

AS THE SUN SETS

Days have beginnings and ends and I am very consciously aware of these events. In my daily log (not really a diary) I almost always make some comment on what the sunrise or sunset was like, colors, skies, clouds, grays. And on the outside of my house I have a display of paintings, unframed against the white wall along a concrete walkway that goes to the door. By the door hang two more paintings one at foot level, one at eye level. During the last, say, three months, I have had at least a hundred, probably double that many people come here. I remember only one person who even slowed down to really see one of the paintings. I too walk by them every day, several times a day, many times a day. I still really look, and often stop in front of one. People have said that my style is minimalist. That may be what they are on the outside, but they have other paintings hidden behind that simple horizon and a sea that has its own light and a sky that hides clouds and unknown darknesses.

The magic hour, for me, is just before sunset (the minutes just after a sunrise are magic in a very different way). If at all possible, that quarter hour before sunset is when I am out, talking with plants, trees, smiling. I try to pin down the color if there is any. (I even wonder whether colors would be brighter after cataract operations: that is a selling point, I don't know if I could survive even more brilliant, vibrant, changing colors.) I do not watch a clock very often, but I always know when is the perfect time to go out, rain or shine. There is more than enough light to see by, but it is obvious that the sun is very close to the horizon. I don't see horizons from here, because there are trees in all directions. But the sun makes no secret of his comings and goings.. Today, just before the magic quarter hour before sunset, I went for my little walk. Plants are dry, very dry. Hope we get some rain soon. It is getting critical. On the way back looked at my own paintings, as I do umpteen times a day, and often before sunset. In this light they, the paintings, look different, of course. The first is. Ka 'anuenue na māhinahina, rainbow of pale moonlight. In this light it is magic, There is a hidden red behind the black, the moon is almost but not quite visible. Yes, I like that painting a lot, but I realize you must look. Next, the new one, as yet unnamed. I like that also. Came out well, not too brazen but a glimpse of bright red and some straight lines melting into the chaos of nature. The next one is Water over Earth, no 8 of the i Ching, "Unity." We are in the middle of a drought; water: over earth -- I wish! Then the painting with horizons (plural) and the shadows of a palm leaf that breaks and almost-but-not-quite returns in the layers (offset). Yes, I really like all of them. And the one by the steps, in this light, is spell blinding. During the day this one looks realistic, but almost. That is how I want it, real but not quite. Tricks of light, reflections that are really two different light sources. I'm glad that I always have appreciated my own art.

Does it matter that I see what few others see? When I think of it — not often — I feel lonely. I am alone, and choose to live that way. Rarely lonely. My contacts are with life, in animals, plants, trees, rocks even. Oh and lots of people as well, but not all the time. When I see people walking one, two feet past five paintings, eyes strictly focused front, that makes me feel very apart. But, obviously, in the world of people, it does not matter what I think, do, or feel. (I get more response from my writing)

The only really important thing that I have given back to the matrix from which I come, is my offspring. That, in the end, is the only importance of a male. All the other stuff, art, power, sex, politics, wars, are just lice living in the rich fur of the planetary ecology. Sometimes, of course, those lice affect the whole ecology. Then the ecology finds ways to deal with that bothersome louse population.

I am of no further use to the ecology, I know that. But still I am deeply aware of life around me, love, beauty, sex, all the fascinating aspects of Life. If I get pleasure from painting and liking my own creativity, that is okay. There are whole parts of my life that have not produced anything except abstractions, like paintings, writing, care, skills. I did and am doing those things not for the species, but for people who pass through my life. Perhaps, in the end, for myself. A 'self' that the Buddha says is illusion. I can accept all that.

We live in a materialistic world. We think matter is the only reality. Our brains have been taught to use an operating system designed by our culture, our society, our religion, our history, our government in order to be able to become a productive citizen --which today, in our society means a consumer. This operating system influences practically all our behaviors, feelings, knowledge, fears and pleasures. It makes us fit in, makes us be lovers, feminists, democrats, bike riders, CEO's, kings, and shit shovelers in a 21st century world we have ourselves created and now is falling apart.. Our OS lately has produced people who are needy, greedy, and ruthless, as well as a lot more people. Using this OS we have created an human-made technology that needs enormous amounts of energy that we fight for. An OS that has us do the most atrocious, monstrous things to the earth and to her planetary ecology, and to ourselves as well. And finally the OS is turning us off, by making us all fall asleep so that we may not experience what we have wrought.

In the olden days, as my kids used to say, we used a very different OS. One that was written by our common humanity, our DNA perhaps. An operating system that fitted us into the wild that this beautiful planet was for millions of years. Fitting in is easy when you think yourself part of the planet.

Over time our operating systems change, shift. Sometimes a little, sometimes a whole level up, or down, or away from reality. Operating Systems get changed by laws, by ideas, by natural and other disasters. Sometimes it is changed by men who think themselves important. Whatever "caused" it the changes happen, and will happen again.

Now, at the end of a long series of many, often simultaneously running, Operating Systems, the current western OS (now almost world-wide) has well-known and ever more visible flaws. The system crashes are fierce and fiery all over the planet. The planet suffers, whole species of animals and plants are forever erased from the ecology. We suffer wars, famines, new epidemics.

So, my thought is that the combination of a really badly flawed Operating System

and the consequences of us working with that OS, are such that we ought to be seriously concerned about our own survival.

I cannot think of a scenario in which some well-meaning and loving, smart, people figure out how to make us all put our OS aside, and learn another. The ones who make crazy laws are not going to teach us how to get rid of them. The only scenario I can think of — and I have experienced it — is a total breakdown: the manmade world crashes. No government, no trade, no electricity. No, we people don't fall apart, but almost everything that made us fit into a certain world, falls away. For the first time since birth, we are free.

Without the OS that we intensely believed was obviously what life was about, we will be forced to look inside. And, lo and behold, there is another, much simpler but utterly fitting Operating System still hiding in a corner of our deepest memories. And, yes, that ancient OS is still fully functional, and I am certain even includes talents and abilities our present OS threw out.

This ancient OS is close to what we now call ADHD, a condition that some kids are supposed to have which makes it difficult for them to 'concentrate'. Because in our modern, man-made world you need to learn to focus on one goal only, and forget, don't even see, the world around you. When the teacher teaches math, math is what must be in your head. Your eyes must be focused on the blackboard. Some children are 'distracted', we say, when they start dreaming about why we have five fingers, why frogs have only three, could we have six? Two hands make ten. Why do we have measures in twelves, or other strange numbers? Not goal-directed those kids! They need blinders, like a horse. Drugs for everything, some are supposed to be blinders.

Before we got so civilized (that does not mean civil) we had to survive in a world full of wonder, magic, and danger. Our attention always, at any moment, had to be as wide as possible, not narrowed. Wild humans survived for at least a hundred thousand years with that ancient Operating System that our senses and our brain are made for. Living in close harmony with nature makes us see in front as well as to the sides, below and above, and, yes, even behind us!

It seems very obvious to me, and many others, that our present OS, that makes us aggressive, competitive, greedy, selfish, cruel, and crazy, is destroying our planet; and so, ourselves. Hopefully, enough of us will survive to rediscover that ancient OS that is still within us. Does it matter whether anyone believes me? No, of course not.

But I know something else. We are so conditioned, brainwashed, to believe only in what our OS tells us is reality, the only possible future, that we fear seeing to the sides. People don't want to know; people don't want to see. They struggle to keep the pieces of their personalities from flying apart, keep their lives go as smoothly as possible, stay on the rails, wear blinders, have an agenda that reminds hour to hour, perhaps minute to minute, what we are supposed to do.