

Yesterday we took the boat to Waldron, arriving on a lovely easterly point at noonish to have the picnic I threw together foraging from the frig. We motored to Cook's, beached the boat and walked up a short trail to a lovely farm—unexpectedly I soon found myself standing on a ladder schmoozing with the owner about hot water plumbing for solar panels and wood stoves. More walking thru a lovely open mixed cedar and fir forest took us to another cabin, the Wren house, a tiny sweet little retreat hidden down a barely visible footpath, complete with wood-fired hot tub. It pulled a few of my stops about retreats and withdrawing into smallness and silence, evoking a tiny, gentle life orbit of eating, a bit of wood gathering, and writing in solitude. I mused aloud whether I might live in a place like that if 20 years from now Jennifer died and I was alone. She thought I was too much of a people person and wondered if I might find the aloneness way too lonely. I wasn't sure. I could see her point and yet there's a part of me that craves silence and solitude and loneliness even; maybe it's a dark side or maybe a side that calls for rest and return to the energies of the earth. I remind myself that, like everything, I'm made of stardust. Maybe the dust wants to return to more elemental forms and rest before it gets energized again into another form (whether a life form or something apparently inanimate, like rock). Maybe there's more to an element, like hydrogen, than "just" a neutron and a proton and an electron. Maybe those particles have properties, like intelligence, preferences, or memory.

What do the physicists know? They poke at elements with high tech sticks to see if, and how, they squirm. They're watching for sub-atomic particles—they are not listening for the sounds of electron songs. That particles, like people, blow up when bombarded says nothing about their soul. For that, one needs not to look but to listen. DNA may hold the form of information, but the information itself weighs nothing. Put all your work on a diskette and it weighs the same. Your work weighs nothing. Your thoughts weigh nothing. Your soul is totally invisible—has no mass, has no structure—is completely dematerialized. It exists neither as a particle nor as energy. No physicist, nor metaphysicist, can measure it.

Maybe atoms, organized into clusters to make people or cell phones or bit patterns on a hard disk, have long term plans; they don't worry about their current form (say, being cast as a rock) because they know in a billion years or so they'll be a gas or radiant energy or part of a flower. Some "rock" might be swept up into gravel, it's neighbor ground up into grist for concrete, and their neighbor pulverized to extract some mineral which becomes fertilizer which becomes an artichoke which becomes lodged in your midrift fat cells, until you become part of a rock again.

Einstein brought from the collective unconscious the idea that matter and energy are related—married perhaps, always dancing with each other. Each can only be transformed from one form into the other—neither can be destroyed. Perhaps what we've done in the last century or two is learn how to cajole these slaves into doing what we want. Certainly we've not asked them what they want. Maybe they're willing to do almost anything because, ultimately, it doesn't matter what they do—they don't die, they just change forms, over and over and over; why *not* be helpful?

Something like 75 percent of all known elements in the universe are hydrogen and 24 point nine nine nine nine percent are helium. Oxygen, carbon, sulphur, and everything else don't even make it onto the radar screen. Yet I am made of these remnants, these afterthoughts, these dregs, these elemental, what? *impurities* ? of the universe. Something like 95 percent of the mass of the universe isn't even known—right now it's called “dark matter”; all that the suits can tell us is that it has gravitational force. It has no spectrum. It has no light. But it's big. Really Big. Way *way* bigger than all the stars and galaxies put together—so just why in this enormity did the piffle of smoke that represents me assemble?

The definition of the upper limit of arrogance would be to assume I am intellectually and physically superior to the atoms, and who knows what else, from which I am made. To argue that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts suggests that somewhere up the aggregation of information scale I cross a line from dumb to smart, from rock to plant to Beethoven. It ignores the possibility that the parts might be smart, or that the wholes might be dumb (after all, they're just experiments in information-clusters). No matter what happens, the parts never die. Ever. Imagine if I could get an electron to tell me where it's been.

It may be that I express the dark matter of the universe in my unconscious. Why wouldn't my psyche, part of the energy field of the stardust that I'm made of, echo the struggles manifesting in the raging infernos of black holes, quasars, red dwarfs, neutron stars, white novas and their almost negligible presence within the massive black silence?

Imagine the richness of a tapestry in which I am offered the chance to humbly fathom just how small, and improbable, and unprecedented I am. Imagine feeling composed of, and graced by, electrons that are as old as the universe. Imagine offering myself in service to a process billions of years old, not knowing where I am going, not having a clue, yet willingly subordinate to this mystery. For a brief flash—if the universe were as old as a year, my time on it is less than a twinkle—I have a chance to direct my electrons toward something. It's not very long. My life is blisteringly short even if theirs is forever. Why not take 'em for a ride they'll remember?