

Wandering With Mindful Wonderment

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Abstract

This article extends and shares practices inspired by Simon and Salter's (2019) "Transmaterial Worlding: Beyond Human Systems." This article argues that there is a need for wandering, and finding or creating diverse transmaterial worlding and practices that transcend Western binaries and hierarchical thinking in order to foster dreams of ecological civilisations. The article shares ways to seek sacred spaces within a pluriverse of worldviews by embracing an eco-relational mindset informed by non-anthropocentric Western, Eastern, Indigenous, and other process wisdom traditions, as well as science. The narrative and storied intention is to engage mindful wonderment and wander within an enmeshed, entangled, "naturalcultural" eco-relational worlding story by playfully integrating transmaterial worlding into an alternative gyrovague lineage connected to Ionian, Chinese, and Indigenous wisdom pointing to possibilities for ecological civilizations. The diverse process wisdom streams are connected to contemporary eco-relational practices, like lifescaping action research, eco-participatory forest walking, and mutual aid efforts. The lifescaping action research section summarises how diverse international co-researchers developed relationships with specific trees in their countries. The eco-relational forest walking practice activities deepen human-to-human and human to the more-than-human connection. Specific eco-relational practices include reciting loving kindness mettas, practicing chi kung (standing like a tree), reciting poetry to trees, and community building that extends beyond the forest walking practices into support for protests, actions resisting the fascist drift in the USA, and hope for emerging ecological civilisations.

Introduction

Transmaterial Worlding opens fresh ways to be in the world with other people, other flora, fauna, and geological material. Transmaterial Worlding is a process recognising humans are not merely *in* the world, they are *of* the world, fully as participants in an eco-relational "'pluriverse'... in which many worlds fit together harmoniously" (Escobar, 2021 250). Emphasizing Barad's (2007) continuous process of intra-becoming within and between species and matter, Simon and Salter's (2019)

transmaterial worlding construct reframes and extends the notion of “social” to include human and non-human participants. We dwell as vibrant eco-relational *becomings*, not as static *beings* with essential selves. Eco-relational simply means we are always in relationship with a more-than-human world. Transmaterial worlding de-centres humans and challenges anthropocentric presuppositions underlying much of Western philosophy, as well as the human and natural sciences. This article offers pathways and practices that transcend Western binaries and hierarchical thinking. We playfully wander with mindful wonderment braiding cords from sacred spaces from a pluriverse of worldviews that point toward possibilities for ecological civilisations (Crist, 2019; Lent, 2026; Mathews, 2023). Braided throughout the article is an eco-relational mindset informed by non-anthropocentric Western, Eastern, Indigenous, and other process wisdom traditions (e.g., Ames, 2024; Barad, 2007; Ekken, 2007; Escobar, 2021; Geering, 2002; Goodchild, 2022; Nail, 2024; Webb, 2025). To avoid any high horse anthropocentric positioning, the next section shares mindful wonderment as a practice weaving humility and openness into practices for cultivating an expressive sense of openness and play within an enmeshed, entangled, “naturalcultural” eco-relational process world—that is to say mindful transmaterial worlding. The section after that plays with my own philosophical lineage (Where are you coming from?), followed by a section sharing three pluriversal process wisdom lineage milestones that mark my wandering, then a section on lifescaping action research with people and trees, and finally a section that shares participatory forest practices designed to nurture nature and human connectedness. This wandering article is about transmaterial worlding as a process for fostering connection and community with humans and our pluriversal eco-relational world. It is an engaged enactment pointing to the possibilities for ecological civilisations.

Mindful Wonderment

Mindful wonderment begins by cultivating a sense of play and by staying open to divergent possibilities (Lewis, Lenski, Mukhopadhyay, and Cartwright, 2010). Thomas Nail (2024) asserts, “Perhaps a better way to think of the project of human life and knowledge, including the study of knowledge itself, philosophy, is as a process of *play*, where we work together to try things out with caution and without guarantees” (p. 238, italics in original). Play and wonder help us as eco-relational beings to try things out in our relationships with each other and the ecosystems where we dwell as participatory beings (Gergen 2009; Kimmmerer 2014; Nail 2024; Naess, 2002). Wonder is embodied. Indigenous researcher Wilson (2008) reflects that wonder nurtures an awareness that we are the relationships that we are part of and hold. Wonder involves open, provisional embodied relationships—eco-relationships, existing in webs, networks, meshwork, and connections to everything else. “Mindful wonderment” emerged when working with a group of co-researchers to counter any desire to make premature conclusions and judgments. Mindful wonderment helped us to humbly slow down, embrace the provisional, and maintain openness to learning (Lewis, et al., 2010). Mindful wonderment requires an awareness to not force answers, sit with uncertainty, and embrace a deeper ecological understanding. Mindful wonderment, like “Transmaterial worlding evokes ecological and contextual curiosity and invites questions that pay attention to relational affect involving a more-than-human relating” (Simon and Salter, 2019, p. 8). Open curiosity comes from slowing down, paying attention, and focusing awareness enough to wonder about little things that might be connected to larger things. In the next section, I wonder and play with the notion of my own philosophical lineage.

