current world of life as a strangely empty version of what was here before we bloomed voraciously in population and power — first colonialist, then industrialist.

A few large animals live wild in New York State now — ghosts of the life here thousands of years ago once the glaciers receded.

Monday, April 12, 2010

Earth thought 104 of 365: Ecological flows make planetary citizens.

105: We can't keep a home in free-floating anxiety.

106: How did I become a here and now self, rather than a “we” that becomes a “humanity” across generations?

107: I want clear, practical advice concerning the environment. Sometimes, it is hard to find due to ignorance and oppression.

108: Environmental faults are brute facts.

A pragmatic attitude pulls us out of dreams.

109: I drove back to Central New York, my childhood home. Country starts to fit like broken-in jeans.

110: Powering down

Friday, April 23, 2010

Earth thought 111 of 365: The shakes run and tumble, roped and rooted as rough nature. Dream-states spread, dissolve in time. Weather in my head clears. Character smoothes over decades as rocks rolled in water.

112: Being on the side of the powerless a thousand years from now isn't powerless.

113: Worms helped me become myself—a natural history of ego.

114: I want new categories of moral heroism. We do not need to stop a bullet with our bodies. We need to dissolve the patterns degrading our world. How? By (re-)designing institutions and engaging in the complex practicality of politics.

These things are not romantic. They take time, compromise, and lunch with people you oppose.

115: Small houses live in big ones.

Take the room upon the room,
washed bowls airing nightly on the rack.
Outside, the soil is made of histories,
speechless and unending for all of human time.

116: Now by the lake. Unassumingly, it reflects my head in the clouds.

117: I'm turned inside out, doubled over from running, my back filled with sky.

118: Headaches—the clogged marsh mind with a skein of plastic bag in the reeds.

119: A loss is a vacuum only if history reminds us.

120: The Earth seeps into music. What do the earliest musics teach us about Earth?

Think of electrified sound now.

121: Just as clouds swirl in, so can small things swiftly gather in my soul to fast moving system. Bright salvation of the day, groundless and optimistic as the sun.

Monday, May 3, 2010

Earth thought 122 of 365: Plants unfurl, push, pod their way through the soil down and up. Wasps cycle out from winter into the open. Cats cry in heat.

123: Like life, I am taking a break from thinking today.

124: I want to support the watershed in our neighborhood by building a rain-water catch. Ecology begins beyond property.

125: Emotional and social maturity are important for happiness in old age; not physical health, money, success or social status (Vaillant 2003). What about ecological connection—sentiment and know-how about the land in which we live?

126: I sat on the floor with students last night, revising their semester-long work. Harried and laughing, once near tears, they tumbled out of the system with no time to lose. And we are like that, we post-students, with our home improvements and loan improvements, our tasks, competition, and dinners. We tumble out of life with barely time to lose. The Earth's lost in all this. So it is really on us, really our thing, to build in time to think about the Earth. If we don't put the Earth into our school systems, students will cascade beyond it. And so, too, with the big people, we so-called adults, who are supposed to be responsible for our generation.

127: Goodnight, Thylacine. Goodnight Holocene. Goodnight ghosts of the Earth.

128: It isn't aggression underneath the carbon-heavy skies; it's obliviousness. Insulated by metal and concrete, we revolve aimlessly inside a million aims.

We lack a political "we."

129: The view on top of the house is different than the view from the sidewalk.

130: I worked outdoors all day. The next morning, I paused over the vitamin bottle with its capsules of chemical sun.

131: Last summer, I saw the strata that were once alive where I now live. Here was once under water—ocean with strange, shelled life. These overlays are compelling in a way advertisements are not. They do not seduce desire but are coolish fact.

They say, "The world doesn't spin around you. You are becoming, and many of your desires are mistakes."

Monday, May 10, 2010

Earth thought 132 of 365: On days when my loved ones hurt, I am made of storms.

133: 1980, 1990, 2000. Most multinational corporations have been as alive to their environment as partygoers puking with laughter into the toilet bowl.

134: Why hasn't the insurance industry funded widespread, environmental activism?

135: It's important to adapt humanity, who we take ourselves to be — our self-projection.

136: The issues that interest me most about Earth ethics concern how Earth's size, duration and intricacy pose a complex problem that exceeds us.

137: The macro-perspectives of geological time and planetary ecology make it hard to keep in view, simultaneously, human perspectives. I look at a book bag I bought alongside my father — from Strand Books. On it, profiles of all different sorts of people. The warmth of that memory, which goes back to when I was young. The thought that every one of those faces has similar memories. From within each of our worlds, our loves are so intense, and it would be inhuman to forget them.

I should write a book that contrasts these two perspectives — and shows how they can coexist in a human life.

138: For the last three nights, the temperature has dipped below freezing. Three weeks ago, April saw the hottest day on record for my city.

Cycling of extremes.

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Earth thought 139 of 365: The Bangladeshi worker on the lift for the sixth straight day of work at a dozen hours per day joining bolts between girders in Dubai's new sky-scrapers: I would not fault blindness to the environment.

Yet he knows that we are shifting the planet. He sees it through the immense strain and exploitation, the scale of it. He is not invested in denying it.

Is it the privileged who are most often in denial?

140: I watched French cinema last week (Melville 1956; Gleize 2002). Each film showed a keen awareness of chance, and luck, of the way we collide or intertwine in happenings.

We are so fundamentally abstract. Who are "we" here?

141: End of semester grading with its misshapen papers, academic dishonesty, appeals, emails, phone calls, running out pens, sore necks, weak eyes, lack of exercise, distraught students, angry messages, fine-grain policy, stress, and deadlines: we *insist* that we are learning, but the system isn't.

142: I am again as weather cycling an extreme.

143: When papers lie on top of papers, clothes hung there, a chair shifted to fit and the fine sift of dust lights up beneath a window, natural order returns.

144: Where the outside is inside and seasonal time is my clock, I live with rock patterns in my heart and the rise and fall of species.

145: I can't imagine the aesthetics of loss that a mass extinction deserves. What is a museum of lost life that isn't a museum of natural history?

146: There is utopia in a million year old form of life. Look at it, how it has weathered and been weathered.

147: The moral person might say that we have responsibility *to*, not *for*, future generations.

But the truth is that we are responsible for them.

Thursday, May 27, 2010

Earth thought 148 of 365: If I teach myself to live more freely with uncertainty, the complexity of the world opens up.

149: Earth is neither healthy nor unhealthy, and so with the environment. I am healthy. You are healthy. Those animals are unhealthy. (Frierson 2002)

Environments are relative. So we are deciding on life much of the time with our environment-changing power.

150: My society has no conventional oath by which I can publically commit myself to stewarding the environment. Nor are there many practices to steward me in contributing to the public good in this way.

151: Seeing cars backed up willy-nilly as they return from Chesapeake Bay.

152: Blindly the horseshoe crabs clutch the future—iridescent trail of eggs on the sand near the waterline.

153: Our current era has spanned sixty five million years since the fifth mass extinction. *Homo sapiens* has yet to age anywhere near a million, much less a quarter of a million, even a tenth.

Still, we have become a geological era in a sliver of time. Unlike a meteor strike or a chain of volcanic eruptions, we have ranged, constructed, settled and multiplied as we've made nature into a mechanics. This fifty thousand year moment is called "intelligence."

It is unclear whether it is *sapient*.

154: Is there a name for the hope that comes with action? Is it the hope in doing something, not nothing?

155: Arendt (2006) thought that evil in mass society has become "banal" — essentially *organized thoughtlessness*.

Jackall (2009) showed how thoughtlessness is organized in business-as-usual corporate capitalism.

The BP oil spill disrupting much of the Gulf of Mexico's ecology is a result of organized corporate thoughtlessness.

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

Earth thought 156 of 365: Can you wrap your head around all that—the fisherfolk, coastlines, ocean bottoms, life that would migrate through, breeding and hatching grounds, the birds depending on the ocean life...?

And now I'm trying to imagine human culture, the communities and visitors who depend on Gulf life, our rituals, sense of beauty, meaning.

