

DUST
& Shadow

reader #2

at t u n e m e n t



an introduction

The Dust & Shadow reader #2 explores **attunement as a proposition for engaging with the world**, Earth-bound environments and their inhabitants, in a continuously changing field of relationships.

Attunement suggests a willingness to be touched by external circumstances, to be lured, affected and changed by them. Attuning to another being or situation invokes a particular sensitivity – receptive and curious, careful and attentive. A deliberately hesitant engagement with other entities on their own terms, from quivering butterfly wings to earth-shattering volcanoes. A kind of "ecological intimacy".

Engaging with worlds by attuning to their patterns, dissonances and resonances may seem unnecessarily slow or ambiguous when faced with the complex urgency of our times. True, attunement may not provide a "way out" of contemporary troubles, but perhaps finding a way out is impossible. Instead, **attunement offers a "way in" to deeper and closer connections with life**, in all of its nuances and intricacies.

Attuning awakens our innate capacity for engaged noticing and responding in kind. Through practices of attunement we may rediscover an ability for subtle responsiveness that lies waiting in a world dominated by opinions, judgements and binary certainties. An entry point into meaningful relationships beyond established modes of communication. Bodies changing posture in response to a punch or an embrace. Languages mimicking their native landscapes. Tuning instruments, machines or brainwaves. The small acts of care between a humans and insects, humans and stones, rain and desert. Attunement accepts human interdependence with the planet as a given. It reminds us that a mutualistic or symbiotic state of being in the world is not only possible but already present.

The motley collection of textual and visual excerpts in this reader offers glimpses of attunement from different perspectives, including ecological, technological, animist, transhumanist, artistic, scientific and philosophical points of view. The various perspectives present in the reader suggest a range of different ways of attuning to the wider (and wider-than-human) world. Some are intimate accounts of personal experiences, others present a more theoretical inclination. Some offer imaginative prompts, others concrete exercises. The reader hints at attunement as a way to mitigate the effects of environmental and cultural turbulence. It also invites us to experiment with attunement to reinvigorate our relationships with an uncertain present and unknowable futures.



A human body is present when, between the see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease until some accident befalls the body, undoing what no accident would have sufficed to do... Since things and my body are made of the same stuff, vision must somehow come about in them; or yet again, their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility. "Nature is on the inside," says Cézanne. Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them.

—MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY, *EYE AND MIND*

Today we have become aware once again that we share this planet with innumerable other living things, whose voices summon our attention and must also direct our lives. (...) Could it be that outside inert matter summons and directs our material bodies in ways that biochemists have not yet been able to trace?

—ALPHONSE LINGIS, *THE VOICES OF THINGS*

GIVING OURSELVES OVER


Ron Broglio

Attunement means giving ourselves over to another and with the resistance, insistence, and weight of bodies. These bodies feel the give and take of being in a place with another. A hand may press into the flesh of another and feel the yielding and the taut resistance of muscle and bone. Another body may reach out to meet our own and call for a new posture and orientation. The sensation of heat moving from skin to a cool rock on a winter day. The prick of a needle along the smooth ridge of a paddle cactus. We give ourselves over to thinking at a register far different from a self-conscious I and the angular forms of reason. **Bodies in a plenum abiding, tethered to the world.**

There is a temporal plenum or rather many in which we are enfolded. Touch opens us to time. 6,000 feet below the rim of the Grand Canyon, one can run fingers across towering flat surfaces of rock layered in a black varnish of eons in which the stone surfaces have breathed air that chemically transforms their coloring. Here in what geologists call the Vishnu layer of planetary sediment, a hand across the unmoving surface touches a mass of earth that has lived a billion years into now. Here the rock bears forth a long now which in our touching takes us elsewhere in time. Here in time but in a duration beyond the registers of an all too human thought. With such touch, we are in a now that engulfs us with a duration before and after humans.

Attuning to a time beyond the human calls for a new posture, a new body architecture. Posture is a moment by moment conversation by which we find a fittedness. Posture is a pathfinding with the world. Some of these paths are well worn—the feel of a familiar keyboard and its responsiveness to slight pressures by the tips of the fingers, the resistance of bicycle pedals in the push of legs and feet as the body and machine move along a street, the nimble threading of shoelaces, the small gestures of hand, arm, and smiling face in greeting a friend.

Other paths challenge us in how we open our body onto the world. They ask something new of us and so we find something different in ourselves. We have a new conversation with the surroundings as we squeeze past rocks on a precarious cliff, hunch and huddle tightly in a cold and windy storm, align and realign grip to the feel of fur unfamiliar to us. These plants and rocks and animals and humans and multitude of things of the world ask something from us. They call for particular conversations which we respond to with corporeal postures. In doing so we get to know these others but only by way of remaking ourselves in ways that respond and ways that fit with what is asked of us. And in these conversational alignments we get to know something different of ourselves.



Grandiose guilt will not do; we need to learn to notice what we were blind to, a humble but difficult art. (...) [L]earning this art also means allowing oneself to be touched and induced to think and imagine by what touches us.

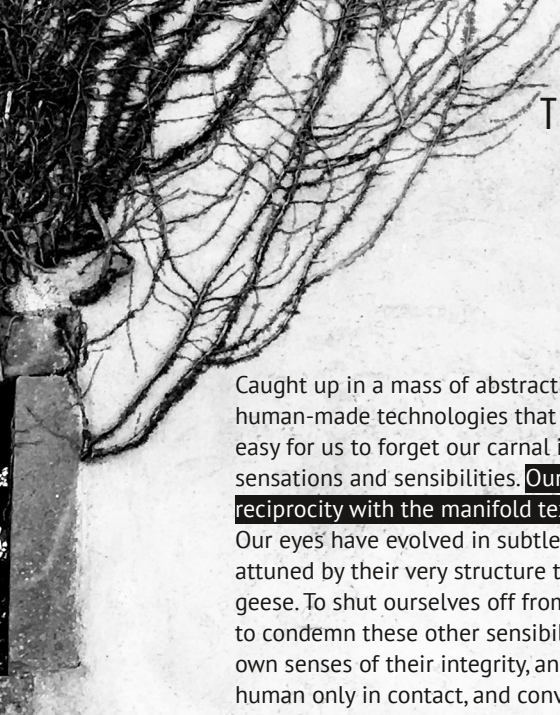
—ISABELLE STENGERS, in *ARTS OF LIVING ON A DAMAGED PLANET*

As philosophers, our job is to amplify the black noise of objects to make the resonant frequencies of the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways. Our job is to write the speculative fictions of their processes, of their unit operations. Our job is to get our hands dirty with grease, juice, gunpowder, and gypsum. Our job is to go where everyone has gone before, but where few have bothered to linger. I call this practice alien phenomenology.

—IAN BOGOST, *ALIEN PHENOMENOLOGY*

THE SPELL OF THE SENSOUS

David Abram



Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back to ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities. **Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth.** Our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity, and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human.

When my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence—to the way of this stone, or tree, or table—as the other seems to adjust itself to my own style and sensitivity.

Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head, I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on this improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathing landscape that it inhabits.

...

If we listen, first, to the sounds of an oral language—the rhythms, tones, and inflections that play through the speech of an oral culture—we will likely find that these elements are attuned, in multiple and subtle ways, to the contour and scale of the local landscape, to the depth of its valleys or the open stretch of its distances, to the visual rhythms of the local topography. (...) **Human language arose not only as a means of attunement between persons, but also between ourselves and the animate landscape.** (...) By denying that birds and other animals have their own styles of speech, by insisting that the river has no real voice and that the ground itself is mute, we stifle our direct experience.

[EXCERPTS]

INVOLUTIONARY MOMENTUM

Carla Hustak & Nataša Myers

If Darwin described the brilliant range of colors, flexible forms, sensual textures, and sweet nectars that attracted pollinators to orchid flowers, today chemical ecologists approach plants with attentions and instruments attuned to the plumes of volatile chemical attractants that plants synthesize and release into the atmosphere.

[...]

This requires reading with our senses attuned to stories told in otherwise muted registers. Working athwart the reductive, mechanistic, and adaptationist logics that ground the ecological sciences, we offer a reading that amplifies accounts of the creative, improvisational, and fleeting practices through which plants and insects involve themselves in one another's lives.

[...]