A Philosophical Gyrovague's Lineage

I offer this lineage as a storied perspective emerging from conversations, readings (perhaps misreadings, too) and practices that shape the world I see and dwell within, as well as my dream of ecological civilisations. Any lineage story helps connect “spacetime-mattering,” those forces producing the material-cultural worlds through intra-actions between human and nonhuman (matter); understanding that time is entangled with space and matter (Barad, 2007). As I compose this story, a do-it-yourself non-anthropocentric philosophical bricolage, I recognise my cutting and filtering shapes an “ethics of worlding” (Barad, 2007, p. 392). “Worlding” is a continuous, ongoing eco-relational process where we are responding to and actively bringing the world into being. There are no fixed, pre-existing entities; the world and matter are inherently dynamic and emerge in contexts. Even this text that is written becomes a world I will respond to from a different perspective as reader. If the writing is still in draft, I will change it. If it is in the hands of an editor, at some point they will tell me to stop and print it, leaving a static record. Thus, in this article I will share what I can in this composing moment, and maintain a sense of wonder and play as I wander at my learning edge, bearing in mind, “We are *of* the universe—there is no inside, no outside. There is only intra-acting from within and as part of the world in its becoming” (Barad, 2007, p. 396). Transmaterial worlding opens us to the mindful wonderment of becoming as process and possibilities for ecological civilisations.

In terms of offering my own pluriversal process wisdom lineage, I am informed by process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead who said in 1925, “Modern science has imposed on humanity the necessity for wandering” (p. 207). I playfully call myself an eco-relational gyrovague— a non-anthropocentric pluriversal process wisdom monk, who in my case since I am no monk wandering monastery to monastery, I wander from process philosophical thought to practices, while maintaining a radical openness along the way to possibilities for feeling and experiencing connectedness, creativity, and freedom (i.e., Ames, 2024; Barad, 2007; Geering, 2002; Gergen, 2009; Lawson, 2001; Mathews, 2021, 2023; Mesle, 2008; Naess, 2002; Nail, 2024; Simon & Salter, 2019; Solnit, 2026; Vasilic, 2022). During the Middle Ages gyrovagues were monks with no leader and viewed as a bit wild. Monks committed to order and control, like Benedictines gave the wandering monks the name, and mocked gyrovagues as walking in circles; meaning gyrovagues were lost. Regardless, gyrovagues could be playful and could be rascals, like embodied Western versions of Native American tricksters, whose crow and coyote stories depict both wise and foolish acts rich in life lessons and learning power in a world defined by kinship with everything. The wandering gyrovagues would have been scary for monks and village dwellers embracing a static, dualistic and hierarchical worldview. Gyrovagues represented a floating population, like today’s homeless, stateless, vagrant, nomads, etc., where over a billion people in the world are a wandering, flowing migrant population. Wandering people threaten the status quo (Nail, 2015).

Any eco-relational gyrovague engaged in transmaterial worlding is a threat to the Western status quo, founded on hierarchical power, human exceptionalism and a colonial mindset. The status quo is afraid of shifting away from a seemingly comfortable cultural anthropocentrism because it means opening the door to a radical transformation (Webb, 2025). I’m trying to open the door a bit with the eco-relational gyrovague construct and possibilities of creating ecological civilisations, where I playfully show roots in a pluriversal process wisdom lineage; a philosophical bricolage drawn from diverse roots in Ionian, Roman, Native American, Western, Eastern, and other indigenous wisdom traditions, as well as contemporary science and process philosophy. Every becoming process draws upon numerous

deep roots, if you look. At its core transmaterial worlding is a non-anthropocentric eco-relational process. The pluriversal process wisdom lineage challenges anthropocentrism, too. There is an appreciation that we are ever-learning, especially when we mindfully open ourselves to an awareness that we are always becoming; embracing ourselves and the world as verbs, as dynamic eco-relational processes, and not as nouns or static things. This pluriversal process wisdom lineage recognises there is no stasis, only regimes of eco-relational circulation.

