



Dwarf Alpine Spring Beauty (Claytonia megarhiza) at 2800 m..

Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .

On the road in the American Northwest.

DEEP WATER

In an adverse cultural climate, with perennial waste,
and war, and utterly mindless violence against the Earth,
mimic the alpine plants:—grow close to the ground, keep
a tight cushion of friends clustered around, wear a coat
of densely woolly white hairs, and especially, send roots
through every crack and crevice down to deep, reliable
water.

FOR THE YOUNG—

a few necessities of the artistic life

An abundance of wonder.

An absence of fear.

The fierce doubt of spiritual freedom.

A love of self, a love of other, a love of Earth.

The calm of clear, cold night air just after a winter storm.

The quiet patience of a thousand-year-old stonepine.

The excellence of determination, diligence and devotion
in all matters of craft and technique.

Like a mountain spring, a natural ebb and flow of giving and

receiving, indifferent if others do, or do not, choose to drink,
and asking nothing in return.

An intense passion for awakening—*one at a time,*
and all at once—all the above qualities in the young,
or younger than you.

VIII.21.2009,
Camp Lost & Found,
Eagle Cap Wilderness



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The Knapweed & the Butterfly (Centaurea maculosa—one of the most notorious weeds of the West) at 1450 m.. | see also the essay, [ON TWO DESTRUCTIVE EXCEPTIONS TO NATURAL MOVEMENT](#) |

Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .

On the road in the American Northwest.

RUNAWAY DECEPTION

Runaway deception is a negative or false idea which is put into an positive feedback loop—like a microphone feeding back and wildly amplifying its own sound. Runaway deceptions as ideas tend to be self-reinforcing. Once you have the idea that, for instance, all Arabs are terrorists, just the earthy, guttural sound of their language—which few in the West feel any sympathetic resonance with, let alone speak fluently or understand—is enough to trigger fear and hate and violence. And when we approach the world with such fear and hate and violence, the world will most likely answer us in kind, thereby wrapping round upon itself and giving still more energy to the deception.

In this way, for what seem to be obvious reasons, runaway deceptions also tend to be self-destructive. In their extreme, fundamentalist form, the false idea of the deception itself may seem more important than one's own, or one's tribe, or group or nation's survival. Runaway deception, indeed.

For this reason, the implicit goal of the propagandist is frequently to establish a self-sustaining runaway deception loop by 'priming the pump,' so to speak. This is done by the constant mechanical repetition of false ideas. From the propagandist's point of view, television is the technology of choice because of its almost totally passive character. which evidently, like a saporific drug, lulls us and our vitally important critical intelligence into a deep sleep.

It is easy, especially for young people, to experiment with the way of looking being presented here. Simply do the test of doing without. Stop watching television for a year. When you then return to the relatively recent in historical terms cultural phenomenon of "sitting around the tube," hour after hour, day after day, I can assure you that you will hear and see it with new eyes and ears.

To sum up, if spiritual liberation based on doubt and criticism is a central goal of education, as I think it is or should be, it should also be clear that understanding this mechanical movement of psychic energy I'm calling runaway deception is of crucial importance. How are we to do this? By observing the vicissitudes of one's own thought just as a naturalist might observe a flower or tree or cloud. And to make fieldnotes in one's journal in a sustained and serious way of how and why one thinks and feels the way one does just as one makes fieldnotes of an excursion in the natural world. In this way, we venture up to higher ground and can observe a process of thought such as runaway deception as a whole, both in oneself and in the culture at large. As we observe, we come to understand, and as we come to understand, we free ourselves from the mechanical grip of the mechanism. Just as when in humankind's not-that-distant past we had a sudden awakening or insight, as when out of the blue we saw that: when there are no clouds, there is no rain, and, therefore, it must be clouds that are responsible for rain and not the gods. because if the gods could make it rain any time they wanted, it would pour in torrents—as a kind of miracle then—on rare and special occasions on even the clearest of days. This doesn't seem to happen. The real miracle, it has always seemed to me, is the natural, unfettered intelligence which grasps or sees this fact.

| see also the essay, [ON TWO DESTRUCTIVE EXCEPTIONS TO NATURAL MOVEMENT](#) |

*VIII.21.2009,
Camp Lost & Found,
Eagle Cap Wilderness*



*Rolling Thunder Falls—pure & undammed generative
creative chaos in its most powerful form . . . East Eagle..*
Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .
On the road in the American Northwest.

