

Lament of a Nature Writer

E. Christopher Mare – Patterns in Nature – Autumn 1995

Part 1: Projection

Today I will go out into Nature. I will pack my pen and my field journal and I will seek out just the right spot where the secrets of Nature may reveal themselves. I will sit quietly, pen in hand, and with heightened perception scan the scene in front of me. With my highly developed powers of keen, educated observation, I will begin to take note of the myriad remote details and subtle interrelationships that constitute Nature.

As I am recording and transposing into writing all the data entering my senses, surely I will become aware of a pattern, an underlying form or sequence or purpose that I can safely assume to be essential Nature. With the skill of my pen, I will translate these perceptions into the structure of language. Hopefully, if I am lucky, I also will have feelings accompanying these thoughts that I can also record. The combination of feelings and thoughts translated onto paper will then become a useful guide, a reminder to those who have either stopped perceiving Nature or who cannot otherwise gain access to Her.

Part 2: Experience

Ahhhhhh, here I am in the boughs of Nature. I'm at my favorite spot, my secret spot where I had that luminous vision so long ago. This is the place where I am most intimate with Nature. It's right in my extended backyard – I see this location from a distance every day and now here I am right in the midst of it. Connely Creek runs into Padden Creek not far from here and their combined force creates a turbulent stream, especially with all the rain we've been having lately. The alders have grown tall here, their bare arms reaching skyward like so many hungry hands begging for food...Oh yea, I haven't eaten lately either. I should have packed some food away; then I could stay here longer in this serene natural environment.

The slender arms of the alder are silhouetted against the backdrop of a quickening gray sky, heralding another advance of the perennial November northwest cloudbank. As I glance down into the creek, I'm amazed to find the exact same scene reflecting off the surface of the water, slightly distorted by the rippling motion but nonetheless dancing right there on the surface. There must be some deep, primal connection between water and sky in this dynamic kind of interplay. There is some

meaningful inner secret of Nature being revealed right here that could very well pertain to the entire Universe. If only I could perceive it, capture its essence – I could write down what I've discovered and then potentially pass it on for the advancement of the entire human race! Well, at least I could share what I've found with others who would be willing to listen, maybe even with some who have had a similar insight. At least my family might be interested.

I close my eyes to reflect and become receptive to whatever intuition I might have concerning this remarkable connection. I become aware of the gentle, gurgling, babbling of the creek in motion, a symphonous cacophony of strange, soothing sounds. My whole body relaxes and I descend into a state of quiet, open receptivity. Surely the secret is soon to come.....Suddenly, my body is jolted by a quick rush of adrenalin – a screaming siren is fast approaching! I become aware of the sound of cars all around me: The freeway is roaring a half mile away; Fairhaven parkway is full of traffic. What an intrusion! I have to block out all these distractions; this is my moment with Nature. I can't let all this noise interfere with my special revelation. I close my eyes again but it's not the same; I've lost that flow. My whole biology is somehow different and I remember how hungry I am. Walking back to my cabin I do get a slight satisfaction knowing I got some stuff down on paper.

Part 3: Re-experience

I am alone in my cabin. I start up a fire in the woodstove and sip some tea, reflecting on the events of the day: Ambulances and cars running all over the place, no one knowing where they're going, too many people.....I sit down on my favorite cushion and begin to feel the warmth of the fire radiating onto me. I begin to relax and slow down the random procession of images in my mind. I feel more and more comfortable and finally expel all the air from my lungs followed by a full, deep breath inward. I'm now breathing slowly, steadily, deliberately, and before long I enter a meditative state of mind. Images come and go and then I remember there was a question I wanted to answer. I see a pine tree sapling and simultaneously there is a thought about a new project I am wanting to begin. As the pine tree grows in my mind, I realize that the new project will have to grow in a similar, organic way for it to succeed – but even that's a distraction; there is a question I have.

I breathe and relax more completely. Coming into view is the I Ching trigram Water. I realize water is an elemental property and therefore there are intrinsic and unique qualities associated with it. One of those qualities is receptivity. Sky too is elemental, represented by the trigram Heaven, associated with radiation. In the same way that water can receive sky and either reflect or absorb it, so can sky be a

transmission medium for water and either reflect or absorb it, thus producing rain and clouds. I sit and contemplate and remember how hungry I am. It's time to cook dinner.

Part 4: Conclusion

The human brain is fully, intrinsically organic. All the thoughts and impulses arising from the human brain are therefore organic and completely a part of Nature. The human capacity for abstraction and the organization of reality into distinct, inflexible compartments leads to a perceived but illusory separation from Nature. It is entirely possible to grasp the essence of Nature simply by becoming aware of the thoughts and impulses arising from within the brain and reflected in the outer environment. It is neither possible nor correct to 'go out into' Nature because Nature is that which is emanating from within us. My perception of Nature ultimately amounts only to thoughts happening inside my brain and feelings and sensations occurring within my body. It is only my capability for abstraction and disconnection which puts Nature outside of myself as something to be observed and documented.

The veil easily dissolves away because there was no veil to begin with...