The pluriversal process wisdom lineage roots reach down in time into a philosophical bricolage. The Ionian philosopher Heraclitus (540-480 BCE) is famous for saying “everything flows.” Epicurus (341-270 BCE) in Greece and Lucretius (99-55 BCE) in Rome developed process philosophies as well; there are no static forms, only emergent habits, flows, and cycles that circulate into metastable patterns that may repeat only to move slightly differently, like whirlpools or eddies in a river (Nail, 2024). Similarly, Laozi (571 BCE) in China embraced the Way, an ineffable force (chi) flowing through all things as they changed and transformed. My pluriversal process wisdom lineage easily recognises transmaterial worlding as a continuous movement that breaks through a static reality and ideologies of isolation into cosmologies of interconnectedness and community diversity. Reality gets defined as an interconnected process emerging from a past flowing into an open future; it is dynamic, changing, and always becoming and learning. I am merely wandering and planting a possibility dream of ecological civilisations emerging.

What do I do as an eco-relational gyrovague embracing a pluriversal process wisdom lineage guided by transmaterial worlding and eco-relational practices? As a professor emeritus, counsellor, teacher, citizen, and family member working in university, institute, and community contexts, roles shift and perceptions of me do, too. In each of those roles, I listen deeply and hopefully express an eco-relational sensibility that we are part of a dynamic living ecology; my conversations, dialogues, and living practices bring out an expression that we are learning animals living in a world that is in process, an ever-changing dance, and dreaming of the possibility of an ecological civilisation for my grandchildren. There is no static place in time or (being) in our person where we arrive; there is only becoming, growth, and development-in-relationships. Or as Simon and Salter (2019) put it, “We are always in the process of becoming-in-relationship and creating social worlds through our engagement with and as parts of the world, human and otherwise. We do not live *in* ecology, we *are* ecology” (p. 2). That is to say, transmaterial worldings are on-going eco-relationships with other people and the more-than-human world where we are woven into ecology.

I am pedestrian and slow, recognising natureculture speed limits. Listening helps me slow the pace and respond more compassionately. Take a breath together. Sip some tea. Listen for the possibilities emerging in the conversation with others. In such transmaterial worlding conversations and dialogues, I wander and avoid creeds, dogmas, certainties, etc. Pluriversal process wisdom is guided by a solar ethics of motion, worlding, and care where we freely enhance human learning power and joy while responsibly co-inhabiting the world with others (people, trees, rocks—the entire living and material system) (Barad, 2007; Cupitt, 1995; Nail, 2020, 2024; Simon and Salter, 2019). Responsibly means confronting our anthropocentric blindness, drawing upon indigenous wisdom, scientific understanding, and philosophical and religious insights; we are nature naturing. We co-inhabit *with*; we are co-inhabiting the world with other people and animals and also with rivers, oceans, and rocks moving in timespace. This radical shift to a solar ethics of worlding, motion, and care opens me to possibilities for expressive conversations, embracing contemporary efforts to think like a commoner

and celebrating thinkers who recognise that we make the world and we can make it differently as active and engaged learners and citizens; We can make ecological civilisations (Bollier, 2014; Crist, 2019; Graeber, 2024; Lent, 2026; Solnit, 2026; Wallis, 2020). Local actions are tied to more lofty ambitions like ecological civilisation by enacting concrete process wisdom practices embodying transmaterial worlding in action. We will find out more about such practices as we wander into another sections below.

In my wandering practicing transmaterial worlding as an eco-relational gyrovague in a transmaterial worlding pluriversal process wisdom lineage, I embrace and teach “possibilism,” the assumption that the future is in principle completely open, anything can happen (Naess, 2002, p. 4). No certain and positive knowledge is possible; only imagination sets limits to what life can become. Possibilism encourages pluriversal process wisdom practitioners to lean into uncertainty-- not to fear uncertainty or feed anxiety by pushing for quick closure. This opens new possibilities for human sense making as action-oriented, interactional, expressive, and contextual in nature. We are relational and participatory nature beings, and the world remains open to being engaged and re-engaged in new ways. Possibilism points toward mindful wonderment, awe, and the creative response to living life and taking action to produce a world where we want to live; a world we want to give to our children—an ecological civilisation. My possibilism finds some connection to Dewey’s (1905) “immediate empiricism” and the primacy of practice. We are always becoming, fluid, bubbling with possibilities for bringing something new into existence *with* (always with) others (Clayton, Archie, Sachs, and Steiner, 2021). Such transmaterial worlding invites us to see coproduction as including of all animate and inanimate matter, decentering the idea that humans alone create a world, and opening us to a relational pluriverse that includes the more-than-human (Escobar, Osterweil, and Sharma, 2024). To get a feel for cultivating pluriversal and transmaterial worlding process wisdom, I offer three milestones that mark my wandering path. After which I share learning stories and practices involving mindful wonderment, deepen what I have shared about lifescaping action research, and close by sharing concrete participatory forest walking practices that create more life enhancing space and places for and with others, both human and more-than-human.