It is in encounters between orchids, insects, and scientists that we find openings for an ecology of interspecies intimacies and subtle propositions. What is at stake in this involutionary approach is a theory of ecological relationality that takes seriously organisms as inventive practitioners who experiment as they craft interspecies lives and worlds. This is an ecology inspired by a feminist ethic of "response-ability" in which questions of species difference are always conjugated with attentions to affect, entanglement, and rupture; it is an affective ecology in which creativity and curiosity characterize the experimental forms of life of all kinds of practitioners, not only the human ones. We will need this mode of ecological thinking in order to do more effective work in challenging the status quo of ecological irresponsibility.

Science can give us knowing, but caring comes from someplace else. (...)
Science lets us see the dance of the chromosomes, the leaves of moss, and the farthest galaxy. (...) *Does science allow us to perceive the sacred in the world, or does it bend light in such a way as to obscure it? (...)* ***I dream of a world guided by a lens of stories rooted in the revelations of science and framed with an indigenous worldview***—*stories in which matter and spirit are both given voice.*

—ROBIN WALL KIMERER, BRAIDING SWEETGRASS

HAUNTED LANDSCAPES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

Elaine Gan, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson & Nils Buband

To survive, we need to relearn multiple forms of curiosity. **Curiosity is an attunement to multispecies entanglement, complexity, and the shimmer all around us.** Landscapes shimmer when they gather rhythms shared across varied forms of life. Shimmer describes the coming in and out of focus of multispecies knots, with their cascading effects. Landscapes enact more-than-human rhythms. To follow these rhythms, we need new histories and descriptions, crossing the sciences and humanities. As artists, we conjure magical figures, weave speculative fictions, animate feral and partial connections. We necessarily stumble. And try again. With every mark, difference haunts and struggles to appear anew.

[...]

Somehow, in the midst of ruins, we must maintain enough curiosity to notice the strange and wonderful as well as the terrible and terrifying. Natural history and ethnographic attentiveness—themselves products of modern projects—offer starting points for such curiosity, along with vernacular and indigenous knowledge practices. Such curiosity also means working against singular notions of modernity. How can we repurpose the tools of modernity against the terrors of Progress to make visible the other worlds it has ignored and damaged? Living in a time of planetary catastrophe thus begins with a practice at once humble and difficult: noticing the worlds around us.

[...]

Perhaps counterintuitively, slowing down to listen to the world—empirically and imaginatively at the same time—seems our only hope in a moment of crisis and urgency. It is urgent that we start paying attention to more of our companions before we kill them off entirely.

“Nature always subverts your expectations.”

—T.C. BOYLE, *THE TERRANAUTS*

RETHINKING THE ANIMATE, RE-ANIMATING THOUGHT

Tim Ingold

We are dealing here not with a way of believing about the world but with a condition of being in it. This could be described as a condition of being alive to the world, characterised by a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness, in perception and action, to an environment that is always in flux, never the same from one moment to the next. Animacy, then, is not a property of persons imaginatively projected onto the things with which they perceive themselves to be surrounded. Rather it is the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence. The animacy of the lifeworld, in short, is not the result of an infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but is rather ontologically prior to their differentiation.

The conditions that enable scientists to know, at least according to official protocols, are such as to make it impossible for scientists to be in the very world of which they seek knowledge. Yet all science depends on observation, and all observation depends on participation – that is, on a close coupling, in perception and action, between the observer and those aspects of the world that are the focus of attention. If science is to be a coherent knowledge practice, it must be rebuilt on the foundation of openness rather than closure, engagement rather than detachment. And this means regaining the sense of astonishment that is so conspicuous by its absence from contemporary scientific work. Knowing must be reconnected with being, epistemology with ontology, thought with life.

MAGIC AND THE MACHINE

David Abram

For most traditionally oral, indigenous cultures that we know of, any and every phenomenon is potentially animate; everything moves. All things are felt to have their own pulse, their own inner spontaneity or dynamism. (...) The members of such cultures seemed to respond to their surroundings as though all things were alive and (at least potentially) aware. Further, from this animistic perspective, it seemed that all things were felt to be expressive; all things had the power of meaningful speech (although, of course, very few of them spoke in words).

The conventional interpretation of such ways of encountering the world, among social scientists, has held that traditional, "tribal" persons are confusedly projecting human attributes—such as life and consciousness—into nonhuman and ostensibly inanimate phenomena. I wish to argue, however, that animistic perception is utterly normal for the human organism, a kind of default setting (to use a technological metaphor) for our species; that in the absence of intervening technologies, the human senses spontaneously encounter the sensorial surroundings as a field of sensitive and sentient powers. Our most immediate experience of the earthly world, and of the myriad bodies that compose this world, is of a multiply animate cosmos wherein nothing is definitively void of expressive agency, or life.

To be sure, such participatory experience is very far from our current feel for things in the midst of contemporary, hyper-modern civilization. Few people today, when they're cycling past a stand of oaks, sense that those trees are sensing them; we don't feel the breeze gusting around us as a sensitive and sentient presence, and upon arriving at our place of work and settling down to the day's tasks, we don't concern ourselves that the chairs we sit in register our presence, or that the walls of the room are affected by our actions.

(...)

[A]nimism—the instinctive experience of reciprocity or exchange between the perceiver and the perceived—lies at the heart of all human perception. While such participatory experience may be displaced by our engagement with particular tools and technologies, it can never entirely be dispelled. Rather, different technologies tend to capture and channel our instinctive, animistic proclivities in particular ways.

While human-produced sounds are far from the only types of sound that exist in the Anthropocene, they do tend to drown out and draw attention away from the numerous other sounds produced by the remaining animals, plants, and other-than-human agents that also inhabit Earth's complex network of interconnected spheres. As both a medium and a perceptual modality, sound transmits a whole range of possible knowledges. Spatial, ideational, affective, temporal, experiential, scientific, acoustic, and/or speculative threads (among many others) may reside inside, outside, or alongside any sound wave for variable parsing by the multiple possible recipients of that sound wave with the right biology or technology available for hearing it. The importance of sound to these complex networks can be understood through the lenses of human and non-human agency. Their relationship hinges on whether or not humans (as individuals, as cultures, as species) encounter these networks from a position of control and regulation benefitting a trifecta of future growth, production, and consumption; or from a position of enmeshed facilitation and attunement arising from a shared understanding of moral and ethical responsibility for the mutual benefit of all of the Earth's actors—plant, animal, or otherwise. As complex adaptive systems, the Earth's numerous ecosystems, ecotones, and biomes are created along grooves of felt/lived experience, an embodied perceptibility that enacts the rhythmic nuances that both sustain and envelope the communicative and biosemiotic vitality of their many inhabitants.



RESILIENCE, ATTUNEMENT, AND OUR SONIC IMAGINATION

Daniel Gilfillan



At the core of such complex systems' sets of adaptive capacities is the multivalent process of resilience, which carries along with it an equally ephemeral notion of risk and its potential either to support or threaten flexibility within such systems. Resilience represents the capacity of a system to absorb and/or recover from a disturbance (natural storms, wildlife depletion, human population growth, economic development, etc.) without causing a threshold shift into a different stable state of existence. Forms of resilience thinking understand such systems as deeply interwoven sets of relationships attuned toward the energies, decisions, and disturbances (natural, human, or otherwise) that characterize them along multiple and often asymmetrical scales and nonlinear time frames. These concomitant processes of resilience and risk so crucial for adaptability often become more about optimizing toward an idea of an ideal or peak resilience and minimizing the importance of risk and precariousness so that humans may continue to thrive within the rapidly less sustainable ecosystem, and profit from that optimization. In veering away from the value of complexity needed for adaptability, we lose sight of (and sound of) other models of experience and attunement that should enhance and accompany our perception of our own model of experience. The sonic realm allows us to rethink the very limits of human resilience alongside the nonhuman. The delicate set of entanglements we share with plants, animals, geologies and atmospheres, and with other humans, necessitates that we also continually open our sonic imaginations to those entanglements within and beyond the human.

[EXCERPTS]

SPECTRES IN CHANGE

FoAM

Is the mere act of observing an act of caring? How can this noticing, witnessing and recording become a transformative, re-animating force, something beyond representation? A noticing that frames spectral existence with real possibilities and propositions. Abstract data become tactile sensations, beckoning rather than elucidating. Could we think of fieldwork as a careful engagement, an attunement reminiscent of Ampère's "tâtonnement", a "feeling around" the landscape? Devising instruments to lightly brush against ecological transformations, allowing us to touch and be touched by them. Perhaps we would design observatories where layered times can be sensed at a human-scale. A collective experience hovering between the spectral and the material. Or conjure a process of environmental interference where art forms compost. A ritual aspiring to express what has been, be present with what is and shape what might become. An experiment in knowing when (not) to interfere.



