

Transcendent Edge

The man often heard the squirrels, birds, and other animals in his surroundings, calling out alarms, so it was usually no big deal to hear them. The Blue Jays would give voice and alarm when a feral cat was in the area, and other jays would join in, creating a cacophony which was normally enough to drive away the cat. Pine squirrels make an irritating, high-pitched alert, that could go on for a long time, and usually the man could not find the reason for the alerts. Grey squirrels often tapped one of their front paws rapidly on a tree trunk or branch, and apparently this alert is to let their adversary know that the squirrel sees them, and to not bother stalking them any longer. Chipmunks make a single, high-pitched squeak and dart for cover, and if you happen to be near their nest, you can hear their high-pitched yet soft squeaking and conversing as they remain hidden. And often of course their alarms were because of him, walking amongst what they presumed was their territory.

The man was learning to sit and listen, and to not interfere with the nature that surrounded him. Of course, by him merely living in nature he was, by default, constantly interfering. His cabin in the woods was made by clearing hundreds of trees. Concrete foundations were poured, and the cabin was built. A septic tank was installed, electricity and water were run to his property and home. He built a garden and put a fence around it to protect the vegetables for his private use.

However, a ground squirrel got through the fence and began burrowing and eating his potatoes. The man yelled and stomped his feet to scare him off three times, and the fourth time the ground squirrel went into the man's garden and began eating his potatoes he shot and killed it with an air rifle. The man didn't want to kill any of the squirrels, but he did want to eat the produce his garden produced. So, he warned the other squirrels out loud and on several subsequent

occasions that their fate would be the same if they invaded his garden any more. Two Pine squirrels failed to heed his warnings and threats, and after three more times of being chased off and verbally warned, they too were shot and killed. Surprisingly, no more squirrels had since bothered his garden. Many squirrels and birds still visited the water bowl he cleaned and filled daily, that was located on a railing overlooking his garden, yet none of the squirrels or chipmunks bothered his vegetables again since the demise of the others.

Some of his plants required more water than the drip system was providing, but he couldn't increase the time the drip system ran as that would be too much water for the other plants. He filled two five-gallon buckets with water and then every other day he hand-watered the plants requiring extra water. One afternoon a couple of weeks later he heard a Pine squirrel's alarm but looking around he saw nothing. The next morning when he went to hand-water his plants, he found a Pine squirrel drowned in one of his five-gallon buckets because the sides of the bucket were too slick for it to climb out of the deep water.

The man wondered if the alarm he heard was from this Pine squirrel. He wondered why the squirrel didn't simply use the water bowl he had been using all spring and summer, and of course he wondered why he had forgotten to put a stick in the bucket for critters to use to climb out if they fell in. Of course, none of his wondering could be answered, nevertheless he put a branch in each bucket and that ended the drowning drama.

But the drowning of the little, beautiful, Pine squirrel bothered the man, and caused the man to think about many things he had seen but not yet questioned.

For instance, a person on a passenger ferry in the North Sea might see 100's of seagulls following the ferry through the night and be amazed, while another will see the same 100's of seagulls and reflect on the 1000's of seagulls that have died.

Or a person having simply watched a mountain lion kill a raccoon in an epic, 35-minute fight and, when relating the experience, being asked "Why didn't you shoot the mountain lion?" And the person replying, "I never even thought of doing that".

Or a person always being aware that life is finite, yet, as they advance towards old age, they begin to accept that which was unacceptable to them earlier in their life.

Or a person being willing to love another person, or an animal, regardless of the emotional cost, and yet, as they age, they might stop wanting to love new people and new things because of the emotional cost.

Or a person noting how the raccoon fought so hard for so long because it wanted to live longer, yet also noting how the lion fought longer and harder so it could live longer.

Or a person seeing the emotionless faces of prey as they meet their final fate by a predator.

Whether that's a fawn or its mother, after an initial alarm call, which is usually a vain attempt at hoping to be rescued, animals seem to surrender to death seemingly without emotion.

The man was becoming fixated on something that seemed to lie just outside his ability to comprehend. To understand that which he was trying to understand would require that he somehow transcend his normal learned-thinking and experiences. The man didn't know how he knew this, yet he got to this understanding when he understood days earlier that none of his wondering could be answered factually, yet he also knew his wondering required an answer. As

he did research over several days, as he pondered the areas in his brain which often sat dormant until he accessed them, or as he meditated and let answers come to him, slowly the mundane, circular thought patterns he had been experiencing gave way to calm. Finally, several days later during his morning meditation a word was revealed to him, and that word was transcendent. That word felt and sounded lovely to him. Transcendent felt like it put his wonderings into a helium balloon, which immediately lifted them into an area of his mind where he could indeed understand that which was formerly not understandable.

