

## *What To Do When It All Seems Too Much*



A wet summer day at Orygen Hermitage

It's been raining all week. A weather system of blocking highs and small intense lows is funnelling hot humid equatorial air down to Aotearoa, and so we sit on our damp, misty deck, having breakfast, listening to a morning chorus of invisible birds, cicadas, and background crickets punctuated by distant traffic sounds of people driving to work. We live in an aqueous universe, water journeying through the lives of myriad beings, through uncountable domains

and dimensions of inter-being~inter-knowing engagement. Everything is damp. Fabrics have absorbed the moisture, wooden floors feel sticky, mould appears in unexpected places, tiny ants invade the kitchen and become regular frequenters of Greycoat's food. Outside, the garden is bursting. In the heat and wet, the yellow French beans seem to grow as you watch, and the butternut squashes look like they are pumped up on steroids, heavy and lumpy with unusual shapes. The peaches are splitting on the branches and everything is extraordinarily green for this time of year which is more often thirsty and brown.

In my mind I can see this precious nectar; water moving through membranes, slipping from one creature into another: micro-organisms in the soil, bacteria, worms, and mycorrhizal fungi, then up through trunks and branches to leaves merging with luminous grey mist. For water, there are no boundaries. It shape-shifts through the lives of all of us with hardly a hello or goodbye. And so I sit, contemplating this mystery, while the internet bubbles like froth on the surface of a deep fermenting pool, crackling with small-visioned conflict and human-focussed concerns, seemingly oblivious to the magnificent dance of living that spans galaxies. In the face of this, what is a student of dharma to do?

Covid, cancer, climate disruption, political power games, celebrity distractions, family conflicts, personal fears, secrets and anxieties, desperations to be in control, . . . Some days it all seems too much. I close my door, pull the drapes, and hang a quickly scribbled sign in the window. It says, "Gone Sailing".

I sail the ocean of suchness  
in a boat of explanation.  
a thin shell of crafted wood, metal, and transformed oil.

Growing from this shell  
like a tree reaching for the sky is the mast,  
an anchor of upright self in the shifting winds of otherness.

The higher the mast, the greater the conceit  
but what a view!

The thin sails of assumption and cultivated belief catch the wind  
and I think that I in my boat, am going somewhere,  
or so it seems and feels.

Scanning the horizon, I look for evidence of fellow sailors.

I focus lenses,  
soften my gaze,  
and survey in a gently aimless way,  
and lo!

I realise the ocean is cloaked with,  
and in fact, composed of – boats  
large and small,  
macro and micro,  
sailings of suchness;  
masts bobbing to and fro.

Everywhere I look,  
this is what I see;  
countless watchful sailors  
waving familial greetings,  
nautical camaraderie,  
all feeling the winds,

tugging on tillers,  
charting their courses  
sailing this ocean of everyone's lives.

Some toss ropes and make their vessels fast with others,  
and so we become a raft,  
a biosphere sailing around its star,  
surveying the cosmos,  
oceans of oceans,  
ships within ships.

What a glorious day!

Oceans of boats  
boats made of oceans  
worlds inter-being with worlds.

Why should we fear getting wet?