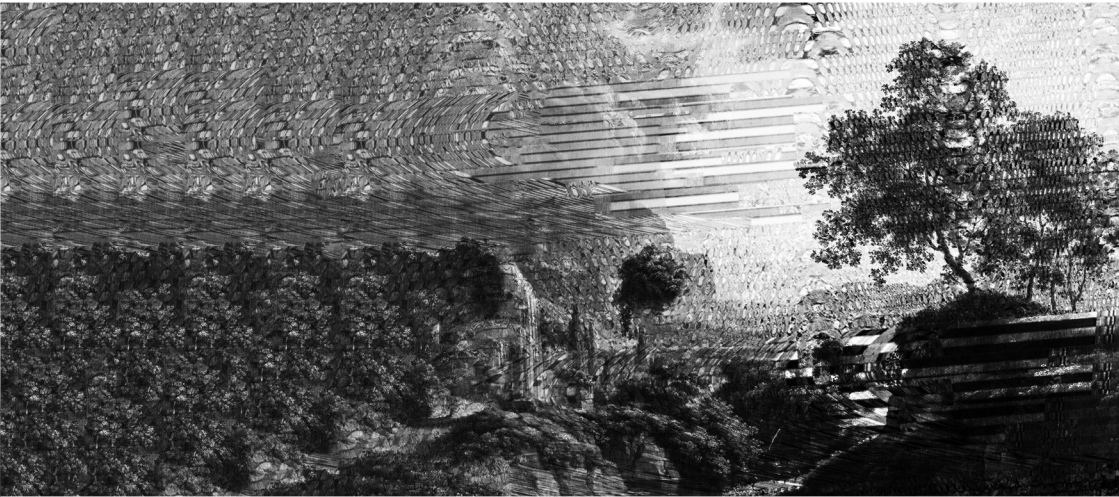
The necessity of changing methods is all the more obvious when it is a question of finding the explanation of a phenomenon that nature offers in all of its complication. There, where the givens are by their very existence more complicated than the results we seek, direct synthesis becomes inapplicable, and it is necessary to take recourse either to direct analysis if possible, or to indirect synthesis, to feeling around (tâtonnement) and explanatory hypotheses.

—ANDRÉ-MARIE AMPÈRE (IN ROMANTIC MACHINE)

[EXCERPTS]
DEEP STEWARD

Theun Karelse

When landscape appeared in European art it emerged first as a landscape of symbols. The Gothic depiction of Earth was populated with features that were primarily there as convenient symbols for a narrative. At present, landscape is emerging in artificial minds. Some of the visual and conceptual similarities with early landscape painting are striking. Both depict landscapes where features are tagged placeholders in a larger narrative geography.



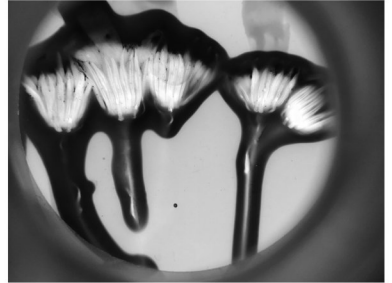
Until recently the ability to make sense of the environment was limited to biological beings, but machines are starting to blur those lines. Slowly the debate around machine intelligence is moving from human-centered preoccupations—like job security, privacy and politics—to the impact of these technologies on non-human lives. The worldview of technology isn't neutral.

Should our machines learn exclusively from humans, should their natural habitat be corporate, or do intelligent machines need training-forests, like orphaned Orangutans in Indonesian rehabilitation programmes? Do the artificial agents that are currently taking seat in corporate boardrooms need to spend their weekends floating around coral-reefs, volunteering at an organic farm, or wandering the tundra with reindeer to get attuned to the other 99.99% of life?



para-PHOTO-mancy

Sam Nightingale



Exploring the traces of human and non-human entanglements left in the molecular structures of soil, water and plants, using experimental modes of photochemical image production.

The photographs use the phytochemical capacities of plants to produce images. They resemble photographic negatives, but they are created without optics or light. Instead, these 'biochemical images' are generated through the internal energy of plants - an agential force that elicits forms of attunement to non-human sensibilities and lines of communication.

Kilpisjärvi Biological Station (in sub-arctic Lapland)

First there was nothing. Then there was everything. Then, in a park above a western city after dusk, the air is raining messages. A woman sits on the ground, leaning against a pine. Its bark presses hard against her back, as hard as life. Its needles scent the air and a force hums in the heart of the wood. Her ears tune down to the lowest frequencies. The tree is saying things, in words before words. It says: Sun and water are questions endlessly worth answering. It says: A good answer must be reinvented many times, from scratch.

—RICHARD POWERS, THE OVERSTORY

Is there a fundamental principle of the natural world that we can perceive directly through our senses, that does not require an education in biology or environmental studies or ecology? Do we see connections? Do we experience interdependency? Do we recognise diversity? Do we dwell in interbeing? Do we feel our embeddedness in the weave of life? Do we know our very own capacity for renewal? Do we hear the surround symphony we are immersed in? Call out to the plants if you want to learn the secret of renewal. You must follow the green ones, and find out how they live; for they are the clever alchemists who keep the world going. You must visit an ancient rainforest, like the one where I live — Old Mother Forest I call her — and sit under the trees. If you want to know what's eternal, and beyond forever, ask them.

—SUPRABHA SESHAN, OLD MOTHER FOREST



*How lovely the green mountains look to me!
Do I look the same in the eyes of the trees and flowers?*

—XIN QIJI

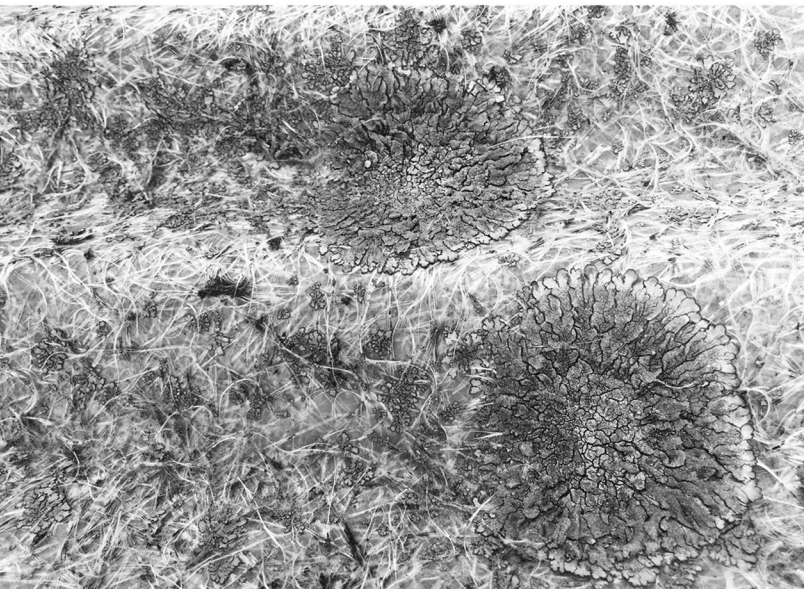
BRAIDING SWEETGRASS

Robin Wall Kimmerer

While lichens can sustain humans, people have not returned the favor of caring for lichens. Umbilicaria, like many lichens, is highly sensitive to air pollution. When you find Umbilicaria, you know you're breathing the purest air. Atmospheric contaminants like sulfur dioxide and ozone will kill it outright. Pay attention when it departs.

Indeed, whole species and entire ecosystems are vanishing before our eyes in the vanguard of accelerating climate chaos. At the same time, other habitats are on the rise. Melting glaciers are exposing land where it has not been seen for millennia. At the edge of the ice, newly scraped land is emerging, a jumble of rocky till, harsh and cold. Umbilicaria is known to be among the first to colonize postglacial forelands today, just as it did when the earth was raw and bare, ten thousand years ago—another era of great climate change. Our indigenous herbalists say to pay attention when plants come to you; they're bringing you something you need to learn.

For millennia, these lichens have held the responsibility of building up life and in an eyeblink of earth's history we have set about undermining their work to usher in a time of great environmental stress, a barrenness of our own making. I suspect that lichens will endure. We could, too, if we listen to their teachings. If not, I imagine Umbilicaria will cover the rocky ruins of our time long after our delusions of separateness have relegated us to the fossil record, a ruffled green skin adorning the crumbling halls of power.