157: *Life forms* are not the only things to go extinct. *Forms of life* do too. The first is biological — the second cultural. Our rites are often woven around life forms. So the ecological processes extinguishing life forms atrophy forms of life.

158: Last night, I saw a Western set in 1868 (Van Acken 2006) and a film about Beijing's internal, global, frontier (Jia 2004). In those 136 years powered first by colonialism, the frontier offered up electricity, cars, airplanes, computers, and industrial processes about which I can only guess. Population rocketed spaceward on a chart.

159: Humanity should become ahead of itself, not simply after its effects.

160: People talk about environmental "aesthetics." But the aesthetic approach is passive—about how a subject views the world (Harries 1998). We should talk instead about *ethos*.

An *ethos* is a way of life in which things make good sense. It is more than what we now call "ethics." It includes beauty and truth.

An ecological *ethos* is active, because it is a way of living, not simply a way of perceiving.

The place of aesthetics is *within* *ethos*: to reveal the morally invisible—other forms of life and the lost *we*.

Sunday, June 6, 2010

Earth thought 161 of 365: Machines are not elemental until they fall apart. But love is elemental, mechanical when it falls apart.

162: Life is organized only in so far as it emerges from disorganization, pressing against it, succumbing to it. Organs are temporary solutions to dissolution. But I must take geological time.

163: Recently, the Alaotra grebe of Madagascar was declared extinct—another bird species, an increasing number. The causes are predictable—incursion into Alaotra habitats, invasive species brought by our reshuffling life around the planet.

Should we call globalization “mass extinction?” From the perspective of much life on this planet, we are their extinction. From our own, “we are the world” (Jackson and Ritchie 1985).

164: *Ethos*, sometimes translated as *character*, is the root of *ethics*. And what of the ethics of *root*? (Why draw on a plant to teach us origins?)

165: Human rights were ill conceived at their root. The Earth’s the origin and breaker of states. What would rights be if they were conceptualized from our *ground*?

Saturday, June 12, 2010

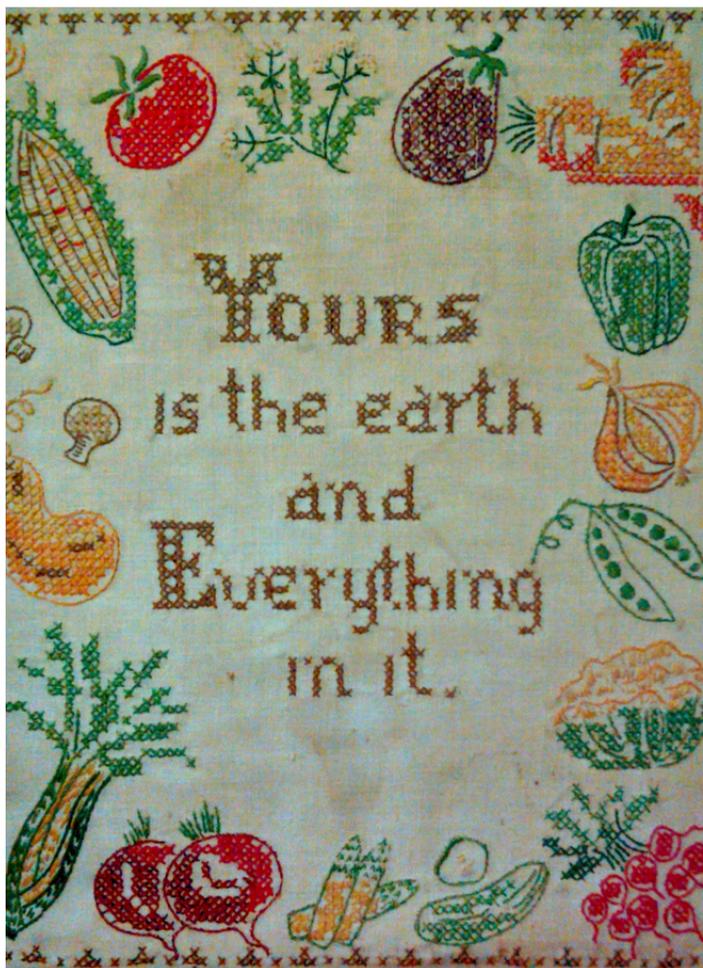
Earth thought 166/365: The root of *education* implies leading forth. To what?

From what?

167/365: Defenders of BP spout off—crude speech from their mouths.

168/365: The child’s face in light.

169/365: I’m speaking of being ecological as if it were an ideal, rather than a fact. To be ecological is to act in light of our context in the world of life, rather than being oblivious to it.



Aunt Eleanor's first needlepoint, Avon, Ohio, 2007.

170/365: "We, as gardeners, cultivate our land, our shelter[,] by taking care of the land for those to come after us — not being wasteful, but watchful — in what, how and why we care for our plot of land, whether we live in the country or [in] the city. We are 'gardeners,' if we are aware to take care of the 'land,' wherever we live."

—(Aunt) Evelyn Palik (née Bendik).

171/365: *Rain in Bangladesh* ~a one minute play~

Isaiah (age 5): “What’s a fact?”

Jeremy (age 40): “It’s something absolutely true.

Like, outside now it is sunny.”

Isaiah: “Not in Bangladesh.”



Zevi, Syracuse, New York, 2012.

Monday, June 14, 2010

172/365: *Oikeiosis* (Laertius 1925, 7.85)—the drive to maintain a good enough life. *Oikos*, or home, is at its root, just as with “ecology.” An impulse to home, to form the conditions for living in a way that meets the deep needs—the stability and growing—of the being. A non-capitalist sense of self-interest.

173/365: Rain falls on good and evil alike (*Matthew* 5:44–45). It is unconditional.

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

174/365: Pageant of Extinct Species, the Theater of Displaced Islanders, Graffiti of a Sunken Planet.

Wednesday, June 16, 2010

175/365: "It makes you feel good." This five-year-old riding a merry-go-round: a complex cyclical movement where the world amazes the body—

Monday, June 21, 2010

176/365: The Thylacine came into being through a long, evolutionary process within geological time. In a shuddering of that time, it died. From our impact.

177/365: The summer day says we should become a festival. But I think of BP oil spreading throughout the cold blackness of the Gulf.

178/365: I am fixing my house, because I own it and because my life appears with it, for a time.

179/365: No one owns the Gulf. But how could BP's life not appear with it for a time?

180/365: A corporation is lifeless, unless it builds time into its accounting and procedures.

Friday, June 25, 2010

181 of 365: Setting the *time* for accounting is as significant as what is evaluated—the time of eras versus the quarterly return.

HALFWAY: Leaving the door ajar, we heard them all night long communicating around the pond. I had dreams, many dreams, hopping about, energetic and calm at once. The amphibians, deservedly sacred, are among the most endangered. They are the memory of the mobility between land and water.

183/365: What have I learned so far doing this exercise? That I like forming over time in my own speciation process. What *kind* of life should I live?

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

184 of 365: Looked through my wild books yesterday — my books from when I was young. In my drawing: the squirming, honest, determined grasp of life.

185/365: I put the flooring down, plank by plank on top of the sub-floor, itself raised on small spaces that let the air circulate out moisture: playroom.

186/365: It is summer to feel so, forever! I have accomplished something for the next generation.

Earth thought 187 of 365: Reading. In *Republic* (Plato 1992, 330d–e), Cephalus leads the discussion to justice by explaining how old age makes the conscience more acute lest we wake at night in terror thinking of the afterlife. My life will seep into soil — and what is left after?

188 of 365: The environment may be one place where, roughly, virtue and happiness align (*pace* Kant 1965). The habit in my body of attending to this or that detail of living well in my environment is conducive to health and vitality.

Friday, July 2, 2010

189: Socrates' argument for equal opportunities for women (Plato 1992)—this first feminist critique in philosophy—how impossible it seemed thousands of years ago. Similarly, it seems impossible now that humankind could become anthroponomic.

1-9-0: Children imitate well the things their adults do. More so—they are consistent and precise in discovering where principles they've learned should be applied but are not. *They* lead us if we give them an ideal implausible to us.