ON THE NATURE OF MESSINESS

Messiness comes in two forms which are outward signs of two species of chaos, either *creative*, or *degenerative*.

The mess which emerges from *d*-chaos is by far the more common of the two. In contemporary culture, it is everywhere, and results when contradictory movements fight against each other, when things fall apart because of the lack of attention and care, when values of excellence and austerity give way to the universal waste of indulgence and excess.

The mess of *c*-chaos is much more rare and exceptional. When see it as a whirlwind of simultaneous helter-skelter movements—*its messiness*—somehow converges and suddenly makes a tremendous and totally unpredictable, unprecedented leap to a new level of super-energy, of creativity. In Culture, this is the energy of the Athens of the 4th century Bce., the north of Vivaldi's and Strativari's Italy in the 1720's, the Paris of Stravinsky, Picasso, and Rilke before 1914, to name just a few of my own favorites.

Of course, messiness is despised by most of North American culture, especially suburban culture, with its neat rows of Walt Disney houses, carpet-like lawns that reek of cancer-causing petrochemicals, and well-tended beds of horrific hybrids with their artificial rainbows of gaudy, supersaturated hues. No, do not expect to find disorderly displays of messiness of either species there.

Well, if not there, where then, you might ask. That's simple. Creative or *c*-chaos is nature's way. Follow any undammed watercourse to its source and you will see and hear with time and a more practiced eye and ear many extraordinary varieties of messiness. Trees, large and small, having fallen, died, been blown over, knocked down by avalanches with the power of a hundred freight trains, all rotting where they fall, all in various stages of decomposition and decay. Through this labyrinth, the flowing water builds niche after niche after niche, each one a different size, each one with a different

light and character. It is in this marvelous back and forth of the simplicity and complexity of interwoven pools and cascades and micro-waterfalls that one could perhaps say the living Earths reinvent, rebirths herself. There it is, right in front of our eyes.

My conjecture is that when the intelligence of the compassionate mind is in a similar—nay—*identical* way, left alone, or is unblocked or undammed, it too behaves in a remarkably similar way. How do I know this. Well, listen to Glenn Gould play the *Goldberg Variations*. Not just once. Maybe a thousand times. My guess is that something of the nature of true miracle will reveal itself. When the leap which is the signature of creative chaos occurs, it will be unmistakable. It is not the cheap-shot commercialized messiness of MTV with jeans with prewashed holes and bands that self-consciously smash guitars. No. The fingers on both sides of this keyboard, of the composer, and of the performer—with Gould and Bach somehow merge into one—are the fingers quided by years of determination, diligence and devotion which, when the world is lucky, are sometimes swept away in a wave of inspiration. I say *world*, for when the natural intelligence of mind and culture are awakened, culture becomes identical with nature. This is Orpheus sitting under his tree with his viola under his arm, playing perhaps on a single nearly broken, out-of-tune string, yet the birds, the waters, the flowers, gather about to listen, for they recognize the music.

It is their music.

It is *their* music, too. What could be more beautiful than this?

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Eagle Cap Wilderness



Tree / Water Forms. Hidden Lake, evening light. Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .

On the road in the American Northwest.

QUIET WATER

Sitting. Waiting.

The quiet sound of morning water
fed by meager snowfields.

A plane flies up the steeply-walled valley,
the sound of its motor wrapping round itself,
beating, fighting against its own echo—then
tapering off in a low, harmonious hum.

So civilizations come and go,
each in their own time, in their own way,
yet the sound of their final silence is always the same.

A chickadee goes *tja tja tja tja*
flittering from fir to fir, same lively little bird
of the fiddle-top spruce in the Alps.

The quiet water flows with flashes,
sparkles, faint stars of morning light,
fed by meager snowfields.

Sitting. Waiting.

The final silence is always the same.

WILDERNESS IN NORTH AMERICA

A goddess chained to a rock

with on all her sides

the greedy grind of petrochemical lust

racing to road's end—

ready to take the wild bitch for a ride.