There had been times in the man's life where he had experienced similar transformational thoughts, and from that one transformational thought he had been able to extrapolate an entire series of transformational thoughts. *A simple example*, he thought, *was about the emotion of hate*. He had experienced the emotion of hating people, politics, the military, and many other things his entire life, until one day he questioned why he hated and where he had learned to hate. The questioning led him to question more and more until he finally got to the core of his question, which was what is hate? The first answer was simply that he had learned hate from others who also hated. The man had felt their hate and learned what hate felt like from them. Yes, he had met many and heard from many people that hate was not the answer, and that hate begets hate. And while he heard the words, and while he could now still remember clearly hearing those words, somehow, they didn't transform him until he asked and answered the question of what is hate himself. The man learned that he literally did not hate, and that what he thought was hate was simply him vicariously acting out feelings he had learned from others. He learned that hate was for him a very ignorant emotion. The man applied his intelligence to the ignorant emotion he called hate, and, seemingly immediately, hate was replaced by a plethora of

new and positive ways of dealing with what was once hate. He hadn't learned this from anybody but himself despite having heard many times that hate was bad.

He smiled ruefully yet with some humor as he realized that a large reason so many people remain ordinary is because most everyone is literally bombarded with information on a daily basis, and that escape from that daily bombardment is seemingly impossible. The man tried to escape the bombardment, but typically he found that leaving one bombardment only exposed him to another form of bombardment. The information overload caused by being so heavily bombarded daily left him little time for any introspection.

This transformational thought realization was different than the others because there was no instant recognition of how this new information could be applied to other areas of his understanding. The man wanted to live in the forest he lived in without interfering with nature, but his mere presence seemed to create an interference. The man suddenly stopped that line of thought and he smiled. *Unless, he thought, unless I accept that I am a part of nature too. And if I am a part of nature than I belong here as much as anything else belongs here.* That was the transcendent thought that cracked the casing that had held him confined within a learned, thought pattern that said he was not really a part of nature. The thought pattern said, nature is out there and when you shut your doors and windows you can shut out nature, you can keep it at bay, and that one thought had seamlessly, once again, extrapolated itself into a life of the man believing he was different than nature. He thought nature was outside and that he could build a house with doors and windows to be protected from nature. Yet here he was finally accepting that he too was a part of nature, and that the reason he built his house the way he built it was to protect himself only from the elements of nature he needed protection from. He had protected himself

from disease by building himself a large septic tank, by installing a clean supply of water, and he had protected himself from the elements by installing double pane windows and doors, and a good, wood burning stove. Not wanting to rely entirely on one source of heat, he also installed a propane stove, and he installed electric heaters in three of the rooms. Not being able to rely on an unreliable electric grid he purchased a gasoline powered, backup generator.

The man reflected on a time he had been out hiking in a remote area deemed a Wilderness Area, and having that recognition then afforded that area many benefits to thwart man's insatiable need to protect himself from nature. As he stood in a small canyon, he heard birds and squirrels, and as he looked, he became acutely aware that nothing living there needed him nor anyone else.

Every living thing he saw seemed to be doing just fine without any human intervention. What these animals and this environment needed was for humans to leave everything here alone.

He smiled as he recounted that hike because the realization he had that day initially added to him feeling separated from nature, and the experience added to his misconception that there was nature and there was him and his cabin in the woods. *Yes, the man thought, we humans have gotten better at coexisting with the wildlife and the forests we so want to live in. We no longer pollute, but when we do we try to learn so we can mitigate our impact. We'll never be perfect, but, hopefully, we'll keep getting better.*

The man was no fool, and he had lived many decades. He had been born when the earth's population was under two billion people, and now the earth's population was just over eight billion people. He knew why areas had been designated Wilderness Areas, and he knew how humans had destroyed many once beautiful and pristine areas of the earth. He also knew many people had reversed, and were still trying to reverse, the effects of the decisions that ignorant

people had made before them. But corporate money talks louder than doing the next right thing often-times, and once corporate money is infused into a project it's nearly impossible to quickly undo the effects that money, and other subsequent negative decisions and effects, can cause.

From the mercury used a century ago to mine gold that is still seeping into rivers to this day, to watering lawns with rapidly dwindling supplies of drinking water, to not knowing yet how to safely dispose of nuclear waste, big money keeps moving large money-making projects forward without enough regard for the effects on nature.

Humans, he thought, see the same things in different ways, and much of how humans see things depends on who taught them what they now know. Yet it also depends on them individually and their ability to question their motivation for their actions. The man wondered, Do people ask the two questions everyone should ask at various times during their lives: Who am I now? and Why am I here now?

The man sat back and said out loud, perhaps to the birds and squirrels that no longer ran nor flew away from him, *Perhaps, this is the Transcendent Edge, where I once again get to surpass being ordinary and I become exceptional to myself. So much of what I have learned is indeed ordinary, and so much of ordinary is only partly true. Being ordinary isn't very exciting either,* he thought. *But, going beyond and above being ordinary is quite exciting.*

A Blue Jay caught his eye flying to the water bowl, and he noticed as it landed the bird stumbled slightly, and he noticed it was the one with only one foot. This Blue Jay had been born the past spring, and one day the man noticed its foot was hanging broken, deformed and useless. Several weeks later the foot was hanging by what looked like a thread, and then, several days later, the foot was gone. The Blue Jay used the stump that remained for balance, and while the Blue Jay

was indeed handicapped it did very well with only one foot. The man often wondered; *How did the Blue Jay's foot come to get so damaged? Did it get caught in the cracks of my deck so the Jay had to pull it out?* Then thought the man, *Wondering cannot provide a factual answer.* The man simply laughed aloud.

The End.

Written by Peter Skeels © August 30th, 2022