Three Milestones on My Wandering Path

Below are three milestones with diverse origins that mark my wandering transmaterial worlding path in different ways; one marks a historical moment in Ionia (BCE 1150-560) when relationships with others based shared values (freedom and equality) displace tribal affiliation; two, when Chinese Daoists (BCE 550-today) influenced their culture to wonder what can be done to enhance the possibilities for making a path with others; three, a wise contemporary Native American woman scientist offers the world a perspective about how to cultivate becoming indigenous.

Milestone One: Kojin Karatani (2012) is an excellent source for informing our own transmaterial worlding process by meditating on the Ionian process philosophers (frequently mischaracterized as Pre-Socratic), who stand in contrast to the later Greek ontological philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. The key points Karatani makes capture a remarkable time in history, where the concept of isonomia (or no-rule) revealed a way of relating to each other as persons, equal and free. Freedom involved being free to roam, wander, and move on from one place to another. The Ionians were colonists moving into largely uninhabited land; they were people from diverse Greek tribes and other regions,

including Phoenicia. Since they were diverse, Ionians formed non-tribal affiliations based on agreements and oaths to each other. They developed a pluriversal process wisdom by fostering relationships based upon the principles of freedom and equality; slavery was not integral to the Ionian economy. The city-states took shape as part of independent farming, trade, and manufacture affiliations. The Ionian natural philosophers rejected personified gods and teleological worldviews. They understood humans were part of the natural world. They directed their inquiry to the nature of the natural world and were concerned with an ethics of how to live. They viewed all matter as having life. Thales, who came from Phoenicia, is reported to say, "All things are full of gods" (Karatani, p. 59). His was a philosophy of panpsychism; everything is alive.

The Ionian philosophers refused to entertain the idea of final cause, "Nature's becoming of itself differs from making precisely because it has not cause or aim" (Karatani, p. 63). Their love of practical knowledge developed into "a habit of leading with a hypothesis" (Karatani, p. 93). Theory and practice were joined in ways of becoming and living. The Ionians placed great value on technology, developing sheep-shears, rotary quern, wine press, and the crane. They were a society of practice; perhaps, even an ecological civilisation. In their pluriversal transmaterial worlding process, they developed a continuous, ongoing relationship with the world and with others in their local context. We wander from Ionian and Greek culture to Chinese culture in the next milestone.

Milestone Two: Roger Ames (2024) masterfully describes Chinese zoetology as a path for practicing the "art of living" (Ames, 2024, p. 8). Zoetological thinking is "a radical empiricism that gives primacy to vital relationality, always expressed uniquely in particular cultural traditions" (Ames, 2024, p. 41). The Chinese tradition might be better understood by looking at the Greek dialectical argument that asks, "What is the Truth?" in contrast to the Chinese consensus approach that asks, "Where is the Way?" The Dao is a path to making our way together. There is a deep difference between truth-seekers and way-seekers. Greek ontology has roots in Plato and Aristotle, who offer a "science of being," whereas the zoetological way-seeking assumes knowing is doing and that such knowing is situation specific and action-oriented (Ames, 2024, p. 68). Actions are not judged primarily in terms of binaries, such as good-bad, right-wrong, true-false but in terms of bringing about what is proposed. The Chinese ask, What is being done to enhance the possibilities before us? The Chinese transmaterial worlding process focuses on the art of living in harmony with the natural world within the culture where one dwells; their own version of ecological civilisation. The next milestone is embodied in a Native American scholar who invites us to be indigenous.

Milestone Three: Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) shares her development as a Native American person and her path to becoming an ecological scientist teaching at a university. Like another indigenous scholar Melanie Goodchild (2022), Kimmerer illustrates how difficult it is to transcend Western binaries and hierarchical thinking, work as a scientist in a sacred space between worldviews, and to openly embrace an eco-relationality informed by indigenous wisdom. Her transmaterial worlding process breaks beyond binaries by integrating indigenous wisdom and Western science in ways that offer a richer naturalcultural understanding. She points out, "For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 9). She encourages readers to listen to the elders who advised her to go out among "the Standing People" (trees), "the Bird People," and "the Rock People." In considering her teaching, she recognises, "The land is the real teacher. All we need as students is mindfulness. Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving

gifts with open eyes and open heart” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 222). Kimmerer is recognised as a visionary who approaches her study with humility, reverence, and an open mind (Webb, 2025). She is calling us to start listening and learning with open hearts about our transmaterial kinship.

The remainder of this article offers ways of engaging with transmaterial worlding via stories and practices involving mindful wonderment, lifescaping action research, and participatory forest walking. Transmaterial worlding is woven into mindful wonderment, lifescaping action research, and eco-relational forest walking practices. Mindful wonderment is a practice that focuses awareness on staying open, keeping our mind, heart, and sense of vibrant possibilities open. Lifescaping action research is the active engagement with others to bring about a more desirable world with them. Participatory forest walking involves eco-relational practices designed to enhance our awareness, appreciation, connection to, and participation with the more-than-human world; ways that deepen our sense of beauty, appreciation of life, and responsibility to those human and more-than-human communities where we dwell in interdependence and reciprocally. In the next section we will find out how mindful wonderment informed an international group of researchers who slowed down to the speed of trees.