Earth thought 191 of 365: A person relating to nature is among the most educational things, since it is our relationship to Earth that is at issue.

Tuesday, July 6, 2010

Earth thought 192 of 365: On the opposite page is a photo of the dock at Crumhorn Mountain Boy Scout Camp, now called Camp Henderson, near Milford, N.Y. I was a waterfront instructor here in the summers of 1985 and 1986 when I was fifteen and sixteen. My sixth grade teacher, Jim Davidson, was waterfront director and got me involved. When I look at the photo—better, am by or on this lake- whole lessons surface.

193 of 365: Pick a smooth, well-weighted one and angle it well. Skip—skip—skip—skip—skip—across the water.

Earth thought 194 of 365: I can avoid exhausting behavior. But as exhaust hits the environment, I can't. 90 degrees Fahrenheit and rising.



Crumborn Mountain waterfront dock, July 2010.

Earth thought 195 of 365: There were profits possible to squeeze outside regulation and weak links in design which no one took the time to double-check: BP.

Sunday, July 11, 2010

Earth thought 196 of 365: Colder winters, hotter summers. To think of adaptation as *insulation*.

197: O planetary citizen, how can you advocate for the unrecognized and the useless? I am wondering whether there are values that touch us from each remoteness.

198: A still patch on the lake, rocking slightly in rhythm: let me open up the sky.

199: Have I been reading slowly? Cool after heat — after sticky, nerve-frayed nights. I read with my body.

200: A fisherwoman takes on BP. How her environment will be affected, how its plenitude can be protected.

Sunday, July 18, 2010

Earth thought 201 of 365: I took a flight to California this year. Drank imported wine. These mattered, because people live in poverty. Environmentally, were my actions negligible apart from their patterns?

202: The car-driving engineer designed a more efficient car. The animal scientist framed slaughterhouses to involve less fear (Grandin and Johnson 2006).

203: Philosophy, predicated off of a personal turn, calls for *positioning* in one's life most of all. Dialogues (Plato 1992), aphorisms (Nietzsche 2001), remarks (Wittgenstein 1990). But what of the body "in" Earth (Abram 2010)?

204: Philosophy without the body is out of place. Ectopian, not ecotopian.

205: Philosophy without the commons is also ectopic. We share Earth. BP is a consequence of ectopic management.

206: What is property when it is *entrusted* and not fungible?

207: My uncle Bill the farmer plowed *around* the Killdeer nest.

Sunday, July 25, 2010

Earth thought 208 of 365: "I have lost my origin. / And I don't want to find it again" (Björk 2009). Ectopian.

209: A lone Missoni dress in the desert wears a mannequin inside.

210: In my midnight (Nolan 2010), the waters flood in, making our half measures obsolete.

211: Their homes are clapboard next to the unimaginably rich. The global economy draws countrysides into cities sprawling for miles on end, powering through the grooves of depletion left by colonialism.

212: The lives of others, of fish and bird, of sponge and mollusk are the deep-sea consciousness of the Gulf of Mexico.

213: I am dissipating the noise in my mind so that I can read while hearing the wood doves outside my home.

214: The founding fathers of the United States Constitution did not foresee a world where term limits and lobbies would thwart long-range planning. They didn't listen to the Onondaga Nation.

Sunday, August 1, 2010

215 — Quarterly returns torque the institution to the present. Look at the decision-making of BP.

216 — Institutions have no "fabric." They have to be contained and designed to self-contain. They fight for resources.

217 — How do institutions *shape* character? The pile of reports on her desk beyond what she can thoughtfully field —

218 — When thoughtful people produce thoughtless results, look at the institution.

219 — Everything has its system in our fantasy of system.

220 — Taking decades to see whether our experiments unintentionally harm is not capitalist. It is democratic.

221 — How do neighborhoods share *ethos*? By adjusting life together and passing along things that work. A democracy without neighborhoods is ectopian.

Sunday, August 8, 2010

222 — The single actor inside the large disorder. Personal environmentalism instead of democracy. A bird learns to fly by banging into windows.

223 —

1. Rotating slowly across the water's surface, a machine harvests lake plants for nearby farms to use.

2. Someone on a boat watches the reflection of the ridgeline become calm near dark.

Water harvesters

224 — Government announcement: the Gulf oil spill is dissipating, absorbed, remediated to a great extent. The long-range effects on Gulf ecosystems appear to be bearable.

Yet we are largely ignorant of what the long-range effects might be (Revkin 2010a) and the long-term effects of past spills have been extensive, much greater

than expected to both non-human ecology and human economy.

Why does the U.S. government have a bad record of environmental reporting (Holland 2010)?

225 — “Dispersed oil is still oil. It’s just [oil] in a different form” (Michael J. Blum, Tulane University, quoted in Fahrenthold, 2010).

Earth thought 226 of 365 — The metropolis is more ecological than a sprawled town. Choice of density.

Earth thought 227 of 365: Now imagine: across the street, a migration corridor, *roof woods!*

Earth thought 228 of 365: There are many different things to be said for relationships and their depth.

Sunday, August 15, 2010

Earth thought 229 of 365: One day in the future, I hike along the coast. There are cool shafts of light in the forest, moss smell in humid air, sound of slow waves of leaves absorbing quick, mostly quiet movements of animals.

Time made the forest a relief.

And sand spins around our memory of silence. The other way, the way in which cosmos and our identities blend in the dune.

Trust crossing back and forth between the human and non-human.

Now on the shore on the water

Earth thought 230 of 365: As I walk, plants grow unnoticeably, the small spider hops and stops. An ever-intent bee.

As I run, a squirrel scrambles up a tree, deer pushing off ahead of dogs and people, the ever-intent bee.

Earth thought 231 of 365: Instead of having portraits of extinct species, should we have portraits of lost terrains and, inside them, species?

Earth thought 232 of 365: Drivers. Soundless metal rivers, glass, and music. Outside, polluting.

233 of 365: Vapor in the air. Sprinklers. Children running.

234::365: The color of the August sun at sunfall. Plato (1992) likened it to the Good. A rare ecotopian trace in this first utopian.

Earth thought 235 of 365: I understood tonight why my Ohio cousins, growing up, would always take showers before bed. By day's end, a layer of stickiness coats my body.

I have moved from Syracuse to Cleveland.



Detroit Road, Cleveland, Ohio, October 2010.

Monday, August 16, 2010

Earth thought 236: In Pakistan, floods (BBC 2010). Horrible landscapes of water.

Tuesday, August 17, 2010

Earth thought 237 of 365: An environmentalism worth its name is an *ethos*. It demands a connection with our Earth origins that settles in the emotions of the chest.

Sunday, August 22, 2010

Earth thought 238 of 365: The environmentalists call it *anthropocentrism* and claim that the circle of moral concern is arbitrarily circumscribed around humans. The humanitarians call it *autonomy* and claim that beings without it—all non-humans, so they say—are not the primary focus of morality.

Both get humanity wrong. *It is humane to care about other life forms* (Bendik-Keymer 2006). Our freedom to relate makes us free to see that not only autonomy matters.

There is so much misanthropy in environmentalism and so much panic in humanitarians.

Earth thought 239 of 365: The mice and the wasps in the summer. They continue on, doing no harm to their world with which they have evolved. They are symbiotic, carrying pollen, aerating soil, turning over life like worms or fungus farming underground insects.

And we who have the power to disrupt these tight-knit multi-age cycles, these bundles of processing life, where are we in this home that has been our origin? Why are we dislocated like a top spinning along concrete?

240:: The time of the office is fragmented. Who has time to dwell on things that fall outside the office's immediate and proximate goals (Jackall 2009)?

Leave it up to the public to do the long-term thinking. But *civic time* is fragmented by a flex economy, circling between multiple jobs and child care (Sennett 1998).

As the office fragments, so does civic time.

Earth thought 241: Could we draw environmentalism from ourselves, rather than inculcating it?

Earth thought 242: The main reason why environmentalism does not develop within the good sense of people in contemporary capitalism is that we do not identify with a long enough time scale.

