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. Runaway climate change.

14: The look on my parents’ faces the night before their 45th: they are serene together. They made 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 make-shift 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.
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?

*Carl Schurz Park, July 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).


**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 overuse resources for present interests (Ridley 1998). Laws correct this tendency and introduce foresight.

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

92: Law needn’t be what the State calls “law.” In ancient Greek, nomos included custom. Anthroponomy—accustoming 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.
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.

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.


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 skyscrapers: 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?


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.
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).

**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?)

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?

Defenders of BP spout off—crude speech from their mouths.

The child’s face in light.

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.
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.”

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 anthropogenic.

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.
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).


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 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 speciecide 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.”

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**Sunday, August 29, 2010**

246 of 365: The sailboat lets the biosphere be, but not the combustion engine (Braungart and McDonaugh 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

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.
WE ARE A STORM

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.
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_

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._

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
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 somewhich 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 unseasonly season surprises the remnants of trees and the rolling circumference of time.

326.365: I’m going to take my time with facts—politcize 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).
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.

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.

Ethics Table notebook, Cleveland, Ohio, 2011.
Museum of Natural History, New York City, 2011.

Lee Rd., Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 2010.
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, overlumbering, 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?

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.
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 Ἀκαδήμεια.
    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 weed 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 (Crialese 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.)


6. Write to change my own mind. Write gymnastically.

7. Let us grow.