Lifescaping Action Research: Trees and People

This section is a summary of two threads from “Lifescaping Action Research with Trees: A Grove in a Process Pluriverse” (Lewis, Salter, Minamii, Whitehouse and Ndirangu, In Press). Due to space, it contains only two co-researchers voices. Our trees and people research emerged as a response to Kurio and Reason’s (2021) co-operative inquiry *with* rivers, which was grounded in onto-poetics: viewing reality and understanding the world as a communicative presence. That is to say, onto-poetics is communicative engagement of the self with the world and the world with the self (e.g., Mathews, 2021, 2023). Our research was deepened and informed by Simon and Salter (2019) and Muraca (2016); these papers were circulated at the start of our project and were prompts for us in our conversations. As a group of social constructionist co-researchers, our inquiry involved developing a personal relationship with different individual trees that we each selected based on our own geographies—Kenya, Wales, Japan, Guatemala, and the USA. We embraced Nail’s notion, “There can be and certainly are multiple coexisting descriptions of the same things from different perspectives” (2024, p. 24). We cultivated space where each of our stories could simply exist within a pluriversal and eco-relational process, with no pressure to justify them. Each researcher was cultivating a “withness” with their tree (Shotter, 2011). We let this tree or person stand this way and that tree or person stand another way—all were connected with deep listening and mindful wonderment in learning about different trees in the same human constructed zoom grove.

Our approach was guided by a lifescaping action research methodology designed for transformation during a time of eco-social crisis (Bradbury, Lewis and Embury, 2019; Lewis, 2020; Lewis and Winkelman, 2017). Lifescaping action research is a process for engaging with others to bring about more desirable learning communities or organizations (Lewis, 2020; Lewis and Winkelman, 2017). When used in schools, lifescaping action research is an approach for groups to engage in inclusive and participative conversations that includes students as co-researchers in bringing about possibilities for a more desirable learning community. Lifescaping, like “Transmaterial worlding is a process of becoming through learning” (Simon & Salter, 2019, p. 13). Lifescaping action research integrates

dialogic and appreciative practices to inform those involved in supporting individual development, learning power in schools, and peace in communities (Gergen and Gill, 2020). The methodology orients action researchers to look at the situation, dream about possibilities, take action, and share the results with the group or community involved. Although sounding sequential, lifescaping action research is a non-linear and spiralling multi-voiced dialogical process designed to deepen listening, understanding, and direction *with* those participating. If something is not working, talk with those involved and experiment with something that might work better. It is a dialogical process. Drawing on Buber (1970) in our research with trees, we asked ourselves: What would be the experience of individuals in different settings around the world if each attempted to develop a personal relationship with a tree? This language shifted the tree from an object (I-It) to the tree as subject (I-Thou). The research involved sharing stories about our trees with each other during a series of zoom meetings. I will briefly summarise two stories about our trees that illuminate our eco-relational process that was influenced by transmaterial worlding and embodies a transmaterial worlding pluriversal process with each other, as humans and trees.

Nelly Ndirangu belongs to the Kikuyu Community in Central Kenya. She describes a big sycamore fig in her village as her tree. Then explains how in her community the sycamore fig is a sacred tree that gives meaning and hope. Sharing, "This sycamore fig has served as a village meeting place where peace has been brokered and where people have come together for many years.... because they are called to listen to each other, empathize, and find common ground together." Nelly's tree exists as a central member in her community where peace is brokered and where people come together. The tree reveals a form of membership in the community, as a quiet elder who helps bring harmony to individuals, families, and even differing tribes.

My tree is a western hemlock in my backyard in Portland, Oregon, USA. I chose it because of proximity and my desire to explore intergenerational play with my three-year old granddaughter as part of the study. During the study we hugged the tree and we named the tree Hemlock. In the 30 years I have known Hemlock, there is a spot under Hemlock where I practice tai chi and chi kung, a form of natural philosophy that embraces the *Dao* or Way emerging from *wu wei ziran* (nonaction/naturalness). Under Hemlock, I cultivate chi (or qi), a fundamental vital energy, life force, breath; chi flows through everything. My tree practice expanded, adding poetic celebration, playful engagement with my granddaughter, and making the tree the subject of a lithograph.

What is most interesting is that each of tree co-researchers explored feelings and developed their own experience with their tree, but all of the co-researchers came together, supporting each other in becoming more than what we were when we planted ourselves with each other in our zoom grove. Unexpectedly, when Nelly shared her collectivist story, it revealed the layers of possession existing in my discourse-- my yard, my tree, my granddaughter. Mindful wonderment about "witness" shifted the "my" into appreciating becoming within eco-relational networks, not as an isolated being or ego. Within our grove, we were able to practice and perform moments of becoming by eco-relationally reconnecting to the wisdom of our trees. In the next section I reveal cultivating moments of becoming in Forest Park, one of the largest urban parks in the USA.