That, and more importantly how we are divided from each other.

Wednesday, August 25, 2010
mid-week

Earth thought 243 of 365: Lizards are going extinct at an elevated rate due to climate change They scuttle for shade rather than overheat and then lose valuable time once used for feeding. Many migrate to cooler climes — but then they compete with the species already there. Climate change is happening *too quickly* for their adaptive evolution. Their temporary system's thrown out by a planet moving too quickly beyond it, and their genetic lines die out after so many millions of years of evolution. They suffer, but do not feel, time.

244: *The impractical ones* — they run after private wealth, personal ambition, suppressing vague fears that would fully erupt only in a group acting collectively. On they go in their private spheres — *homo economicus*.

245: *Homo sapiens* only now for the first time can be aware of its long-term and widespread ecological effects. Can we use our technology to think like a planet?

The *homo sapiens* of 12,000 years ago was a long-term ecological mess. Consider the extinction of megafauna in what we now call North America—deep, indigenous specicide due to hunting with long-range weapons. Then agriculture a couple thousand years later. And now the industrial world acts as if the Earth is not our home. It simply overshoots Holocene Earth.

Can we develop a technology of planetary reach and time? This would include institutional design—and democracy.

Yes, but this also smacks of avoidance: of colonialism, of global capitalism, of today's oligarchic "democracy."

Sunday, August 29, 2010

246 of 365: The sailboat lets the biosphere be, but not the combustion engine (Braungart and McDonough 2002). I thought of these things tonight, driving home. My car, out of whack, a poorly designed artifact in a poorly designed society where we do not have true, collective choice.

247 of 365: A hawk glides above the ridgeline for minutes on minutes.

248 of 365: The industrial approach to our feelings isn't fitting to ourselves. The self-help tune-up with workbook and office seminar, even the haste with which we attack ourselves, betray industrial design: push and package.

249 of 365: *A child builds naturally*. It is how he understands causality, not how to ignore it.

Sunday, September 5, 2010

Earth thought 250 of 365: *National borders* keep us from protecting societies and ecosystems from pollution, while seeds and water are increasingly *commodified by transnational corporations*. We should become citizens of Earth and push our States toward anthroponomy.

Earth thought 251 of 365: I've been having flashes recently of . . . I don't know the word. I suddenly *feel* that everything I or others do on this planet is temporary. The entire history of life is a point with no one to record or to watch it. Rushing headlong forward, startlingly the way it is, instead of a desperate nostalgia, I feel freed to try again or anew at things that matter to me, and I feel responsible for my point in time.

The meaning is intrinsic, since any hold beyond the point is fantasy. And so my love for this point of life on Earth, for handing it down — that, too, is intrinsic. It is more meaningful to have been a point in time this way, to have been an unrecognized, unrecorded, headed-to-dust *attender* to a geological instant in an even older cosmos.

252 of 365: Paradoxically, we could use a can-do attitude like that once found in Dubai, most un-ecological of cities. That city deranged with speculation and construction, whose use of energy and emission of waste has been the largest per capita in the world — *that* city felt change in the air. And now our entire civilization must change to become ecological.

In the deserts outside Dubai, the sand sifts in eddies through the air, smooth and beautiful, and the qaf tree dots the crown and level of the land, tough in its persistent adaptation. This wealth remains unseen.

The wealth of collective action also stays unseen.

253 of 365: Yes, I save the human over the snake, but the basic idea is that we should co-inhabit. Industrial theorists obsess over the trade-offs and miss the goal: creative solutions that are altogether decent.

254 of 365: Pre-occupied grown-ups, try growing up: act collectively.

255: I am lost in the wild when I cannot reach medical care for my child. Also when I reach inarticulate silence.

I am lost in civilization when I forget I am alive or feel unfree, when I have no distance on civilization.

256 of 365: Upstairs, wound-up neighbors walking on floorboards over this apartment where I now live during the workweek, sound of cars on Lee Rd. Cold seeping in. Fall, not yet — soon.

Friday, September 10, 2010
justice in

257 of 365: Emerge out of oblivion inside the makeshift habits of adults, the future unimaginable?

258: Life isn't something you just *waste!* It deserves a chance just as we deserve a chance. There should be a good reason to kill it off, and we should want to be aware of having acted so as to kill it off.

Our society seems invisibly wanton. We're producing widespread extinction without thinking about or discussing it, without meaning to.

Earth thought 259 of 365: Trust is a keeper, the alchemist of anxiety. Trustworthy, you activists of the next world.

Earth thought 260 of 365: As Chin-Tai (Kim 2010) reminded me, trustworthiness is different than being trusted. Still, I believe in *oikeiosis*—once we include true, collective communication and some time.

Earth thought 261 of 365: Some portions of the world, around 1500 A.D., managed to brutally exploit the rest of the world, using that exploitation to drastically increase material development back home. 500 years later, those same parts of the world managed to make the descendants of the exploited suffer even more. And they did so quite simply, by polluting. Climate change floods the helpless, not the gluttonous rich, and colonialism's shadow stretches over the poorest faces still. Is it not enough to make you shake your fists at the sky?

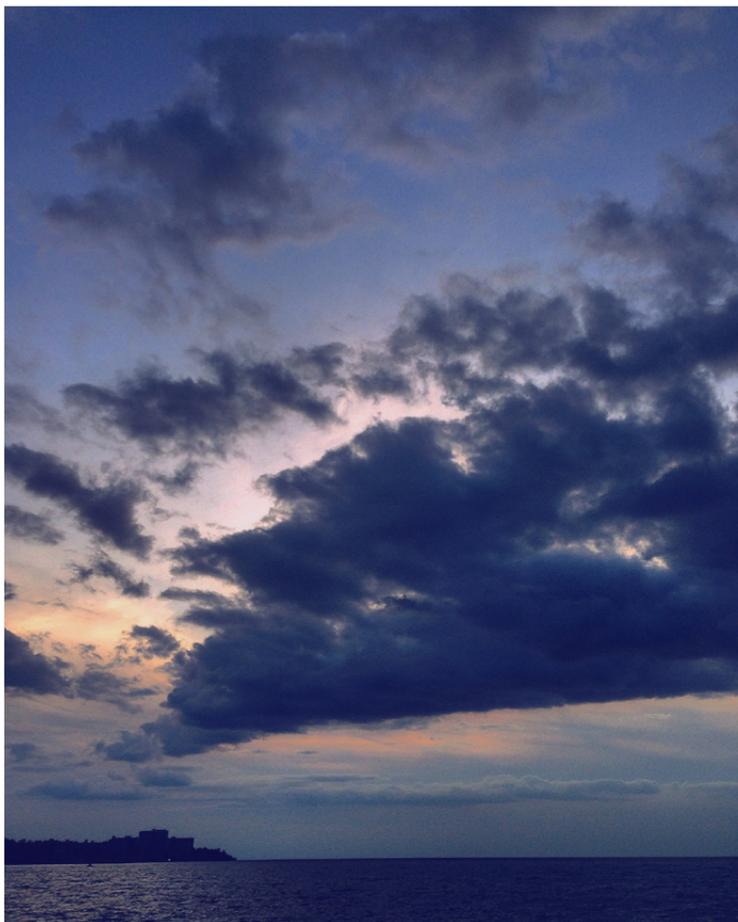
Saturday, September 11, 2010

262: “We can’t simply keep stacking boulders against the change that’s coming...” (McKibben 2010). Yes, we can. *They* will have to cope, not us.—This is presentism, worse than racism and sexism combined, because it magnifies powerlessness in the future.

Sunday, September 12, 2010

relationships

263: To keep our humanity, we’ll need to find goodness in each other. So I am going to build a home beginning from my relationships.



Lake Erie, May 2016.

Friday, September 17, 2010

264 of 365: Alien planet, full of dislocation, loss, dryness, dust, rain and floods. But it is still Earth, a continuous biochemical system, our origin and home.

Earth thought 265 of 365 (one hundred more to go): Democratic states today exist in a dis-integrated global patchwork with many holes of sovereignty and failed coordination. State alongside state alongside state with slight consistency between when it comes to environmental policy.