Embodied animism is like a dance of deep communion. The steps of the dance are ancient, and when we make those old familiar moves we are once again in tune with the other-than-human world. There is a point where self and other bow and acknowledge one another before the dance begins (...) But in just a few fluid steps the self/other dance becomes a process in itself. If I learn the steps well, then suddenly — phenomenologically and spiritually — "I" am no longer the dancer but the dance, at which point "I" am not. This plunge into the deep body awakens us from the dualistic dream that we are separate from the other-than-human world. We experience this psychological shift phenomenologically as a sense of spiritual connection (...) Inasmuch as the immanent sacred is that which enables communion with the world and offers spiritual knowing, its source is the deep body which blurs into our organic environment.

—ADRIAN HARRIS, EMBODIED ECO-PAGANISM

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE UNKNOWN

George Prochnik

There is a different, more subterranean tradition of theological solace predicated on restoring—not optimism, but a sense of the unknown. The first step toward creating some way out of our dilemma may involve allowing our sense of certainty itself to unravel. This doesn't mean succumbing to a fatuous denial of dire present-day realities, but rather restoring a sense of amplitude to all the time we've not yet lived through.

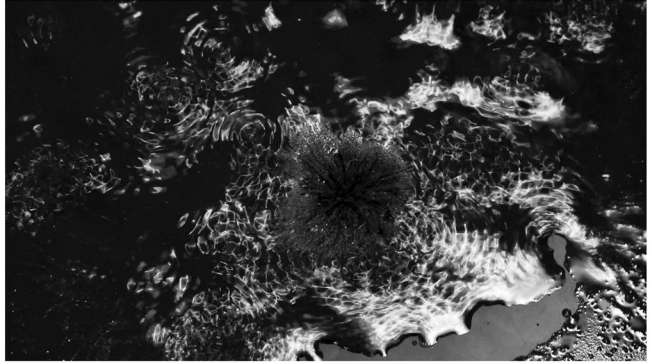
What if the nocturnal side of nature is thought of less as the source of an alternative variety of knowledge than as a catalyst to the imagination, a preserve of images that have no known purpose, yet which compellingly reveal how the possibilities of the world have not yet been exhausted?

At our moments of most intent receptivity, we no longer know the source of the voice that leaves our own lips—only that it is part of a greater collective lineage of truth seeking. Not knowing exactly what speaks through us, other fatalistic certainties blur as well. The consciousness of our historical doom takes on something of the plasticity Scholem invokes—perhaps enabling us to say something unexpected: I do not know what happens next becomes an iteration of hope instead of helplessness.

[EXCERPTS]

PSYCHEDELICS AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

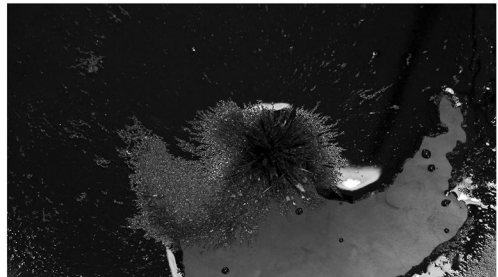
Alan Watts



The first characteristic is a slowing down of time, a concentration in the present. One's normally compulsive concern for the future decreases and one becomes aware of the enormous importance and interest of what is happening at the moment.

The second characteristic I will call awareness of polarity. This is the vivid realization that states, things and events which we ordinarily call opposite are interdependent, like back and front or the poles of a magnet. By polar awareness one sees that things which are explicitly different are implicitly one: self and other, subject and object, left and right, male and female—and then, a little more surprisingly, solid and space, figure and background, pulse and interval, saints and sinners, and police and criminals, ingroups and outgroups.

The third characteristic is awareness of relativity. I see that I am a link in an infinite hierarchy of process and beings, ranging from molecules through bacteria and insects to human beings, and, maybe, to angels and gods—a hierarchy in which every level is in effect the same situation.



The fourth characteristic is awareness of eternal energy, often in the form of intense white light, which seems to be both the current in your nerves and that mysterious e which equals mc^2 . This may sound like megalomania or delusion of grandeur—but one sees quite clearly that all existence is a single energy, and that this energy is one's own being. Of course there is death as well as life, because energy is a pulsation, and just as waves must have both crests and troughs the experience of existing must go on and off.

Basically, therefore, there is simply nothing to worry about, because you yourself are the eternal energy of the universe playing hide-and-seek with itself.

[EXCERPTS]
PLANET-CENTRED DESIGN

Jerneja Rebernak

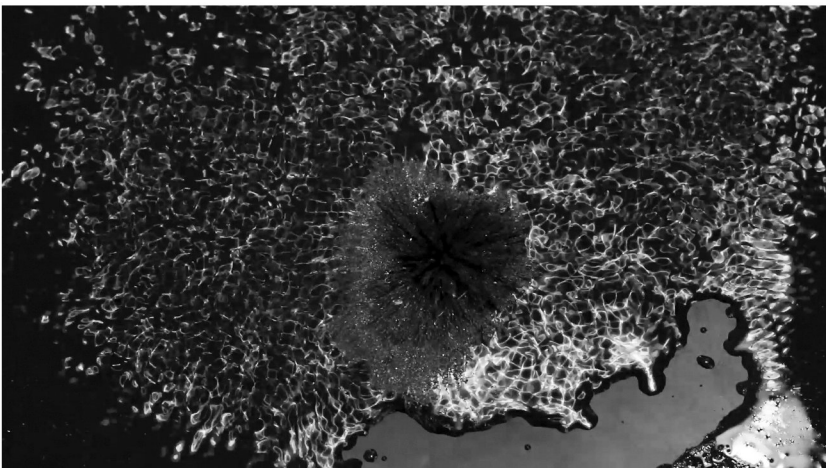
In the end, therefore, instead of many possible times, we can speak only of a single time: the time of our experience: uniform, universal and ordered. This is the approximation of an approximation of a description of the world made from our particular perspective as human beings who are dependent on the growth of entropy, anchored to the flowing of time.

—CARLO ROVELLI, THE ORDER OF TIME

Poetics of attunement can inspire a multiplicity of engagements with our ecosystems, our umwelt. If we are to think across design and architecture, could we incorporate attunement in planning, creating and making?

The experience of attunement resonates with the "imaginal landscapes" as described by William Rolandson. A dismantling of the hard division between an external material reality and an internal landscape, the liminal land of enchantment that bridges the material and the psychic.

The wooden doors adorning Kings College's chapel are moist from the heat generated by patient bodies awaiting to enter the hall on this hot and humid day in London. Inside, the artist group Senscapes is preparing an immersive performance. An aurally and visually enchanting dance captured through magnetoencephalography (MEG) permeate the space. Cymatic images and sounds offer a glimpse of the brain's reaction to psilocybin...



Abigail Fletcher - senscapes

[EXCERPTS]

THE GREAT WORK. ALCHEMY AND THE POWER OF WORDS

Paul Kingsnorth

At the heart of art is the same paradox as lies at the heart of religion: we don't know anything. We can only act from our unknowing, with faith and determination.

Writing, art, creation: this is smithwork. You set your fire; you use your bellows, your pen, your paper, to heat it to the right temperature. You set your base metal in the flames, heat it until it is white. Then you begin your transformation.

Read a great poem aloud to yourself and take note of how your physical body reacts. This is the transformation that the written word can conjure.

I think we miss magic. We bend our shoulders beneath the official notion that the material world is explicable, just as we bend our shoulders beneath the notion that words are merely units of information. But something in us—something which sings when the moon is up—knows this to be a lie. We miss the songs that were sung through us, whoever it is, whatever it is, that sung them. We live in an age of loss, our stories collapsing around us, our people dividing into tribes, anger and rage and condemnation overruling nuance, compassion, and attention. Looking around our outer world right now, it can seem as if we are being driven mad by something. It can seem as if we are stuck, raging at the world, missing something we deeply need.

The hidden attunement is better than the open.

—HERACLITUS, R. P. 34.

SHINTO, THE WAY HOME

Thomas P. Kasulis

To appreciate mystery one must respond both to it and within it. Sometimes the mysterious is like that forgotten presence. At other times though, the mysterious may be something new that seems to come forward behind the horizons of ordinary experience, calling attention to itself. I cherish such experiences precisely because they take me beyond the bounds of detached observation.

In Shinto spirituality, relatedness is often internal, not external. The sacred is approached not as something out there to be focused upon, but as something of which the person is already a part. One might think of contemplation or meditation as not approaching an object, but being open or sensitive to what is already present.

Our initial response to the awesome is to try to understand it, rather than to stand under it. Instead of filling us with the sense of humility before the unknown, awe has come to challenge us as only "the not yet known". That is fine, but let us never allow the impulse to understand the firmament outshine the awe and wonder of simply standing under it, feeling ourselves to be inherently part of it and it part of ourselves.