Lithograph by Rolla Lewis

Participatory Forest Walking as Eco-Relational Practice

Forest Park covers over 5100 acres of second growth trees in Portland. This section concentrates on eco-relational practices when walking with people. I share five participatory forest walking practices, and then stories connected to people *passing* the other way on the trail and people walking *with* me. Listen for the transmaterial worlding process.

Practices:

Practice One, I begin with a metta: a short, positive phrase originating in Buddhist loving-kindness mediation, influenced by Sharon Salzberg, Jon Kabat-Zinn and other Western practitioners. My metta is a variant that integrates movement:

“May I be safe (turning around), may I be happy (smiling), may I be healthy (shoulders back and deep breath), may I be forgiving (palms extended and arms down), may I be self-compassionate (arms crossed over chest), may I be thankful (arms extended out), may I dwell (arms over head to form roof) in love (hands in heart shape), peace (palms together), and live with equanimity and beauty (searching for something beautiful within sight).”

I recite the metta twice in the first person, “I.” Then twice in the second person, “you.” And finally, twice in the first person plural, “we,” moving from I to thou to all—understanding that “all” includes the more-than-human world. Try it out slowly. It’s not as complicated as it sounds.

Practice Two, chi kung (qigong) is the practice of standing in relaxed postures in order to cultivate balance and free up chi (life energy). One seeks to cultivate a centreline through the top of one’s head to the ground by standing in a natural, upright position with soft knees, relaxed shoulders, and focused breath. Chinese also refer to chi kung (zhan zhuang) as standing like a tree. My tai chi sifu (venerable teacher), Fong Ha grounded us by saying, “We sit, we stand, we walk. Everything else is commentary.” This is an action-oriented practice. I found Eugene Gendlin’s (1981) focusing was helpful to me in cultivating a felt-sense for centring.

Practice Three, reciting poetry to trees came about after a comment made by Jon Kabat-Zinn at a Science for the Greater Good conference in Berkeley when he talked about memorising and reciting poetry as a Western way for cultivating awareness and focus. I selected core poets that aligned with my life’s developmental arc. Poems range from Omar Khayyam, to e.e. cummings, Gary Snyder, A. R. Ammons, William Stafford (who lived in Portland), Robinson Jeffers, Mary Oliver, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Hafez Shirazi, Kobayashi Issa, and myself. Here’s a short poem of mine:

Overhead
 Stellar Jay screeches:
 Along the path
 Chipmunk scurries
 Hairy woodpecker
 pounds a snag:
 Woman walks
 dog leashed
 ear pasted to iPhone
 conversation out beyond the forest
 She’s in another world.

I believe meditative poetry needs to resonate with an individual's feelings and lived experience, and not be assigned or offered as a standardised list. My forest walking "poetic sensibility" (Claxton, 1997) was cultivated by memorising one poem then adding other poems, as I got comfortable. The practice entails reciting words while remaining keenly aware of the forest by focusing on a specific tree, fern, etc. As a participatory practice, poetry is a path that fosters an eco-relationship with trees and being in "this" place—an immediate empiricism (Dewey, 1905). At the same time, our movement as humans means we are capable of being in many places and divergent contexts, unlike trees who are truly committed to place. Being with the trees cultivates an awareness that both you and the trees are brief eddies of capture swirling together momentarily in a vast geology of time (Nail, 2024).

Practice Four, Chogyam Trungpa, a Buddhist monk wrote his Warrior's Vow as a meditation for what a person could do in a very troubled world. Rather than reciting his vow, I revised it to fit the forest where I walk and life I live:

"I cannot see the future and cannot change the way the world is, but by opening to the world as it is, making a choice to live into the mystery, into the indeterminacy, I may discover faith (in life), courage, compassion, and creativity are available to me and all human beings in our relationships with each other and the more-than-human world."

Practice Five, *sutra* is a Sanskrit term meaning thread, referring to concise statements, or aphorisms, that weave together core teaching in Eastern religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism. I have written a number of sutras for forest walks. One came after reading how John Cobb (2023) saw the universe infused with cosmic life, feeling, and experience. I wrote the Forest Park Sutra: "Feeling cosmic life, experiencing a gift." When walking, I repeat it over and over for about a quarter mile before changing to another *sutra*.

In short, these are five forest walking eco-relational practices designed to deepen transmaterial worlding awareness and understanding. In the next section, you will be introduced to people I *pass by* and people I *walk with* in Forest Park. Their conversations and actions bring our wandering transmaterial worlding adventure narrative to a close.