And then the whims of “democratic”—just as easily *oligarchic*—preference opting for short-term interests as swayed by powerful media and politicians funded by private interests.

The widespread ignorance and apparent hedonism—valuing material pleasures over invisible life forms or over fairness to generations a hundred years from now.

But authoritarianism is unjustifiable even on consequential grounds. Top-down rule can be blind to perspective, focused on the things it thinks matter and abstract to the real concerns of people—indeed, it would almost certainly be if planetary. More importantly, authoritarianism is notoriously susceptible to corruption, checks and balances less so.

I think what is needed is a dispersed and widely held method for stabilizing perspective and integrating invisible values, checks on the systemic soft spots that subject the public to private interests. This is simply *real* democracy. We would appear to need democratic contestation and sub- and transnational movements that challenge oligarchic politics to become moral (Benhabib 2004).

266. Lady Gaga's meat (Gaga 2010)—her Missoni—is it more gluttonous than the typical restaurant menu? The eaters consume inconspicuously, whereas the dress hangs conspicuously.

267. The silk harvesting, dye vats, and electrical energy in a pulsing sewing factory, the transportation over several continents (pollution rising to the upper reaches of the atmosphere and dissolving in the oceans); the packaging of plastics, papers, and silks.

...

A florescent-lit, white showroom with bright colored scarves in glorious patterns laid out on long, white plastic podiums.

268. "Hey, you! You're destroying all of our fun!"

(The self-gratifiers are tired without even having had a storm within their chests.)

Saturday, September 18, 2010

269. Today, the media question is *can you do me?* This is a deflection in which you position someone to think *we* are out of reach from the beginning.

Sunday, September 19, 2010

particularity

270. The disaster books (McKibben 2010; Lovelock 2006) don't do a good job of starting from *our* particularity, and so they promote hysteria. The steadying by a face.

(Elaine's voice, Isaiah's face, Mom and Dad and Ruth's voices, seeing the Aunts, my good friends)

Monday, September 27, 2010

fragments — action

271. In German romanticism (1830), *avant-garde* modernism (1925), minimalist music (1950), hip-hop, rap, and much late twentieth-century media and performance, the fragment scattered the atmosphere so that we could breathe in our limits (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988).

The cracks showing: weather outside brings down the translucent ceiling where we thought we could be angels. The hot, dusty, humid, pouring, freezing, billowing sky pours in. Shards on the floor by your feet. Children have decided on the basement.

272. When I am healthy, I am in my own ecosystem fitting my limits. I am not running myself down. I weather into myself.

273. The environmental crisis we now face is not one we can stop in our lifetimes; it is one *we* can start to address for future generations on the model of building a cathedral (Saillant 2010).

274. At the precise historical moment when we need to expand our sense of ecology to include the planet, research drives our sense of ecology down to the scale of genetics, there in the inside of cells (Whitehouse 2010). Instead of turning to the collective, “bioethics” goes back to the *sub*-individual!

275. Convert relational reality to mechanical potency for hedonic intent. *Eco-tourism* — in-grown fragmentation!

276. *Eco-hedonism*. I like to glide when I ride. And that means this: slowing up hills, quickening down them. The gas-users of America act as if we have no topography (my eco-friends and I, we’re righteously complicit)!

277. Why not fund a corps of mechanic-teachers who give public efficiency classes in each community, teaching people how to retrofit their homes to save money while teaching sustainability at the same time?

Why not prime a corps of law instructors who show us how to collectively change our zoning?

Personal efficiency, not collective legislation? In-grown fragmentation.

278. The old image of sustainability as an ever-overturning way of life is false, because the changing climate will change what is possible in life. Sustainability itself had an un-geological sense of time. *In-grown fragmentation!*

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

The Failure (1988–2012)

279. I want a movie seen from the perspective of a climate refugee in 2050. It should depict the history of the Failure (1988–2012) when everyone in the know knew about climate change—the politicians, the journalists, the academics—and (most) sneezed.

The Failure would be part of every child's vocabulary.

The Rockies will be barren in this film, eaten out by beetle infestations and washed through with soil erosion.

Many states will have imploded as Sudan has under the pressure of desertification.

The refugee will rely on the kindness of strangers.

Everyone will be stressed and angry at the selfishness of the Failure.

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

presentism

280. Presentism is bias toward the present to the detriment of the future. It is an *organizational situation*. Due in part to our presentism, we are forcing the climate toward a less hospitable planet. Shortage of resources and environmental risk are oppressive. So presentism is complicit in oppression. It is a new kind of oppression, one that is unintentional but clearly negligent.

Friday, October 1, 2010

281. The time frame of twenty-one centuries sits as a convention, a bubble in my mind. But geological time should be the default context. Ten years ago, I thought the *millennium* was the mark. The Museum of the Earth has affected my imagination.

282. Ode to a global flow. The cotton from [?], dyes from [?], buttons from [?] made from plastics from [?]
—stitched into Zara's Spring line outside Dhaka, Bangladesh; shipped to Spain [?] and redistributed to Dubai where it's sold in Mall of the Emirates to a U.S. woman who travels back to New York, then to Cleveland, and lives in Shaker Square, wearing the suit downtown on the commuter rail and walking around Public Square into her office building, up to the twenty-seventh floor, corner office, overlooking Lake Erie.

Saturday, October 2, 2010
third-generation climate ethics

Two eight three. First-generation climate ethics focused on whether there is a climate problem, what caused it, who is responsible, and how to apportion blame. The second generation focuses on the adaptability of our form of life—our social and political systems, technology and economics, our *ethos*. Third-generation climate ethics is straight civics. Trans- and subnational democratic contestation!

Sunday, October 3, 2010

Two eight four. Here is this beautiful planet whose Holocene order we are destroying.

Climate civics is trans- and subnational democratic contestation!

Monday, October 4, 2010

Two eight five. You climb around it, fall your head let upside down, hair above to the ground, leg locked, a cold and sturdy bar. The giddy high like sea-rise barriers. Out into the surrounding world, search of eddies. Self-organizing. Of broken ecologies of. A jungle gym —
like a good fragment

Thursday, October 14, 2010
post-industrial society

286/365: The State University of New York at Albany cancels most of its modern language programs (Jaschik 2010), breaking tenure, and I think about climate change. The university whose motto is “the world within reach” just did that.



Old Southern Ohio coal-mining country, May 2016.

287/365: People had to adjust to urbanization following the Industrial Revolution. What will we have to adjust to in a post-industrial age? Too easy.

288/365: On a quick-speeding plume, rolling over the land, enveloping trees, houses, fields, fences, cars, roads, mailboxes, ditches, porches . . . our industrial, democratically poor civilization meets Holocene Earth's limits.

Bedrock personal time has liquefied.

The core vaporized

Time is now urgent, a tremor on its face, an eddy blowing away the vapor

I no longer have all the time in the world; nor do we.

The seasons change, change their *form*—not just rotating.

Hylomorphs no longer count on the re-assuring, re-appearing Same.

289/365: Where the biosphere is mimicked, not shifted. To achieve a post-industrial society will require a kind of self-consciousness and innovation that the human species has rarely shown. To achieve harmony with the biosphere's cycles in a given geological era—we have hardly been able to do that in all our time as a *species* (Ridley 1998), and *especially* in industrial society. And now the cycles are shifting, the bundles coming loose.

But one thing in our way is corporate oligarchy. We are missing the wealth of true, democratic collectives.

290/365: I looked for a time yesterday at kids playing in a playground. It seemed to me that ethics isn't about argument, then, but about really looking. What am I doing here?

291/365: Goal: *post-industrial society—dismantled oligarchy—confronting the colonial past.*

292/365: *Imaginary lunch-napkin notes.*

#1 (*while they went outside for a smoke, leaving me at the table*)

Patterns of behavior in which we are locked by incentives and disincentives and in which the actors that build our world are lodged, even trapped (Jackall 2009)

#2 (*by myself later that week*)

The deconstruction of an industrial economy—energy patterns, patterns of production, accountability schemes, laws, guiding metaphors . . .