Ecological awareness may arise from a nostalgia for a way of living in which humanity used to be a responsive part of nature, rather than its manager or exploiter. Etymologically, ecology means the study of home. Ecology is not about managing or controlling the world, but about feeling at home in it. The etymology of the word nostalgia is the ache to return home. And this ache to return home is the aspect of spirituality that Shinto so well exemplifies. We all probably remember feeling it at some point. If we should forget, the frogs of Futami will remind us.



Exercise:

*mountain meets mountain
one was made by human,
the other by something older.
the meeting is brokered by a human.
they meet at a neutral boundary
(an altered body of water)
wait.*

—ERIKA HANSON



[EXCERPTS]

Nature's Sublime: An Essay in Aesthetic Naturalism

Robert S. Corrington

Ordinal phenomenology is not just a method of description of any and all relevant phenomena; it is also an ongoing spiritual discipline that helps the practicing phenomenologist become more authentic in her or his existence, and more attuned to the semiotic codes that permeate living systems, both conscious and unconscious.

What healing potential does the experience of the sublime have? Can the self relearn to live once it has experienced the abyss between its horizon(s) and the world that horizons serve to render intelligible? Is the self after this experience “twice-born” in William James’ sense, that is, more deeply attuned to the rhythms of the real? The answer should be clear. The self that has been shriven by an encounter with the sublime has seen the awesome power of what a humanly occupied horizon can do to render world and nature intelligible and livable, both personally and communally. Further, the self now recognizes that some key aspects of its own horizon are arbitrary thus making it sensitive to the differing prospects in other horizons and other horizontal choices, that is, it acknowledges the centrality of a healthy pluralism between and among horizontal variables. The pluralistic self understands the depth-mystery and power of the world and nature that cannot be captured by any human horizon nor by all of them in consort. Finally, the self comes to an awareness of the potencies of nature naturing as the ultimate origin of the sublime. **The experience of the sublime does all of the things that religious experience has attempted to do but without the concomitant tribalism and fierce identity politics.**

Both the artist and the saint are fully aware of the duality of their lives, that they live in a public world that cannot, in principle, understand the other and deeper world that claims their true allegiance. They are split and know it. Part of the force of their lives is that they must struggle heroically to heal this split through the means available to their psychological type. For the artist it is, of course, through art works that are publically available for appraisal and assimilation. For the saint, on the other hand, it is through a kind of higher action that is actually a non-action, a kind of *Gelassenheit*, or mode of attunement that harmonizes the various components of the self into one higher harmony.



They saw that they would rise and fall like every living form. So, instead of trying to extend their existence, like so many other species before and since, they looked to ways of preserving and nourishing an environment that would encourage the birth and growth of species similar to themselves. Cooperative, farsighted peoples.



Fungi are ideal guides. Fungi have always been recalcitrant to the iron cage of self-replication. Like bacteria, some are given to exchanging genes in nonreproductive encounters (“horizontal gene transfer”); many also seem averse to keeping their genetic material sorted out as “individuals” and “species,” not to speak of “populations.”

—ANNA LOWENHAUPT TSING. THE MUSHROOM AT THE END OF THE WORLD

What's the difference between holding an object, say a cup, made by alien hands and a cup created out of nothing by the universe— by the ineffable?


An alien speaks, or a stone speaks— what's the difference? The experience is similar.



Our goal has always been to become one with our environment— to absorb its particular character, which we call the kami or spirit of a place. That experience is always an experience of union, of joining with the world that we're otherwise alienated from. I've experienced it on a hundred worlds, in places humans can only timidly tread. On Dis, though... On Dis I experienced not union but annihilation: my consciousness expanded and at first it was ecstatic, but the kami of the place were too alien and too strong. I could see myself, infinitely small and vulnerable, a stranger to this place and then even that was gone; I was swept away, becoming one with Dis and lost to my Self.


Humans think metaphorically. Most of our thoughts are built up of more primitive metaphors. Our most atomic metaphors are hard-wired in as a result of where we evolved. One of those hardwired metaphors is something we commonly call 'I'. It's the metaphor of self-as-object. Religions throughout history have tried to replace this primary metaphor with self-as-world, but it's very difficult unaided. Takes years of effort by specialists, because you're operating on basic neurological programming. By the twentieth century they had drugs that could explode the 'I' metaphor, but they didn't have the conceptual framework to understand what they were doing. We have it. NeoShinto is just a technology for replacing your 'I' with a perceived Other— what we call the kami. We attach no mythology or dogma to the experience. You're free to interpret it however you'd like.

Nothing's permanent. But everything can hand what's unique, what's best about itself, to what comes after.



We are all inhabitants of the same mudscape, the same geological sludge, as it were. Anthropocene landscapes of death and extinction are, however, also inhabited by emergent and unexpected constellations of life, nonlife, and afterlife. Before mud becomes our only future, we need to learn from stones to notice all the forms of life and possibility that exist in the midst of death: that, as I see it, is the message and the magic of the geology of the present.

—NILS BUBAND, HAUNTED GEOLOGIES, IN ARTS OF LIVING ON A DAMAGED PLANET



We seek to cultivate a sensibility that attunes us not only to the “now” of the weather, but towards ourselves and the world as weather bodies, mutually caught up in the whirlwind of a weather-world, in the thickness of climate-time. In short, as weathering. (...) And if we understand our-selves as weathering, intra-actively made and unmade by the chill of a too-cold winter, the discomfort of a too-hot sun, then we can also attune our-selves to the pasts that are contracted in changing temperatures, rising sea levels, increasingly desiccated earths. We attune ourselves to the singularities of its intra-actions, recognizing the multitude of bodies (including our own) that are all co-emerging in the making of these weather-times. We recognize our own implications in the climatic conditions around us, thick with co-labored temporalities...”

—ASTRIDA NEIMANIS AND RACHEL LOEWEN WALKER, WEATHERING

For the so-called environmental crisis is now more our everyday reality as climate, as even newspapers move from discussing natural disasters to the normalization of “weird weather.” As such it feels too ordinary in its weirdness to be a crisis. Moreover, the force of destruction is simply the political and social organization of human life.

—ANTHONY PAUL SMICH, A NON-PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY OF NATURE

We're going to gradually normalize climate change, one bit of weirdness at a time.

—VENKATESH RAO

Paying due attention to what matters in a situation means accepting that there are radically different ways of having a situation matter, and these differences cannot be explained away, or accounted for in advance. In other words, the common sense of a situation indexes the divergent ways a situation comes to make sense to others.

Thinking par le milieu concerns resisting the temptation to know in advance how a technique or practice will come to matter, how it will take hold, and how it will move us to think, act, and feel.

We are obliged to respond to the fact that life on Earth is threatened without there ever being an adequate response to this threat. But what we must also come to appreciate is that with every response, with every struggle, with every apparatus for learning and sharing assembled, the conditions for future struggle change; they undergo transformation. In other words, the problematic field doesn't go away, but it generates **new conditions for learning and responding.**

...

Learning from problems, instead of knowing solutions, requires a transformation on our behalf.



...

We cannot approach a situation composed of various tensions and strains already knowing how to resolve them, already expecting a result and how to go about achieving it. Rather, learning concerns the art of crafting responses that are always local, always situated, and always risky. Each adjustment, each pull, changes the nature of the composition of the problem, which is why attention and care are so essential to learning from problems. **With one wrong adjustment, the field of potential action changes and the milieu can become "poisoned".** One must always be attentive to dosages. Each response to a problem intervenes in the modes of thought and action that are possible in the future.

[EXCERPTS]
ON THE RISK OF Gaia FOR AN ECOLOGY
OF PRACTICES

Adam Nocek

Learning is not about solving the problem, but about changing our conditions for engaging it.

...

The proposition of Gaia lures us into feeling that there is no transcendental capacity to judge how best to solve the problem of the Earth's intrusion; there is no secure perspective from which we can evaluate this threat and eliminate it. Gaia makes it impossible for judgment to work confidently—that faculty which is so quick to apply the ready-made tools neoliberalism has made available to it. There are no prepared answers, only local questions and provisional answers that change the possibilities for future response.

Gaia is the one who lures us into confronting the fact that there are radically different ways of having a situation come to matter, and none of them can be subsumed under a common measure or a set of “shared values.”

...

Gaia is a proposition that reorients our thinking about the Earth; it is a problem we must learn from and not solve; anything short of this destines us for barbarism.