People: Walking along public trails in an urban park, no matter how large, means you are going to have people you pass by walking the other direction, people who run past or walk faster than you going in the same direction, as well as people you walk with intentionally. In passing others moving in the opposite direction, your eyes usually meet, you might say hello, and learn if they respond or not to any gesture or greeting. Most respond in kind and some do not. If meeting the same people on the trail day after day over a period of time, frequently years, you might introduce yourself, or engage in a brief conversation because they happen to see you looking at a bird, like a large crow-sized, red-headed pileated woodpecker. This can evoke collective awe and mindful wonderment. Seeing a pileated woodpecker hammer away at a tree opens moments of becoming with where every other thought falls away as you and whoever happens to be around are transfixed by the action and opportunity to be with such a creature up close.

I have been passing by a wide range of folks during nearly 30 years of walking in Forest Park. In order to make this section manageable, I focus on three trail buddies who have passed by or who walked with me occasionally or quite regularly. Like the milestone Ionian Greeks mentioned above, we met each other equal and free. I invited them to share what they value and experience in Forest Park. One trail buddy story involves Phil, a person I *passed by* for five or more years before we introduced

ourselves. The other two trail buddy stories involve individuals who have *walked with* me, and that means doing the forest practices together. One is a neighbour, Diane who is 10 years my senior and walks with me on Fridays. The other is a retired yoga teacher, Julie who shared her interest joining me in the forest walking after hearing about my practices in conversation.

First, my trail buddy Phil passes by me as we walk from different directions on the same trail. Although walking in the same forest and on the same trail, we are seeing it from different perspectives. When he is going down, I'm going up. When he has the sun to his back, I am looking into it. When we see each other, we stop to chat before going our different directions along the Wildwood Trail. He tells me walking in Forest Park is an essential part of his life that grounds him in seasonal cycles, such as experiencing the emergence of the liquorice fern in the fall and the trillium flowers in the spring. He connects to the forest's dusty stress during the increasingly dry summers and feels relief when walking in the lush, moist landscape in the winters. Our dialogue opens an awareness of the biological and social ecosystems in the forest. Phil shares how he enjoys his encounters with all flora and fauna. He appreciates "the interesting mix of other walkers and runners and the conversations we might have, however brief. It is noteworthy how fellow walkers will greet each other in the park as they would be loath to do on neighbourhood sidewalks. The forest somehow invites that exchange. The forest walks are both a deeply personal and social experience. Critters large or small, fast or slow, on the ground or in the air are an important part of the experience." The forest invites an ethical relationship. He tells me, "I assist slugs and snails off the trodden trail as they search for moisture in the summer. I relocate fallen clumps of moss or dislodged plants after a storm. I thus feel as though I am truly participating in the forested world." The forest invites a deeper reflection on life. Phil shares, "The forest also offers perspective... while trees are constantly being toppled by storms and erosion, the forest nonetheless is ageless. Many trees were there long before I was born and will be there long after I pass (hopefully). The forest for me is thus a microcosm of what living is and should be about."

Second, Diane was afraid to walk in the woods alone. I invited her to walk with me for six miles one day a week. At 83, she is 10 years my senior and serves as marker for navigating life's challenges and changes. Walking with me, she participates in my practices reciting mettas, standing chi kung, and reciting poetry to trees. I told her that I was writing this article and I wanted to explore as deeply as possible what she found valuable in the walks with me in Forest Park. She told me, "At first I was thinking companionship was person to person but now that you have pointed it out, it's also plants, birds, light. It's the 'wild geese...announcing my place in the family of things,'" quoting from a Mary Oliver poem I recite to the trees. The two of us talked about walking and the meaning of "companionship" to her. She expanded, "for me it's about trust. All topics are allowed, but there is no pressure to share. It's okay to walk in silence. Companionship/friendship takes time."

Diane reflected on the "routine and pattern of trail time throughout the four seasons. Watching the change in trees, bushes and flowers create an awareness of the finality of our time here. Existing forever would not only be unpractical and selfish, it would also be depressing. Being aware of changes that start in the Spring when plants begin to renew and moving to Summer and Fall when they typically are at their full display to finally the Winter. Resting reminds me that for all ...people and plants...there's a moving through space and time. And it's all perspective. My time is different than my ancestors and different than my progeny. But not better. And not worse. Routine settles and calms me. Creates expectations."

Diane's favourite part of our walk is when we stop to practice chi kung at a bridge that passes over a small brook. When I asked her why that is her favourite part, she told me, "It slows me down to reflect. Life can be fast moving in a trivial way...standing at the bridge forces me into calm.....with the brook and birds....the past two weeks [after hip replacement surgery] have been my 'bridge moment'. In life we don't need a bridge. But we rarely stop to reflect unless there is an object that stops the routine. And then we hopefully see what we've missed during the past day, week or year."