ETHICAL DESIGN

Repair, reuse, recycle—the three imperatives of a new spirit of ethical design. *Ethical*, because it expands the circle of moral and legal responsibility to include the whole world of creation and the living Earth. *Imperative*, because it sees with granite-like clarity the necessity of the first principle of all design: *no waste*.

THE TWO FACES OF EMPIRE

Sometimes, Empire puts on a happy, cheerful face as it takes what it wants from you, all the while promising you peace and protection, and giving you a solid silver medal stamped with a president's image.

Othertimes, Empire puts on a more straight forward, mean and ugly face which projects military power and a willingness to use it. Like the Romans said, "*It doesn't matter if they love or hate you, as long as they fear you.*"

For those peoples who are suppressed and exploited,

which face, say, an American president puts on makes very little difference. (Democrats, for example, seem to prefer the cheerful face, whereas Republicans evidently tend towards the mean and ugly.) The real question, however, is not the face which is used, which after all is merely a projection. The real question is rather how much longer the violence of Empire can continue to wear the cloak of Democracy. For this contradictory hybrid form of government, a form of government which should for reasons of clarity be called *Democratic Empire*—the one based on freedom and civil rights, the other on exploitation and different forms of economic slavery—must necessarily be threatened with collapse on two fronts simultaneously: There will be the protest on the home front with citizens—especially those who do not benefit from the spoils of empire or who feel that it is morally unjust—demanding more open and less corrupt representative governance; At the same time, liberation struggles in the physically far away but in terms of modern information technologies right in your living room resource colonies will resist, as they always have, all suppression and exploitation.

So, regardless of which face is put on for public display, Democratic Empire must necessarily collapse because of its contradictory nature. It did in the Greece of Athens. It did in the Rome of Julius Caesar. It did in the Great Britain of Winston Churchill. And now, in the North America of Mr. Obama?

Contradictions, as any naturalist knows, are non-renewable.

Contradictions, because they are in essence conflicting movements fighting one another—can only be kept alive by massive artificial inputs of energy from outside the system, which in turn can only be obtained by massive amounts of waste and use of force. Not a pretty picture, indeed.

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Hidden Lake, West Shoreline. Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .
On the road in the American Northwest.

THE LUTE—*a long-line sonnet*

*upon hearing Nigel North
play John Dowland*

O come again sweet love, soft rounded belly of wood,
Resonance rich with bright stars and dark loam,
Pure instrument of the unseen platonic realm.
By what strange demonic twist of fate

Did your fine form fall into disfavor? Like a Queen,
Much beloved, yet banished to a far-away isle,
You've suffered eternities of turbulent seas,
Waves of sharp steel strings, of harsh amplified sounds.

So now:—come again sweet love, let us dare open
Your velvet protective case, let down your youthful braids,
And let the coming age find new spirit on your strings;

Let the recluse tune your pegs by mountain springs,
Poets find new rhythms to match your most dissonant chords,
And bards play to Kings bent on war, as you dream of peace.

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Earthrise. Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .
On the road in the American Northwest.

ETHICAL IMPERATIVES—a *meditation* on *Earthrise*

The first imperative of ethics is that ethics itself should not be thought of as belonging primarily to what is now considered religion, but rather as a primary dimension of all human activity. '*Primary*' means that it is the first aspect to be considered in all action and decision making, and not the last, as a kind of half-hearted, feel-good, clean-up action on Sundays intended to mask and cover-up guilt.

All action resonates in space and time. Sometimes only a second or two, sometimes for centuries; Sometimes only a few centimeters out from my own body. sometimes perhaps to infinity.

Outwardly, this is *ethical consequence*; inwardly, it is *ethical conscience*.

The key feature of this complementary inner and outer movement of consequence and conscience is the breadth of the circle of awareness and responsibility.

The great leap of consciousness brought home in the historic *Earthrise* photograph of forty years ago—perhaps the most important image of our time—is that it shows to the mind of compassion with granite-like clarity that the necessary breadth of this circle of awareness and responsibility begins and ends with the whole living Earth, and not with arbitrary, conflicting fragments like nations states.

