

Abstract:

I recognize that I am part of a culture that values materials more than basic human rights, a culture that views humans as objects, a culture of material worth. In such an environment I have become detached from my body, my multitude and nature. I have since seen this fracture as an opportunity to rebuild myself the way I see true. This paper is that exploration.

Beginnings: Sensing Boundaries.

“Any feeling of less-than is merely a symptom of the colonization of your mind” -Buhner.

A feeling takes a whole as parts

When prompted to think about connecting art and science together I began to think about my body, because my body is just that, science and art meticulously and complexly crafted to house worlds within worlds within worlds. I was not only prompted to just “think” about the merging of science and art but to think about it in a Goethean way, to be *present* and *involved* with this question and the connections that are found.

As a young girl I saw the fragments of myself. Untrusting of my own inner voice, I criticized my multiplicity and became isolated, dissected and labeled. I felt the weight of unobtainable expectation of the “ideal self” and I feared failing. However through the struggle to become what was “expected” of me I found instead the many-sided self I am.

“what didn't fit into the systems didn't exist, and if it tried to exist, it might soon find that legislators and schoolteachers and missionaries and farmers marched against it.” Bringham. The Tree of Meaning (21)

I am involved in a world that is built from wholes made of parts and that I myself am just that. Through the lens of Goethean Science, the process of becoming aware has challenged me to ask difficult questions and be open to the honest responses, to both evaluate and trust my intuition and to seriously look at my interactions within western culture and my environments.

“We have an innate ability to perceive the unique identities that occur at moments of self-organization. It is born into us, intended for our use.” -Buhner.

Like the universe, I am in a constant state of flux, acknowledging and shifting my multitude with that of what surrounds me. Be it plants, people, buildings, or bees we are in dialogue.

Delicate Empiricism: Science as a Conversation:

*Fed into our minds,
make all known
by adding between roots,
a stringy stem. Supported by
that know of limits
among the minds
until the found lost hum,
that make the trees
up inside the minds—
like tiny sprigs
of a machine like nature,
falsify with breath.*

The western linear mindset around sex, gender identity, healing and the physical body are all designed for and function through the detachment of ones ability to sense their needs. Our culture is built off of fragmenting people from themselves and then providing them with objects to fill the void.

Our society and culture has diminished and devalued the notion of self-care and self-healing, taking away a persons ability to listen to their bodies specific needs and address them in a way unique to them and their way of life. Western medicine in many regards has a “one size fits all” approach that often causes more harm than good. Western society trains people to detach from themselves and then treat themselves like objects. If more people could re-engage in the dialogue with their bodies and environments there would be a shift in the collective consciousness, a sense of empowerment and self reliance.

By employing a Goethean method of science to every day interactions, my body, and others I have developed a self awareness that counters much of the mainstream medias “ideals”.

- 1) I engage with my body, feeling and listening to what it is telling me. Am I sore? Tired? Hungry? Sick? When I ask these questions I pay attention to the physical response and thoughts that occur, knowing that is where the answers lies. I am able to read my bodies language by keeping a loose framework around whatever I am questioning. Remembering that it spoke to me first and now I must actively listen and ask questions.
- 2) If I explore my body with too critical a gaze it becomes difficult to pick up on a response. That leaves little room to interpret a solution. By asking myself openly, and respecting what my body and mind suggest, only then am I able to address and adapt to what I need.
- 3) Keeping adaption in mind, bodies are constantly in flux. They are sensing their environments and adjusting in ways to sustain themselves. It becomes harder for my body to do so when I bog it down with a the notion that I have control over the environment around me, I have control over myself *within* an environment. And the beauty of being numerous is that I can shift and adapt while keeping boundaries.
- 4) Self-care and self-healing limit the need for large corporate institutions and empower people to define healing in a way specific to them. It also respects autonomy and caters to peoples individual needs unbiased about their sex or chosen gender. Recognizing that my sex and my gender are not interchangeable allows me to live out the variety that makes me whole.
- 5) Listening to my body, questioning for its needs and respecting them is essential for the dialogue to take place. Knowing that I have internalized certain societal concepts within me I have come to question my intuition. Asking myself: is it a societal based fear or judgment or is it something truer to my core? Becoming aware and asking what influences society has had on me without my consciously knowing it helps clear my perception of others, myself and my surroundings. Thus I am better able to avoid living withing concepts based out of static stereotypes and skewed boundaries.
- 6) By taking back the ownership of my body I am changing and challenging the ways of modern western culture. Through the acknowledgment that gender is an abstraction I can be less distracted by the objects presented to appeal to specific genders in attempts to fill the gaps.
- 7) This process of engaging with my body and learning to listen to its needs has spilled over into many aspects of my life. Paying attention to details, hearing what people have to say and acknowledging my surroundings and how they affect and interact with me has empowered me to be responsible and accountable for myself.

