

CAT TRACKS

by Chim Blea

Spirituality

In my peregrination through the streets of this rotting civilization, I've passed through a number of religious stages. After realizing the utter absurdity of christianity, its appalling banality and evil, I flirted briefly with eastern religions before rejecting them for their anti-Earthly metaphysic. Through my twenties and early thirties, I was an atheist — until I sensed something out there. Out there in the wilderness.

So, I became a pagan, a pantheist, a witch, if you will. I offered prayers to the moon, performed secret rituals in the wildwood, did spells. I placated the spirits of that which I ate or used (remember, your firewood is alive, too.)

For almost ten years, I've followed my individualistic shamanism (no, organized paganism smacks a little too much of a Tolkien discussion group, or of a rudimentary "great religion" for one like me who never quite fits in).

But recently, I've begun to doubt my faith. Or, perhaps I've simply begun to wonder why I need it.

It came while watching a coyote catch and eat mice in a meadow, and later a



garter snake catching a frog in a marsh. Did they placate the spirits of those they used? Did they perform rituals, offer prayers? Did they need to make connections?

No. They were connected. That was all.

What makes us so different from the rest out there? Why are we apart? When did we stumble?

Is it . . . is it the fact that we have a spiritual sense that makes us so apart, that cuts us off?

Or rather, did we develop the spiritual sense that other animals don't have, in a soul-salving way to return, after we realized that we were apart? Or do we just do it as a rationalization of the evil

we do?

Perhaps our curse is that we can imagine spiritual things, that we conceive of good and evil, that we speculate beyond our lives, that we look for meaning in that which simply is.

Instead of spirituality being a way to return home, to rejoin Earth, is it that which cuts us off? Is it our fatal flaw?

Did Neitzche dwell on this as he pondered beyond good and evil?

Is this what Heidegger meant by letting being be?

Can we simply live, dwell, without clothing our lives and acts in grandiose importance?

Can we walk down a forest path, and cease dealing in abstractions, turn off the little pocket calculator up in our left frontal lobe? Can we simply be aware of our surroundings without ascribing any greater importance to them?

There are times when this happens, of course. Caught in a rapid, face to face with a Grizzly, slipping on the rock, lightning crashing nearby; then our adrenaline takes over and our cortical thinking apparatus is in charge. No

intellectualizing, no abstracting them — we're alive, we're animals, we're connected at those moments. Far rarer are

the quiet times when we can let being be, when things are just as they are, when a sunset is a sunset, a bee a bee, a flower a flower, me me. When nothing symbolizes anything, when there is no

search for the essence of something, when a tree is merely a tree and not the projection of the "ideal tree," when we analyze nothing.

Is it then that we are beyond good and evil, beyond spirituality, back to animal? At one with Earth?

Nonetheless, we do seem to have a spiritual sense. Perhaps our fatal flaw, that which sunders us from Earth, is our ability for abstract thinking. To think of things as *things*. And spirituality, ritual, is that which attempts, albeit imperfectly, to reconnect us.

Maybe I'll talk to the moon tonight.