293/365: I frequently feel the need to gather my time together, my interests, the meaning of the places I've lived, the jobs I've done, and—more importantly—the meaning of my relationships.

If I am split—shaved off, and vulnerable—I settle back into myself through the processing which is done as if I were an observer to myself, loving but also detached.

...

I cling to the fragmentation until I am as much a witness to my life as anyone else, albeit someone else who has some kindness.

...

294/365: “Industry” with its word family—*industrious*.

But the Industrial Revolution with its specific form of production. There could be other forms of production that would be *more* civilized (Braungart and McDonough 2002).

The virtues of industrialism can be vices too.

Presentism, human-caused planetary change—the Industrial Revolution at its limit undermining itself through technology that is in the hands of the few over the many, here and in the far future.

295/365: Hear “industry” straight to the backlife, the frontlife.

Backlife: extraction, colonialism

Frontlife: waste, misregulated capitalism

Saturday, October 16, 2010

Here's to focus on materials, the gut-bare fantasy.

296/365: Manuel Castells (2000) called the Information Age “post-industrial.” But how is information technology produced and what powers it? The heavy metals and rare earths are extracted. The electricity comes from fossil fuel with its emissions. The powerful still exploit the vulnerable in the name of profit. The Information Age is simply late-industrialism.

297.365: Alekandr Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002)—a single, continuous shot of 96 minutes, panning and flowing through a historical dream set at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (these Earth thoughts feel also like such a shot). This is the nineteenth century; it is nationalist, colonialist. The ark of the twenty-first century is planetary, filmed in a dismantled refinery in 2090. Who dismantled it?

Sunday, October 24, 2010

promissory justice

298.365. *The Earth's given us a chance to live.* Does that demand anything of us?

299.365. How can a chance generate *obligations* to live up to it? It would be the meaning the chance provides that contained the grounds of obligation. What is the meaning?

300.365. Suppose that being alive were the chance of a relationship, as when I inherit my parents.

But some parents are bad. Life is deservedly criticized when it involves tragedy or abuse (Neiman 2002).

Life is the scene of all our relationships. If any relationship is good, life is a condition on that possibility. But does the possibility of the good in relationships outweigh the possibility of tragedy and abuse, especially when the good in relationships makes tragedy and abuse truly hurt?

301.365. To make any sense of the idea that the chance of being alive demands something of us, then, we need the notion of an *unsurmountable* good in a mere possibility. I call this an *unqualified* good.

302.365. There is an unqualified good in being alive. It is the chance to *see* the good. It is unqualifiedly good to discern goodness—or even to have the possibility of doing so.

So the chance Earth has given us to live demands that we mind the good.

...

Is this not a *reductio ad absurdum* of the so-called “liberal” view that we have no obligation to do anything with ourselves as long as we’re not hurting one another? We have an obligation to discern and attest to the good. It comes from the fact of being alive given to us by our original home, Earth.

303.365. *Hamlet* (Shakespeare 2003) read as *the* crisis of authority. He doesn’t see the obligation in being alive, an obligation that goes away only when we can no longer see the good. He makes being into a groundless choice. This is immoral.

Hamlet does not display authority’s crisis—our *fascination* with him does.

304.365: The rot of obligation goes deeper.

1. Citizenship is a dying art so that we have lost important knowledge about how to work out what is good.
2. Many institutions organize irresponsibility so that we have trouble maintaining what is good *collectively*.
3. We have developed practices of short-term thinking so that we are not disposed to consider what is really good *for others in the future*.

305.365: How can we have a relationship with an impersonal system of life? Cultures and labors close to the land or water tend to develop a relationship with these zones of life out of long, sedimented time interacting with them and their climate.

Listen, the system of life filters down into someone.

Sunday, October 31, 2010
the use of time

306.365: Let me suppose that the idea of a relationship with an impersonal system of life, personalized by our analogical thinking, our identification and blurring as the system settles in, is not unhelpful (Bendik-Keymer 2006). It allows us to have a *home*. Still, this only helps; it does not suffice. An impersonal system expects nothing of me. I do, rather, of myself.

307.365: In today's corporate-style-managed militaries, soldiers, too, are often treated like the Earth under industrialism—squeezed to produce effective results, trained, equipped, even drugged or biotechnologically modified. They are used up and left over, polluted by the process.

308.365: I was shocked tonight to see that the same depersonalization allowing corporations such as BP to

turn ecosystems into numbers is there in my government's discharging of combat veterans (French et al., 2010).

Did you kill anyone?

Were you wounded?

Have you ever had thoughts of suicide?

[check]

Thank you. That will be all.

309.365: Branches across glass, back and forth.

310.365: The first use of time is to be able to make decisions.

311.365: Jumbled and thrown together—and apart—our personal histories (and *our* personal history). The sound textured leaves along the hills. I *leave*.

312.365: Each day I write is significant to me, inside limits and aware.

Sunday, November 7, 2010
keeping our heads

313.365: What would a planetary curriculum for adaptation to climate change be, where the scale would be found not only in the content but also in the *form*? What kind of politics would it need to actually show?

314.365: On this election day, I can think of nothing worse for our relation to the environment than *the death of facts*.

315.365: *A self-portrait in the upstairs bathroom mirror of the Scheinfeld's home* (Scheinfeld et al. 2008). Imagine it is weathered by time, rain water, mold, ice.

316.365: / *Urban farming grocery list* /

Organic ghosts:

—to be alive to significance

—to have relational responses (to not turn away from you or myself)

—to not fit in, to

Be awkward and *ending* (!!!) even when

[They {production machines}] refuse to end. <*They really do, they refuse to give up!*>

317.365: *State of the world*. They deregulated our future so that they could gratify themselves now; sacrificed young people, families, whole ecosystems to a war based on lies. Their friends used loopholes around the globe to pollute and use up the Holocene Earth.

...

Meanwhile, I read some contemporary literature that gives one the sweetness in the infinity of life, as if everything were funny, or at least almost — ironic and light.

It's not that I am bitter and insist on critique. It's that the angles dizzy me.

318.365: Visiting University of Chicago, the first thing I did was to enter Rockefeller Chapel.

At center was *the intelligent flame of charity* — one, stained-glass window high, high up in the arch above the altar.

...

The epiphenomena of the quarterly return. Fractal dance of identities and desire amounting to an individual life.

...

I do not usually pray, being technically a-theist. But I thought about the next thousand years, an emptiness in my mind that was only a bare wish.



Not quite a self-portrait, November 2012.

319.365: *To let alone reasons, and to not let reasons be alone, so that: we aren't trying to make life more orderly than it is, denying its buzz and blur*

[organic ghost wall sticker/urban farmer saying]

Sunday, November 14, 2010
the death of facts

320.365: I think reasoning takes many forms; it isn't monolithic. For instance, reasoning can be theoretical, practical, or relational. There are many kinds of reasoning processes. Each has a different logic: involves different goals, forms of knowledge, sensibilities. Usually, when intellectuals rail against reason, they have *forgotten* practical and especially relational reason.

Look and see: how to fix something from experience, trust the body's capacity; know when to hold and be held.

Sense is sense. The sensible thing is to acknowledge it in its different forms.

So the environmentalist (Abram 2010) who chastises reason with intuition, experience, practice, poetry, religion, spirit, touch, dream, wildness, compassion, life, materiality, etc. — unintentionally contributes to an out of focus, rational culture. He gives reason to only one form of awareness, when it has many.

Think about the fact that there are many ways your life makes *sense*.

321.365: I knew a program once that, although in a school, openly contributed to the death of facts. It called itself "progressive," but was complicit in conservatism through its view of what is rational. The program, which was in philosophy, cultivated sentimentalism. It discounted objectivity and eschewed argument in favor of voice. It didn't matter if a position were well argued so long as it *felt* right. But authenticity depends ultimately



Amir & Dzena's wedding, New York City, May 2015.

on veracity to get a grip. This was my first introduction to how intellectuals can hate themselves by undermining the conditions of reason and, so, of responsibility. When you give up on objectivity, you give up on facts. And when we give up on facts, we hand over social reality to the most powerful and to self-gratification.