DEEP IN ADMIRATION

Ursula K. Le Guin

Changing our minds is going to be a big change. To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it. Skill in living, awareness of belonging to the world, delight in being part of the world, always tends to involve knowing our kinship as animals with animals. (...) One way to stop seeing trees, or rivers, or hills, only as "natural resources" is to class them as fellow beings—kinfolk. I guess I'm trying to subjectify the universe, because look where objectifying it has gotten us. To subjectify is not necessarily to co-opt, colonize, exploit. Rather, it may involve a great reach outward of the mind and imagination.

THE MARROW

There was a word inside a stone.
I tried to pry it clear,
mallet and chisel, pick and gad,
until the stone was dropping blood,
but still I could not hear
the word the stone had said.

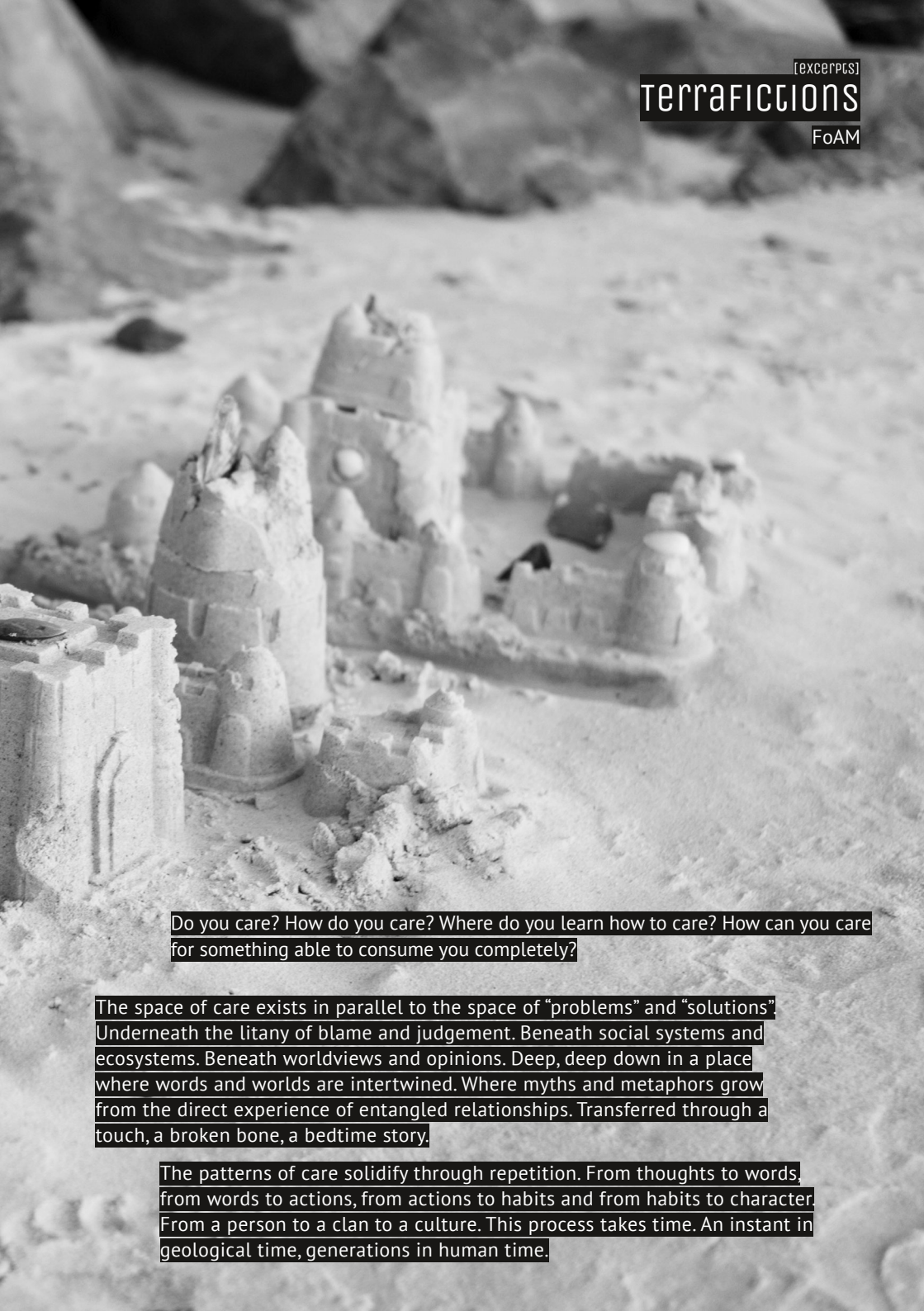
I threw it down beside the road
among a thousand stones
and as I turned away it cried
the word aloud within my ear
and the marrow of my bones
heard, and replied.

To care, to cure, to comfort. To be with. To help cope, regardless of the situation. "Being with" involves allowing yourself to be touched by the joys and sorrows of another. To be touched by external circumstances, or as the Dutch so eloquently say, to be "ontroerd". Thrown off-course by the sheer rawness of the moment, by your own inability to make things better, by our fragility, impermanence and mortality.

We learn to "be with" when looking after a sick child, tending to a garden, or when caring for the dying. "Being with" a person or a process that you can't quite understand can be frightening and uncomfortable, yet it can also become an instrument for discernment, a compass for navigating ambivalence. Care first, do later.

The work of care in the Anthropocene is a struggle with scale and scope and sentience. What does care for a dying forest look like? For an unstoppable flood? For the endless migration of humans and other animals? For an out of balance microbiome in one's gut?






Do you care? How do you care? Where do you learn how to care? How can you care for something able to consume you completely?

The space of care exists in parallel to the space of “problems” and “solutions” Underneath the litany of blame and judgement. Beneath social systems and ecosystems. Beneath worldviews and opinions. Deep, deep down in a place where words and worlds are intertwined. Where myths and metaphors grow from the direct experience of entangled relationships. Transferred through a touch, a broken bone, a bedtime story.

The patterns of care solidify through repetition. From thoughts to words, from words to actions, from actions to habits and from habits to character. From a person to a clan to a culture. This process takes time. An instant in geological time, generations in human time.





The intensities of the ordinary

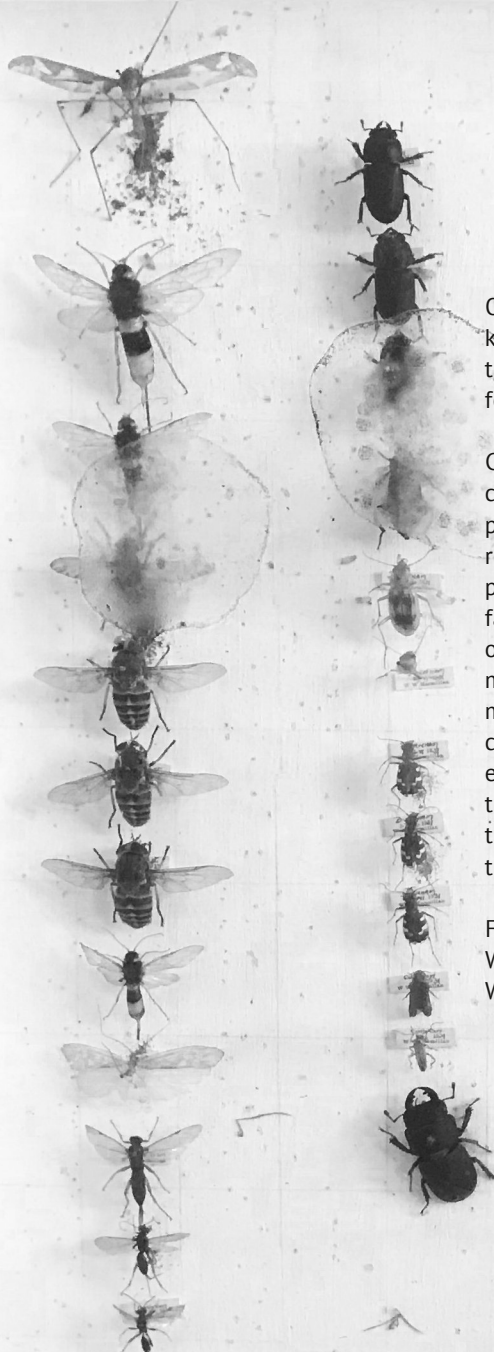
There's a politics to being/feeling connected (or not), to impacts that are shared (or not), to energies spent worrying or scheming (or not), to affective contagion, and to all the forms of attunement and attachment. There's a politics to ways of watching and waiting for something to happen and to forms of agency—to how the mirage of a straightforward exercise of will is a flag waved in one situation and a vicious, self-defeating deflation in another (...) There's a politics to difference in itself—the difference of danger, the difference of habit and dull routine, the difference of everything that matters.