Engaging the Conversation:

*Tip toe around.
Wear this feeling of loaded limitation
like a silk shawl, old and delicate.
Remain contained with a given word,
shuffle from exactness to exactness
touching only with a shadow,*

the edges of the whole of it.

Engaging with the body requires engaging with the environment. While wondering the grounds of the Organic Farm on a brisk fall morning I had set the intention to come across something I was not familiar with. I roamed the open fields and narrow rows of plant life, seeing flowers nearing the end of their bloom and brassicas ready to be picked. As I made my way through the herb garden my eye was drawn toward two beds filled with rich colors of deep, almost black purples, antique muted violets and layers of dark green. I got nearer to one of the beds and stared down into the thick tangle of the numerous wiry stems flimsily shooting upward. Many creatures had made this tangled forest their home such as bees, spiders, and dragonflies.

The sun is shining, warming my face and hands, illuminating the strands of my hair.

I sat next to the plant and watched the light seep its way through the tangles of stems, leaves, and small bead like flowers with ease. I wanted to take a walk through this wire forest. To look up and view the under belly of the leaves, see the stretch of clumping buds. Some reached out then exploded in a grand finale of soft thin petals and pistons, others remained closed and dense.

What am I seeing? Does it see me? feel me? Does it know that it can and always has provided more for me than I have for it? Will it open up to me? Share its secrets?

On some, the leaves looked like they were decomposing, they turned to white hair like fibers within the bone structure of the leaf.

*I am feeling this uneasy feeling.
The redirection of truth, a new blood flow.*

As I was sitting next to this plant, I noticed there was another variety of plant within the same bed. I began to wonder if I was looking at the right plant according to the sign and realized that what I had thought was Burnet was actually Oregano.

This was a strange and powerful realization.

Realizing that I was looking at the wrong plant (in the eye of the sign) made me question where I get my information and how I interpret it. The sign was surrounded by Oregano in a form unfamiliar to me and thus I was lead to believe it was Burnet. By being drawn to something I didn't know and ending up next to something I new just not in a familiar form stirred many questions within me.

What happens when a woman is labeled a man or a man a woman? What happens when one removes the label of gender entirely? What is being said when a body is placed next to a dollar sign? Do the elements become objects? would others question the label if it was something they have never seen before? If not, what is it that they trust within the sign/label?

I am perceiving with my mind when I follow blindly and my heart when I see a path and choose to challenge.

Exact Sensorial Imagination and Living Understanding:

“When you do this kind of conscious picture building, you grow more and more connected to what you're observing.”-Holdrege.

“Then you put a label on the bottle, and write “skunk cabbage” on it, and know that this captures none of the living reality of the plant. But, inside you, the name of the plant resides, and you can call it up in memory and say it anytime...though not in words.” Buhner pg. 129

The first attempt to communicate with Oregano consisted mostly of me trying to quiet my thoughts and let the plant speak. Then I began to feel unsure about whether I was speaking *for* the plant. I thought about this further and realized that by projecting myself onto the plant I denied it its own existence and discredited its power to have an effect on me. I didn't want to project, I wanted to *sense*.