322.365: On March 25, 2009, Congressman Schimkus (R-IL) testified before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Environment. In this brief testimony, he appears to have taken biblical quotes out of context to justify his view that cataclysmic climate change can't

happen — “God” being providential (Doster 2009). I believe this to be the most tragic video clip I’ve seen all year, due to its banality.

You have to remember that the oligarchic power-brokers and beneficiaries of our current, global economy perpetuate a kind of exploitation against future people. Future generations are people too and deserve fair opportunities. Things as they are, however, the wealthy and their brokers take advantage of their position in time to use things up. And Congressman Schimkus runs interference with his bible.

323.365: I have obligations to a specific child, Isaiah. This fact is a despair-stopper.

My obligations demand that I do my best to protect future generations from my generation’s corrupt organization and its lack of collective will. It doesn’t matter how I feel about this. If my feelings get in the way, then I must disregard them.

324.365: Imagine that you see a tanker out on Puget Sound. My friend, Judy, shared *somesuch* photo:

Here is our world now, industrialism afloat — controlled by a corporation.

The fact of the matter?

325.365: “The summer day says we should become a festival.” And so does the winter day in late Fall. How do *days* do that — not achievements, customs, even friends — bare weather?

The sun, crisp in its unseasonal season surprises the remnants of trees and the rolling circumference of time.

326.365: I’m going to take my time with facts — *politicize* them. But that doesn’t mean I will distort them. It means the opposite. I’ll insist on their objectivity. I’ll point out the political framing that caused them to be; will signal what clouds them being seen.

Sunday, November 21, 2010
morally invisible

327: Climate change's ghosts opening barren water. This is what ocean acidification means.

328: If the essence of humanity is freedom (della Mirandola 1996), *must* we care what happens to ocean? *Only in so far as what happens to ocean bears on other free beings* (Kant 1998)—*future generations, for instance.*

I think this gets the problem backward. Free people should be responsible people, and responsible people shouldn't be thoughtless with what matters and is meaningful. So if I am going to be free, I should care what happens to ocean.

I don't need to *start* with other people's rights to see that what we are doing is not worthy of freedom. I can begin with what it means to be a responsible person.

329. A year ago next month, my nation's democracy—along with several other nations—managed to imperil future generations of the planet by not producing climate policy at Copenhagen (Morton 2009). Shall we discuss a crime against humanity?

It is hard to give democracy the hundreds of years it needs. But, then, is *that* democracy?

330. Do species matter in and of themselves?—*Yes, but; no, but . . .* Do wild processes (Rolston 1985)?—*Which?*—Isn't everything ocean near life (abiotic condition; toxin voids for speciation-to-come)?

Then do individual ocean lives demand our respect?—No, except . . .—*And those that feel pain (do fish feel pain)?*—It depends.—*Why should our depending matter more than our independing?*—That isn't even a word.—*But it's a concept.*

What is intrinsically valuable?—*Isn't relational value relative to our ends?*—What of our ends?—*The death of a species is the life of another.*

...

Or relational process, understood between us and ocean: each thing story, each decision complex, as it is between people. No, this isn't a method. It's a sensibility—a way to *hold* reasoning so that it makes sense to us.

...

331. Yesterday, I drove the thruway slowly, passing no one. I was inside my ocean, eddies in rain splashed down and wicked off the window in refracted taillights.

...

The main thing that interests me is the commitment to be thoughtful. Slow our reasoning down and think about a *generous* space. Start with *we*: sharing all the ways the ocean matters & our stories with it.

332. I am sitting with an entrusted five-year-old having pizza after a long bike ride through the secret field, the hidden station, through the mud, the wind.

One: I tell myself to forget those things that I have been writing daily.

Two: I tell myself to remember this moment so that I can understand why we should care about these things that I have been writing about daily.

333. Hard-working, industrious we—and churning underwater the morally invisible.



The secret site behind LeMoyne College, Syracuse, New York, November 2010.

Sunday, November 28, 2010

knowing vs. acknowledging

Earth thought 334 of 365: I have been thinking of high school lately, the assumptions of my world growing up. I grew up in Reaganite America and was a punk at a time when being so meant getting bullied. I tried to be political: “This school is filled with apartheid!” on my back. I was lucky to attend one of the better public high schools in the United States — New Hartford High in New Hartford, N.Y., near Utica. My parents were open-minded. I gravitated toward biology, history and English — with natural strength in math. So I was well placed to learn and to be schooled about our planet from a challenging perspective — and to *challenge* perspective.

But I grew up with the fantasy of infinity around me. I was an *actor* — we humans were actors- on a stage in the bright and open life of the world. Earth was a condition, not a limit.

I didn’t think of our inhibited, atomized action in a trade-off with future generations.

The future seemed always to get better.

I didn’t think we were pushing planetary boundaries.

335: Imagine an ethics book in which not a single thorough argument is given. The entire exercise is not critical thinking yet.

336: Bright day and around us electric lights.

337: What feeling about our politics *now* is thanksgiving?

338: Gratitude outpouring, and when it comes, it comes flowing out like shit.

339: “What sane reason could there be for moving away from this paradise? I think I may have felt a glimmer of madness, with no concept for the feeling” (Cavell 2010; July 7, 2003).

340: *The story of a structure changing. Thanksgiving day, 2010. Tokisdotis—Isaiah’s name today—has changed his structure. A hurricane went through it. Tokisdotis: Fixing the structure here.*

Aunt Ruth watching, sitting

Tokisdotis: Once the hurricane comes through the structure, we build it. And the name for that is rebuilding it. And that’s what we’re doing.

So the process here is rebuilding it, but the things in this structure are just *very* messed up. . . . Because you never know when a hurricane might hit; so you never know when the structure will get destroyed; so I’m trying to fix this. Mainly just trying to make it better; so we took it apart and put it back together, but it is a very long process. We’re trying to get this straight here.

Thursday, December 2, 2010

we

Earth thought 341 of 365: Must there be an absolute difference between our generation, the past generations—and humankind across distant, future generations?

The form of the human passes away, only not on my time scale.

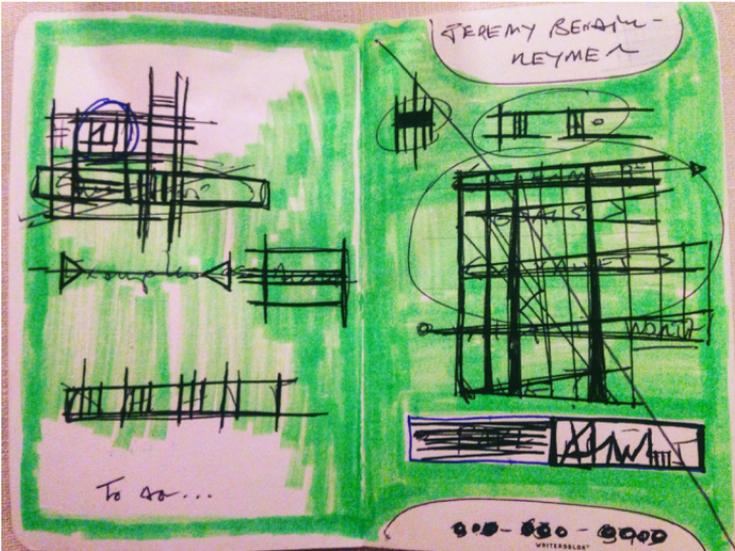
Why can’t “we” be a decision, a commitment to being as fair a part of a bio-geological process called “the human” as possible?

The best in the human is the process that includes the entire species, and beyond.

342: The major difference between our “technosphere” and “biosphere” is moral—a matter of responsibility for our environment. Whenever we live in a biosphere, we make it into a technosphere. That’s what we do. The real question is whether we are responsible *in* it. This is a political question.