Third, Julie is a yoga master who was curious about my participatory forest walk practices. On our first walk, she offered me a new poem, Mary Oliver's "When I am Among the Trees." After I memorized it, on another walk she also offered a yogic chant when we came to an open clearing. Julie told me she "considers Forest Park to be a cathedral. The trees hold the space. The birds, flowers, squirrels, and even the rocks invite wonder and enhance beauty.... If feeling proceeds thought... being comfortable in the cathedral of the trees invites opening, vulnerability and trust." Our dialogue frequently involved talking about process philosophy and she offered feedback on a draft of a PowerPoint I developed for the Center for Process Studies: "What is Process-Relational Thought?".

My three trail buddies' words resonate within me, as I also feel this deep sense of connectivity in the forest. Their everyday sharing highlight a pluriversal eco-relational transmaterial worlding process. Simon and Salter (2019) capture the wisdom and challenge, "Transmaterial worlding requires that we re-think our relations with-in our environment, that we re-position ourselves from in-habiting the world or co-habiting (both separate us from other materiality) to co-inhabiting.... Co-inhabitation requires an active stance—to engage *in* and *with* our environment with an ethic of care and an assumption of having some responsibility" (p. 10).

That is a big shift. Practicing mindful wonder and taking others on forest walks invites them to experience transmaterial worlding as a process to re-position understanding humans as co-inhabiting in and with others. Such experiential activities can be informal invitations or more formal courses, like when I taught Counseling for Ecological Participation at Portland State University. Transmaterial worlding is about fostering learning as a continuous process in life. Taking walks in the forest and practicing mindful wonderment repositions how we are in the world and with each other. By opening ourselves as continually learning, we invite profound individual experiences, but more importantly, we begin to re-position ourselves as co-inhabiting the world with greater awareness.

Sharing my trail buddies' stories was an attempt to offer their everyday wisdom, and how their connection with the forest matters to them. They are cultivating mindful wonderment. They are developing continuous, ongoing relationships with the more-than-human world and with others in their local context. They are taking steps toward embodying living in an ecological civilisation. As if leaning into the Chinese zoetological milestone question earlier (Where is the Way?), they are recognising the Dao is a path making our way together. They are also living into an unarticulated transmaterial worlding process, where they are cultivating the art of co-inhabiting in harmony with the natural world and within the culture where they dwell. Drawing on Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2014) invitation shared above in the third milestone, they are becoming indigenous to place by living as if every child's future mattered.

They are learning to recognise that the land is the real teacher, and as such, they are becoming part of that place and the larger community. They are leaning toward transmaterial worlding an ecological civilisation. That takes action. For example, since the 2025 drift toward fascism in the USA, our forest walk dialogues have resulted in more mutual aid and political action directed toward living as if every child's future mattered. Each trail buddy in their own way, participated in community efforts to prevent Portland Electric from cutting down acres of trees in Forest Park to make room for power lines planned to feed energy to a data centre. Trail buddies and community members participated in the No Kings protests, and protests opposing US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions terrorizing undocumented individuals, families, and the community in Portland.



Conclusion

Hopefully, my community is moving beyond anthropocentric delusions. Hopefully, there are possibilities for living into a solar ethics of transmaterial worlding, care, and motion that enhance co-inhabitation with other people and the more-than-human world. Wandering with my community, including the more-than-human, opened possibilities for sharing a transmaterial worlding pluriverse with others. Wandering planted seeds of ecological civilisation. A wandering Way was made reciting mettas, stopping to practice chi kung by standing like a tree, sharing poetry with the forest, creating personal Warrior's Vow, and chanting the Forest Park Sutra. Like Simon and Salter (2019), a way was shown for enacting "human and non-human activity motivated by a concern for ecological survival and 'social' justice where social is reframed to include a consideration of all peoples and ecosystems. This requires critically separating from anthropocentric ideology and moving into a new way of seeing oneself and humans in a world of vital matter with whom we are in communication" (p. 13). I have offered one path in enhancing a pluriversal transmaterial worlding process and understanding of what it means to co-inhabit in and with our ecologies informed by solar ethics of motion, worlding, and care. We drifted in a process where we playfully wandered with mindful wonderment, explored an eco-relational mindset informed pluriversal wisdom traditions, and heard about practices like lifescaping action research and participatory forest practices designed to nurture nature and human connectedness. Ultimately, there is no static spot where we will arrive at ecological civilisation. There is no transmaterial worlding end point. There is no singular eco-relational gyrovague way. Ours is a pluriversal world in process; one where our human wandering involve co-inhabiting with everything and everyone. Let our wandering bring many vibrant ways of becoming *with* Earth and possibilities for ecological civilisations.

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