—KATHLEEN STEWART, ORDINARY AFFECTS

[EXCERPTS]

#OLUFSENANDI #LETTHERIGHTONEIN

Cat Jones



Olufsen the eighth, a free roaming nocturnal katydid called my apartment kitchen home, transforming a time of extraordinary illness, caring for me as I cared for them, as 'kin'.

Co-habiting with olufsen evoked memories of a childhood filled with the care, maintenance and protection of creatures. Hatching lizards under my reading lamp, bottle-feeding bats, spotlighting peripatetic turtles through the night, my whole family carrying an aviary inside through the middle of a cyclone. How these early practices have served me well as an adult, teaching me to care for family members through life and death, and now myself. By contrast a recently commissioned artwork on entomophagy, required me to hold and feed, sacrifice then devour my tiny collaborators, invoking the deep trouble in being humane, an imperfection of care that is distinctly human.

For whom do I choose to care and when?
Which pain and whose will I ignore?
Who am I today? Carer or the cared for?

ATTUNEMENT AND THE INFRAMINCE

Edith Doove

Attunement tends to take place at a small scale, usually focusing on subtle differences in intonation. It is only with attention for the smallness in life, the small intertwining movements of the human and non-human, that we are able to properly attune to our surroundings. Basically, attunement comes down to being carefully aware of the 'process of the world' as advocated by Whitehead, Deleuze and Cage.

Attuning is sensing possibilities or presences (whether by ear, eye, or the full body) we are usually not aware of. Marcel Duchamp's concept of the inframince can therefore be turned into the perfect tool to do just that. The inframince is the usually overlooked, the awry. One of Duchamp's 'definitions' of the inframince is that of 'possibility'. He connects the inframince to various everyday observations, the most famous of which is that of the intermingling of smoke and breath in a 'marriage' when smoking. In its attention for the minor it is possible to make a connection to the becoming minor of Deleuze (as an integral part of affective emancipation), to Serres' observation of the clinamen, and to the parasite as an 'inventor' of cybernetics.

Once being made aware of the minor it cannot be un-thought. It inevitably leads to the state of what Serres calls 'white multiplicity' caused by a minimal differentiation, which the inframince does by calling attention. As in 'white noise', which is of equal intensity, white multiplicity "does not (yet) approach a clearly ordered form. It is a kind of in-between state, neither pure noise nor pure order, a third position ranged between the two" that has "maximum information value" (Brown) as long as one recognizes it. In other words, a pure state of becoming.

Through this operation it is thus possible to connect the inframince to an ecological awareness or attunement. In *The Parasite*, Serres argues "that by being pests, minor groups can become major players in public dialogue – creating diversity and complexity vital to human life and thought." In thus equating the minor and the inframince, with 'trouble' we inadvertently end up with Donna Haraway arguing for a practice of sym-poiesis or 'making-with' (reminiscent of Whitehead's 'togetherness') to combat the negativity that surrounds the Anthropocene.

When explored in relation to our dealings with the nonhuman and our damaged planet, the inframince can potentially play the role of a mischievous jester, pointing to otherwise unnoticed elements that matter and require attention.



*I say it again, nothing else to be done,
it's a way of proceeding,
a way of finding a foothold,
a complex dance inside the bees' hive,
the crackling warm brain of the anthill in pinewoods,
gravity lies awake, unable to sleep,
but your fingertips tingle with cautious knowledge,
the sense of everything being within reach,
even the dark in the mirror, a crack in the wall,
seeing it all disappear, seeing the flower's shadow
cover your face,
it's getting late, and that which is near becomes afar,
and a glimpse of infinity in the clouds
gives up and collapses, tired and titanic.*

—MORTEN SØNDERGAARD

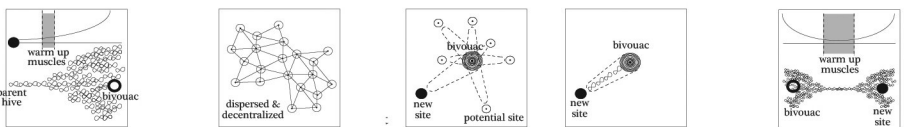
BEE DIASPORA

Anna Maria Orru & Morten Søndergaard

Our bee story begins during a spring afternoon in 1949, when behavioural scientist Martin Lindauer came upon a bivouac of bees suspended in a tree near the Munich Zoological Institute. After careful observation, he watched the bees return to the swarm performing a series of 'waggle' dances oddly covered in a variety of debris. Lindauer plucked a few bees, dusted them off and examined the debris under a microscope. This debris was not pollen but various forms of dirt particles – black with chimney soot, red from brick rubble, grey from concrete dust. The 'dancing' bees were nest-site scouts who were searching for a new home for their hive in the rubble of bombed Munich.

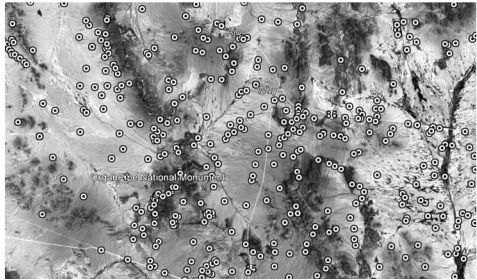
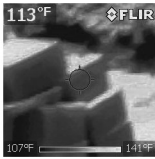
When bees swarm from their parental hive, their communication involves constant interaction; reporting sites visited, confirmation, open debate about different sites, and reaching an agreement for the new site. The bees' decision-making can be seen through their bodily movements, face-to-face communication, sounds and shared goals. Biologists Thomas Seeley depicts their manners as democratic decision-making, one that reveals collective behaviour from the relation-making components of a swarm.

When bees swarm, they set off from their home in search of another. A bee diaspora. The term diaspora is an ancient word that refers to people who have dispersed from their homeland. It brings up connotations of spreading out, mobility, transition, transformation, of finding home and a common ambition. As a diaspora living on a decaying planet, we have to collectively agree on where to go from here.



Bees employ sound as a way to communicate, and the beekeeper uses their sound to learn about the state of the hive. The soundscape of Bee Diaspora re-articulates the flight of bees from their parental hive to a new home – a temporality of a diaspora – in five composed 'movements'. It honors a profound relation between humans and bees, speaking to a hidden wisdom of inter-species relationships. It beckons an experiential, sonic, situated learning.

Bee Diaspora is a song-in-progress, calling us to attune to our companion species - *Apis Mellifera*. Bees and their collective forms of environmental thinking and decision-making. Swarm intelligence translated into a sonic encounter.



*Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey soak through.*

—SUE MONK KIDD, THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES

[EXCERPTS]
OF BEES AND MIGRANTS

Kevin McHugh & Scott Warren

In oppressive July heat we move along rough and tumble Pipeline Road in the mountains east of Ajo, Arizona, delivering water to remote migrant aid stations in the Arizona-Sonora borderlands. In the Desplado, the spectral is everywhere and nowhere. Bodies are 'passings' in an incomprehensible vastness. The landscape is doubly haunted, by unfathomably deep time and by death. Using GPS and thermal cameras, we search for sites along washes reported to be locations where human remains have been discovered.

"This is the language of waves and radiation, or how the dead speak to the living"


—DON DELILLO

There is material evidence of migrant crossers along Pipeline Road: plastic gallon water jugs, homemade moccasins (to reduce tracking by the Border Patrol), blankets and bedding, backpacks, hats, clothing, bordados (hand embroidered cloths used to wrap possessions), personal care products, medicines, and palliatives associated with a long journey on foot. There is a spectral perplexity and profundity surrounding the objects—absence in presence, presence in absence—that eludes capture.

We come upon a site strewn with more than a score of abandoned rotting beehives and objects discarded by passing migrants. We wander about the materialities, as if they might somehow reveal mysteries of what transpired here, whispering stories about the bees and migrants who passed through, and what became of them. Have we fallen prey to the phenomenological illusion that "causality must be happening 'behind' objects which are mere surface appearances" (Morton)?

The abandoned rotting beehives and objects themselves are vibrant and forceful, radiating sensations sensible and insensible, vibrating with the inexhaustible Sonoran desert landscape.