Necessity is a thing of great philosophical beauty. This is so because necessity awakens, and in a most powerful way brings together, the very best of our intellectual and spiritual energies, both individually and collectively. Just as the wild proposal of the poet-scientist that we must go to the Moon not because it is easy, but because it is difficult crystallized and brought together an entire generation of creativity, we need now to see that the dual imperatives of the new millennium are ending waste and war. Waste, because it in one word summarizes where the conventions of Culture are out of line with the laws of Nature. Eliminate waste, and you solve the problem of pollution, renewable energy, corrupt agricultural practices and climate change all at once. And War, because of its destructive insanity—and it is insanity because the entire Earth is at stake—of contemporary weapons technology stands before us as the central fact of our time:—

that it is no longer a question of violence or non-violence,
but rather of non-violence or non-existence.

Seen from this larger perspective, it becomes clear perhaps
that War & Waste are essentially two sides of one problem.
Who would not say that from the perspective of the Moon
that waste is not humanity's total war on Nature, and that
war in turn is not humanity's total waste of its own
spiritual essence and promise?

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Dwarf Alpine Groundsel, skyview at 2700 m. (Senecio fremontii) East Eagle..

Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .

On the road in the American Northwest.

MONEY AS NOTHING

New to the West? Don't be a fool

looking for gold!

The real money is in nothing!

The nothing of the insurance man

making millions out of the nothing

that does not happen;

The nothing of the banker

who makes millions out of the nothing

that backs up his loans;

The nothing of the powerful industrial warmaker,

presidents & whole congresses in his back pocket,

the man who makes billions out of the nothing

he is about to make out of us all!

WHOLE & PART

Sometimes, with a limited field of vision, one can
only reveal the whole by showing the parts.

ENERGY IPOD

The only reason we do not have an *iPod* for energy right now—that is, a handy little device you could put in your pocket that condenses and stores, instead of an entire library of information or data, an entire household's worth of kilowatts—is that those who profit from keeping us dependent on the stone-age fuels of fire and hydrocarbons wish to continue doing so until the supplies are exhausted. And for obvious reasons. That Exxon-Mobile wants to keep selling us oil until we enter a new dark-age is only reasonable and logical. But that governments world-wide do likewise is not.

Clearly, if the whole of Shakespeare can be condensed to the head of a pin, so can the whole of Einstein. Clear also is that this will not happen until money and the distortions of power it buys are in a bold and simple way eliminated from politics. The only force capable of making this happen, it seems to me, is the natural convergence of common sense, respect for truth, and the reasoned voice of public opinion and civil, democratic debate.

So an iPod for energy is not as far-fetched as it might sound. For the light of the sun to burn at night, and a new solar era to begin, we need only to turn off the switch on the blinding glare of wholly unnecessary corruption.

*VIII.21.2009,
Camp Lost & Found,
Eagle Cap Wilderness*



Land Above the Trees—first light on Lost Glacier Peak & Eagle Cap.
Eagle Cap Wilderness. . .
On the road in the American Northwest.

LAND ABOVE THE TREES

Paradise only lasts a day.

Let Time stretch out to eternity.

Let Space open up to the stars.

The new ice you found at the spring this morning is already gone.

See that Lily over there: it only lasts an hour.

Write that love letter you've been waiting for for a thousand years.

Figure out those equations that Einstein knew he had wrong.

The sound of the rushing water mixes with the late summer wind.

As it always has; as it always has.

Your next life can wait till tomorrow.

PILGRIM'S PATH

There are many stones on the pilgrim's path.

Under each one lies another piece of yourself.

You trip, you stumble, you fall.

Sometimes, you turn the stones over

and find faded pictures of lost loves,

long lists of things you should have done, or could have said.

But *here, now*, at this crossing, which way to go . . . ?

Down that jeep-track over there to the city below,
or follow this ridgeline up into the pathless country
of lord-knows-where?

Which way to go, which way to go . . . ?

The sound of rushing water rises into the cool morning air.

It's time to go now,





Time to go.

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Eagle Cap Wilderness*

SEPTEMBER 2009



(IMAGE: Holly Brook Meanders, above Hidden Lake—Eagle Cap Wilderness)

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