I found that this is a slow and patient process. I visited the Oregano each week for seven weeks and each time I came to it with a different prompt for myself. Giving myself some guiding points to help keep the conversation flowing and at the same time not dominating the dialogue. They were loose themes or an open ended question that gave my visit an overall arch but not a formal structure. I had to let myself sit and breathe and not censor my thoughts and feelings, for I would be using those as my tools of communication rather than words. During this time I would take notes and free write all that came to my mind. No matter how insignificant it would feel. After my visit, I would re-read my notes and visualize that specific encounter. My mind would produce a sort of character of the herb, flashing leaves and outlines of the clustered buds but the veins on the leaves would be missing or the way the buds built off of each other was not clear. They were only fragments of the plant's entirety. This would give me clues for what to pay attention to during my next visit.

Oregano—A Portrayal:

Origanum Vulgare, Latin for Oregano (Wild Marjoram or Spanish Thyme) is used mostly for its medicinal purposes rather than as a culinary spice. The part that most commonly gets used is the leaf. When harvested Oregano provides relief of nervous headaches/toothaches, used against common cold diseases and is also a stomach soother. This genus of Oregano is originally a native to warmer climates. In similar climates it acts as a perennial, yet in the state of Washington it is considered a perennial that must be replanted annually. The root system of Oregano is shallow and dense, using no more than the top few inches of soil.

As the seasons changed I got to see Oregano transform through many stages. The first encounter it was full and energetic, somewhat silly as the breeze blew through the bunch and they all swayed and twisted. Then as the air blew colder and the days shrank it became woody, brittle, sparse.

While I was understanding this transformation, I knew I was only capturing a still shot. No matter how long I sat there I knew that my eye would not pick up on its physical shifts, yet with every visit I could *feel* it. I felt the change occurring within myself as well. Recognizing my body responding to the shift in seasons, preparing to slow down and rest. There was a different sensation within myself than with Oregano. I seemed to be resistant, wanting to hold onto that last fleeting bit of summer where Oregano accepted its transformation with grace and ease, remaining humble and sure, knowing this was part of its cycle, to be birthed and give birth to a new life.

The Whole as a Part:

A week had gone by and the herb looked remarkably different.

There is no sense of time, just shifts of earth and air.

I felt anxious to see this herb again. As I began studying it I noticed a few of the sprigs had changed their leaves from a vibrant orangish green to a magenta like purple. Some have even turned to a rich brown, a stroke of dark to light.

The colors overwhelmed me.

The contrast of glowing greens and hazed variations of black and purple hypnotized me. I felt a calmness lay upon my shoulders. I felt I was remembered and invited to become acquainted. I enjoyed this herb is at various stages of development and admired its ability to remain as a whole, working with and accepting its decaying parts.

Some darker some lighter, some standing tall others flopping over; some flowering and others beginning to shrivel.

Another week passed. I went out to the herb garden to find most of the beds empty. I found the Oregano inside a pot next to a turned up bed.

The six looked unhoused in the pot.

What was once a forest had been reduced to six flimsy beings that leaned and toppled over one another. They looked exhausted, limp. Some were completely bent, hanging over the edge, reaching for their old home. Others leaning far back in ways that did not look comfortable. There was a weakness portrayed without the fullness of multiples. I rubbed my thumb and index finger over a leaf to release its scent. It was faint from being exposed to the elements. Stale. The leaf felt soft and plump, some moisture still pulsing through it. I picked one. Bit it. A coolness came over my tongue, very light. I could taste its echo of once being powerful and strong. Its fibers felt stiff and compressed with a small burst of moisture leaving me with a fleeting taste of a memory. Gone almost before I could tell what it was.

The darker parts of the stem appeared where there were once leaves, the joints now bare. The light brown began to fade to pink in between each knobby knee, however, towards the top of the stem the leaves remained green, some were almost white and had violet speckled tips with purple veins. The flowers came into sharp little points and were scratching and brittle against my clothes. The stems branched out at the top into smaller stems that carried even smaller stems that burst out into puffed petals like a bouquet. The petals twisted and mixed in a white, purple, and brown haze surrounding a crisp cream center. White fuzzy hairs blanketed the stems.