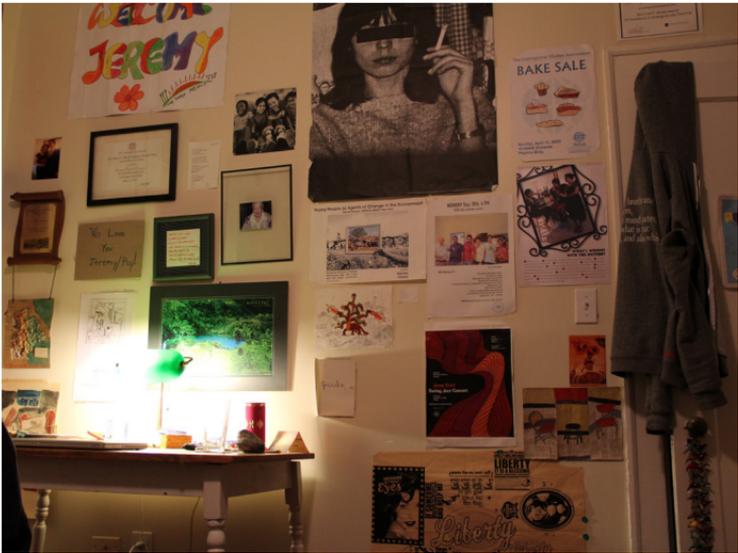
Planttruck, Syracuse, New York, 2010.



Ethics Table notebook, Cleveland, Ohio, 2011.



Museum of Natural History, New York City, 2011.



Lee Rd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 2010.

343: On June 6th, I wondered whether human rights drive environmental destruction. If human rights include the rights of future generations, does most of the objection fade? The objection would hold only as a criticism of the discourse of human rights within their first institutionalization in 1947–1948. It wouldn't undermine their idea.

(1) A right to an environment that doesn't kill us or make us ill

(2) A right to an environment in which our conscience is not "outraged" (United Nations 1948, preamble)

The first provides protection against pollution and its effects.

The second protects non-human life, since conscience implies being thoughtful with life, not wanton with it.

Then human rights—as idea—seem able to resist environmental destruction and no longer drive it by driving the demands of "development."

But the pressure exerted by billions is to streamline the Earth's functions and the use of non-human life so that the rights of the present and the future can be met. Climate change would then be protected against—also toxicity caused by pollution, and so overfishing, over-lumbering, resource depletion in general— but everything else, much of the Earth's unused outpouring of life, would "rightfully" become subject to the human-development machine.

Is that right?

344: The activist is a site that speaks to us, not *for* us. How do we find the actual sense of politics in our guts and in our bones?

How can we participate in actual distribution of power, not over things, but as a process of ordering our shared world together?

Sunday, December 5, 2010

map key

Earth thought 345 of 365: To respect another involves sensing him, being able to connect with him—to connect enough that one sees, for instance, that it's best to disconnect for a time out of respect. It involves what I call "relational reason." This rationally ordered process demands more of us than simply conceptualizing what respects another's will. It demands that we respect another's being. How else would we even know his will?

But we can't relate to far future generations in this manner. There's no possibility of intimacy. They are the great blank, although one day we will be their pity, contempt, or inchoate heroes.

346: A child's structure—wild in many directions, left hanging

A series of lived connections, provisional and there for a time

A structure by which to integrate the momentary complexity of...

347: Let's take a walk around. One. *Thought should be searching.* Two. *Vital.* Three. *Sufficient for the day.*

Monday, December 6, 2010

348. Things look different in daily junk. Getting the kid to school, fixing plumbing, working on good communication with the loved one—not big, abstract stuff.



Night, Shaker Heights, Ohio, Winter 2016.

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

349. The making personal of knowledge—that to my mind is *philosophy*. It is also *poetry*. The connection would be obvious if philosophy recognized the personal.

Poetry knows it is a form of *knowing*. We know, for instance, that we are home.

Wednesday, December 8, 2010
over time (the conditions of judgment)

350. I shuffle myself constantly like a deck of cards. Commuting is wearing me out. I just want to be home.

Sunday, December 12, 2010
life in uncertainty

351. Few people have lived long, hard hours in the antagonistic, self-interested, vain, and collective mind of science —

the survived nature of strongly supported scientific hypotheses and of powerfully effective models.

Few people also have internalized the virtues of the altruistic, objective, scientist who isn't self-absorbed.

Both suggest (as science does) the greater sense of *uncertainty*.

352. Virtue involves judgment about putting oneself in situations that won't undermine one's judgment or will support it (cf. Kamtekar 2004, 487). The virtuous person *sets herself up* to act well.

Call this a "virtuous constitution."

353. This morning, surprisingly, climate talks progressed.

At Cancun, compromise and conciliation filled the air among all the major air polluters — China, U.S.A., India — Japan also in agreement (Revkin 2010b) . . .

I'd be unreasonable not to be wary of my own relief.

They act self-interestedly.

The politicians are elected; they are elected this morning or the next.

Where's the *law*?

But *who* makes it?

Who will make them make it *well*?

We must.

Transnationally.

354. There are so many forms of philosophy the academy hardly *touches*.

But the healthy body was encouraged in the Ἀκαδημία.

About the body *doing* philosophy?—The profession is uncertain.

Thursday, December 16, 2010

it is actually, only, art

355. What an amazing year.

This exercise has pulled around with time and been an umbilical scar.

356. Philosophy the lost art (that's how it feels)—

Hereby, I add my *wed* between the sidewalk cracks of industrial theory. Don't smoke it.

357. Non-academics turn to “philosophers” expecting traces of discernment and the ancient schools. And what we show them is a discipline crouched around a fantasy of research science when it cannot ever be science, since it is actually, only, art.

358. The practice of philosophy, done in a community of “friends” (genuinely cared-about people) is supposed to seek wisdom. However, industrial theory does not. It is organized by the formalism of a way of writing and talking that must be mastered by highly focused feats of intelligence centered on distinctions and developments of positions for their own sake. Very little checking back in with our orientation toward wisdom is done, if it ever is at all — and it rarely is.

This has costs.

Friday, December 17, 2010

359. I've come two-legged to this party.
Some say love's a way of seeing, but
love see —
saws, see.

Saturday, December 18, 2010

360. Lake Cazenovia, a Saturday morning with Tokisdotis playing in the snow.

Sunday, December 19, 2010

361. I was thinking yesterday of how these thoughts circled around the sun as they circled around a year.

Tuesday, December 21, 2010

362. Some greater whole when you fill in for me, for I am trying.

363. In *Respiro* (Crialesse 2002), set on a small Italian speaking island between France and Italy, people use the environment in a way that displays a closeness to its workings and hence an awareness of its shifts. They cope with the surging sea around them on the dry rocks of the place and reveal an unsentimental sense of fellowship with non-human life. It allows them to use that life, revealing familiarity with life and its patterns. The people's lives are suffused with the tossing air and sea, rolling in cycles.

Thursday, December 23, 2010

364. For a time it seemed I was in a place where I could be useful and where discussion was needed. So I tried. I am proud of that.

The Ecological Life's concept of a thought of the Earth shaped this year's daily practice here (2006, lecture 9).

I was anxious, moving, without an industrial theory and ambivalent about doing any. I wanted to do philosophy.

This sprawling text might be called *The Sky inside the City*—the original title I wanted for *The Ecological Life*, but which my editor said it was too literary. Why is that bad?

(That title came from Alex Shakar's first novel, *City in Love: The New York Metamorphoses* [1996], the story in the Museum of Natural History.)

Perhaps all I've left to do for now is to group these thoughts with the poetics of extinction I projected back into my graduate school studio at 53rd & Kimbark:

the sky filled with glacier light —

Earth thought 365 of 365: *Rules of engagement* —

1. Write a reflection daily for a year.
2. Aim my “sternum-mind” toward “Earth” as a bundle of ecological concerns — what don’t I feel resolved about? What isn’t clear?
3. Compose the reflection on the day, and do not edit it once the day is done until many years later.
4. Share the Earth thoughts when I feel like it with those who would seem to want to read them. (I hope that you enjoyed them.)
5. Be open — what Bernard Williams (2003) called “sincere.”
6. Write to change my own mind. Write gymnastically.
7. Let us grow.