The spectre that many try not to see is a simple realisation — the world will not be 'saved'. Global anarchist revolution is not going to happen. Global climate change is now unstoppable. We are not going to see the world-wide end to civilisation/capitalism/patriarchy/authority. It's not going to happen any time soon. It's unlikely to happen ever. The world will not be 'saved'. Not by activists, not by mass movements, not by charities and not by an insurgent global proletariat. The world will not be 'saved'. This realisation hurts people. They don't want it to be true! But it probably is.

—ANONYMOUS, DESERT

THE WATER KNIFE

Paolo Bacigalupi

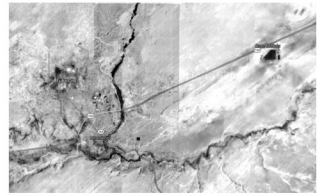
Everything died. Places were blown away, or drowned or burned, and it just kept happening. The equilibrium of the world was shifting. Whole cities were losing their balance as the ground they'd taken for bedrock shifted beneath them and knocked them right on their collective asses.

The Mojave lay sere and open, a burned, wind-abraded scape of oxidized gravels and pale clays, scabbed with creosote bushes and twisted Joshua trees. One hundred twenty degrees in the shade, and heat rippling off the pavement, mirage shimmer.

It had been a desperate land before, and it was a desperate land still. Angel had always liked the desert for its lack of illusions. Here, plants spread their roots wide and shallow, starved for every drop. Their saps crystalized to hard shellac, fighting to keep every molecule of moisture from evaporating. Leaves strained up into the unforgiving sky, shaped to catch and channel any rare drop that might happen to fall upon them.

The desert was different. It had always been a gaunt and feral thing. Always hunting for its next sip. The desert never forgot itself. A thin fall of winter rain was all that kept yucca and creosote blooming. If there was other life, it covered alongside the banks of the few capillary rivers that braved the blazing lands and never strayed far.

The desert never took water for granted.



We are attuning to the surfaces of the desert at the pace of modernity, at various speeds and human densities. Attuning to the smear of the landscape sliding past while driving, to the irregularities of the path while trail-running or hiking, to the sounds of the frosty ground and howling wind while walking.

The spatial and temporal scales in the desert show themselves differently when experienced at speed. Driving through canyon country becomes a movie of geological magnitude. Echoes of an era before the planet became hospitable to humans. A few hours (or moments) later time is adrift, scattered, discarded as it blows erratically along the roadside. We glide through a gentler geological process – layered sedimentation of rock and sand and ash. The dust of minerals layered with the dust of forests and crushed bones. What might the thin layer of the Anthropocene look like, when sedimented atop those older layers, with hues of non-compostable plastics and industrial waste? What layers will come next? What could cover the remnants of the human-dominated sliver of deep geological time?



We continued our deceleration from 5000 miles in a day, 1000 miles in a week to one mile in 10 days. We arrived and we stayed put. We listened. Experiencing the desert at 0mph, as the warm light of the afternoon intensified into a blood-hued sunset, the fading cool shades of dusk, until the pinprick starlights began blinking into existence, scattered across the desert sky.



The longer we remained still, the more frequently our neighbours visited. Humming birds, lizards, insects, crows, a pack of coyotes, deer, javelina, even a solitary shapeshifter. The nocturnal scuttlings of unseen beasts. The brutal nonchalance of bats eating crickets. A mundane spectacle of the everyday, indifferent to our arrival. Amidst this teeming habitat on the edge of urbanity, we eavesdropped on incomprehensible conversations of animate matter. Dust and cacti, trees and insects, concrete and sunlight.

We began to learn the subtle variations in daily routines of plants and animals. We explored the sonic textures of cacti, Palo Verde trees and creosote bushes, listening to the wind on their skin and caressing surfaces with sensing devices. We experimented with directional and ambient recordings, deliberate and incidental sounds. Woodpeckers playing metal chimneys, thrashers mimicking police sirens, howling conversations between dogs and coyotes at dusk. Above and through it all, vast geological scales cast their long shadows, imposing a silent, harsh indifference.



In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me.... I was there, listening.... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it.... I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out.

—ANDRÉ MARCHAND AFTER PAUL KLEE



The Rule of Home

A person is at home in a landscape, some people can encompass two or three landscapes, but no more. Despite that, we need to travel abroad – for comparison, for the recognition of the smallness of home, and the realisation of where we belong.

The Rule of Resonance

A smaller place with which we resonate is more important than a great place of pilgrimage, where one is only a visitor.

The Rule of Irreplaceability

There are places that cannot be replaced by other places.

The Rule of Breezing

The spirit breezes, where it pleases, but some places prefers over others.

The Rule of Various Viewpoints

One perceives the beauty of a place, the other myth or poetry, another understands the charge and flow of energies. None of these ways is superior to any of the others.

The Rule of a Lid

Some places, or even whole landscapes, are open and friendly. Others are hidden under a lid – closed or injured and suffering. Deeper, perhaps, there is a crooked, but nonetheless beautiful inner life.

The Rule of Return

Just as between people there exists love at first sight, so there exists one between a person and a place. Usually though, it is necessary to keep returning, to observe, and to grow intimate with the place. Certain places (and certain truths), only reveal themselves when they are not clearly visible.

The Rule of Slow Approaching

Some places are shy, other places behave like a director in chief – they accept you, but you will need to wait. We never arrive to unknown sacred spaces directly, it is much better to walk slowly, to hesitate, to circle the place first and only then to approach. An unknown place is not only one that we do not know, but also one which doesn't know us.

The Rule of Friendly Teasing

If we want to get to know a certain place, it is necessary to vary an active and passive approach. In the active part of the approach one prompts a place with the question who are you, please? And after that usually nothing happens, the place lives in a different time than the human. Sometimes a reply follows. Quick replies are usually misleading.

The Rule of Sacred Games

There are places or lines where strange things happen and sensitive people perceive unusual images. There are many playful places or those endowed with a strange (sometimes almost malicious) humour, that produce images which should not be interpreted.

The Rule of Culmination

A place, which is also a being, matures and grows. (...) Certain lazy and messy or enchanted places confuse times or even sleep through whole eras and then awake into a period in which they are disorientated.

The Rule of Reciprocal Awakening

By journeying to places we awaken and reinvigorate the earth, which returns this to us. A place within a landscape corresponds to a place within the heart.

DESERT ATTUNEMENT TECHNIQUES

FoAM

Carry water. Wear good shoes. No drones.


Adjust your rhythm to the desert. Emphasize slowness and short bursts of activity. Move at different speeds. Notice how as your body adapts to the lay of the land.

Stay still. Practice durational abiding to sense other-than-human scales. Listen. Use your ears and sensing technologies to hear voices often unheard. Become comfortable with solitude. Learn from shamans and desert hermits.

Celebrate life in the desert. Hold seasonal observances, ceremonies and feasts. Commune across cultures, species and environments, using whatever means possible. Acknowledge interdependence. Live in solidarity with other desert inhabitants.

Always remember – the desert is awe inspiring, it is also unforgiving.





Since a thing cannot be known directly or totally, one can only attune to it, with greater or lesser degrees of intimacy. This is not a "merely" aesthetic approach to a basically blank extensional substance. Since appearance can't be peeled decisively from the reality of a thing, attunement is a living, dynamic relation with another being. The ecological space of attunement is a space of veering, because rigid differences between active and passive, straight and curved, become impossible to maintain.

[...]

[...]

We have recently rediscovered attunement, which is unsurprising, as we have recently rediscovered non-human beings outside the flattening, reifying concept of nature, which almost seems to have been designed to dampen our awareness of attunement space, perhaps just as the "well-tempered" keyboard is designed to reduce the spectral harmonics that haunt a sound owing to its necessary physical embodiment: there is no sound as such, no pure tones, only the sound of a string, the sound of a sine wave generator.

When we study attunement, we study something that has always been there: ecological intimacy, which is to say intimacy between humans and nonhumans, violently repressed with violent results.

[EXCERPTS]

Attune

Timothy Morton


We spent all this time tuning the world to anthropocenic tones, then delimiting attunement space. We might have to teach birds to tune to wind turbines, and this will be a drag. We want to be comfy in our unwavering, thanatological world.

I am playing a tune called myself to which you are attuning, but which is itself attuned to you, so that we have an asymmetrical chiasmus between myself and me, between me and you.

Attunement is the feeling of an object's power over me
—I am being dragged by its tractor beam into its orbit.

Hearing is a chiasmic crisscross between sounds emitted by my ear and pressure waves perturbing the ear's liquids from the outside. The not-me beckons, making me hesitate. Come.

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"I have always loved the desert.

One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing,
hears nothing. Yet through the silence something
throbs, and gleams..."

Antoine De Saint-Exupery