The Unity of the Organism:

“The remarkable thing is that when you build exact pictures over and over, moving from one characteristic to the next, patterns emerge...characteristics express a whole.” -Holdrege

“Any other plant, beetle, or bird you see appears immediately as a riddle and not a thing.” -Holdrege

Through this process of knowing and getting to know an entity I begin view not only what is

directly in my line of sight but the way the air moves around it, the way light is cast and reflected, the earth that it stems from and grabs onto. I begin to see a flow and flux of elements, an aura, a unity that each part brings. To remove a part and lay it against steel and run a clean line through it to see the center provides only a fraction of the fraction. This is not the whole unit. One cannot dissect sunlight or the breeze or the grip within the earth. These are equally as important as the part itself. They are what build the very part being torn.

I've noticed the same reductionist method being applied to people. Placing a hierarchy on the body and advertising parts as more important than others leads to detachment of the self and devalues the entirety of a person. If we are able to view ourselves as a whole, see the multiple parts that make up our complex unity and not judge the fragments, we could better understand ourselves in relation to one another.

Doing Goethean Science: Preparing the ground—A new attitude of mind.

“As far as I can see, most people who are drawn to Goethe's approach to science recognize in it a way of understanding nature that can take them beyond the boundaries of what has developed as mainstream science”-Holdrege.

Living and doing Goethean science has taught me to rethink the way I interact with people, my place within (as part of) nature and myself as a whole. It is more than a “science” but a way of life. I have yet to find an aspect of my life and the world I am part of that Goethean science has not penetrated and influenced.

“For this attitude of mind to actually inform every fiber of one's work means removing many obstacles—habits of the mind that have us search for single causes, for general theories, for reductive explanations.” -Holdrege.

Just like pulling a plant from its environment to try and understand it we have projected categories onto people to try and understand one another. Neither of these methods contain a dialogue but rather an interrogation.

“It's an active conversation, but one in which I hope the other—as something in its own right—can reveal itself.”-Holdrege.

With understanding anything it takes good communication, active listening, and respecting boundaries.

Practicing Goethean Science:

The Riddle:

“And because each person has a different biography—carries a unique world within herself—and is drawn to different features of the world, there is an endless and beautiful array of possible questions and areas of focus.”-Holdrege

There is much in this world to learn from and learning a little bit of everything further connects us to one another. There is no one way to learn, to identify, to live. We are made of multiples that form one body living in a world that thrives in diversity. The singularity within our culture, the linear mindset, the dualistic gender systems deny space for our *whole* selves to exist.

“And the riddle that draws a particular person is the beginning of a pathway into the world that is specific, but can be shared with others.(We live, after all, in one world.)” Holdrege.

Into the Phenomena:

“In studying a living organism, you want to gain a many-sided picture of the life of the organism and its relation to its environment.”-Holdrege

It's important to understand a person as more than just a fragment of the world. We are all made up of parts and those parts build the earth and the elements and cosmos that build us. Like seeing a person with your minds eye, squinting and blurring the edges of the pictures to blend them into one.

Exact picture building:

“This is where you notice how the picture-building as an exercise becomes integrated into your concrete interaction with the phenomena.” Holdrege.

With enough time and practice your vision will naturally start to piece together the bits. Each encounter with any living organism will become a riddle, an exciting opportunity, a dialogue. There will be times when the tunnel vision of society will be hard to see beyond, but with self awareness and communication the pinhole will expand into a panoramic view.

Seeing the Whole:

“We close the gaps that are given through our discrete observations and in this sense go beyond what perception gives us, but our whole intention is to take in the world.” Holdrege.

By reconstructing my body in my mind I am able to create a new, truer vision of myself. Imagining myself over and over again I am able to sift through what has been presented to me as the “correct” body image and what I believe is right for me. This is usually very different from the medias representation of bodies. *This* is when I am able to feel the fullness of each part and take the form of nature that I have always been.

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