Kenotic Walking, Wilderness Sojourning, and Hospitality

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Birdsong reverberates under the canopy of trees and through thick rhododendron shrub, resonating with hollow logs. A slight breeze rustles leaves in the treetops, creating a crisp susurrate that mingles with the melodies of birds. My footsteps also resound, a rhythmic percussion with the planting, thrusting, and lifting in connection with the soil, root, and rock of the trail tread. The concert fills the spatial surround and makes the air seem saturated with presence, as if my body were passing through a living organism.

If I were to focus on the concert, enjoy the music as one who sits in a concert hall, I would have to stop walking. The trail is too rugged for this kind of appreciative thought; to divert attention from the challenging tread would result in a fall, a twisted ankle, a broken bone. But, I have experienced walking on a wilderness trail that opened me to the musical, visual, tactile, and aromatic saturation of the spatial surround, and at the same time my attention remained present to the full sensuous array unfolding in each moment; each footfall, flexing muscle, lung expanding and contracting, breath and intertwining of consciousness and body. This merging of action and awareness is what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) refers to as flow. He writes:

> It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next […] and in which there is little distinction between self and environment (1975, p. 43)

He also writes, “one is very aware of one’s actions, but not of the awareness itself” (1975, p. 45).

In previous publications I have explored long-distance wilderness hiking as contemporary pilgrimage wherein meaning making rises in the interplay between contemplative walking and flow (Redick, 2016). Extended wilderness rambles distance pilgrims from their everyday lifeworld. They encounter new possibilities and script new meaning. Hospitality has also been shown to be a key phenomenon in these sojourns. As

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pilgrim/hikers learn to receive hospitality, especially in the context of wilderness, wherein the givers of hospitality are the extra-human inhabitants of the land, these pilgrim/hikers might return home and begin to show more hospitality to both human and extra-human constituents. This essay extends these explorations with an introduction of kenotic walking, or walking-self-emptying.

Kenotic walking will be shown to be distinct from mindfulness meditation. In drawing this distinction, I will briefly highlight an example of mindfulness meditation in the context of a wilderness trek as described by Belden C. Lane (2014). I will also reflect on the ecstatic religious experiences of Saint Teresa of Avila and compare them to kenotic walking.

I will employ a phenomenological approach, listening to the voices of philosophers such as Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion. I will employ Jacques Derrida's thoughts on hospitality in showing the difference between pilgrims and tourists. In receiving absolute hospitality, the pilgrim becomes aware of mutual existence and begins emptying human centered economic strategies while searching for a more inclusive ecology. This essay will show the connection between the religious experience of wilderness sojourning and a more inclusive ecological consciousness.

Variations in Walking Experiences

Various walking experiences during long-distance hikes manifest depending on trail conditions, focus of attention, solitude, or companionship. In order to better understand flow in this context, also referenced as kenotic walking, I will briefly describe these experiences, beginning with shorter walks, day hikes on established park trails versus wilderness paths such as the Appalachian Trail. In both cases, domestic and wild, day hikes serve to remove the walker from their accustomed living and working places spatially, but the distance in time keeps them closer to their everyday lifeworld. Walking in this context may serve to clear one's thoughts or focus attention partially, but proximity of the everyday lifeworld, its stresses as well as its joys, mix. The well-groomed tread of the park trail is conducive to conversations with companions as well as reflective thought, not demanding the hiker's full attention. Thoreau's essay on walking illustrates what might happen on such a hike:

> it is of no use to direct our steps to the woods, if they do not carry us thither. I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the wood bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot

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> easily shake off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is — I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? (1957, pp. 597-598)

Walking in the park with a companion, with a communication device, or with thoughts of life elsewhere takes the hiker out of her senses. Though the Appalachian Trail is more rugged, demands more focused attention, day hiking thereon presents some of the same challenges of shaking off the village.

Many people who do hike on wilderness paths such as the Appalachian Trail engage in overnight camping, for a couple of days or a week. The relatively short time in the woods is not enough to shake off the village. The challenge of the trail tread and the pack strapped to the body leave the hiker feeling awkward while walking. A week is not enough time to condition one's self to the demands of steep ascents and descents, roots and rocks, mud and mosquitoes, and the load of supplies that constantly tugs, rubs, and drags. Just when the hiker seems to be getting into the rhythm of walking, some surprising interruption obtrudes. Just when the way ahead looks relatively easy, almost like the park trail, she rounds a bend and discovers a fallen tree that requires more agility than anticipated. She crawls through the dense branches and becomes snagged. She removes her pack in the middle of twisted limbs and then drags it the rest of the way through. Once clear of the tree, she is drenched in sweat, bleeding, and her new high-tech clothing is ripped. If she were a long-distance hiker and had been on the trail for a month or more, this challenge would have become commonplace. She would continually have wounds on her arms and legs in various stages of healing. Her clothes would be in tatters. But short-term hikers do not come out on the trail for this. They may have had some romantic notion of blazing a path through scenic beauty, but the reality is nothing like the imagined trek.

The Camino de Santiago provides a long-distance pilgrimage far removed from most pilgrim's lifeworld both spatially and temporally. There is a descriptive phrase that pilgrims apply once they have become attuned to the rhythm and challenge of the walk, "being in Camino." Yet, walking along that well established path does not involve the same challenge of a wilderness trail tread, the steep ascents and descents, or the necessity of camping. The pathway of the Camino itself facilitates contemplative walking. There are a few places, such as the descent from Alto del Perdón, very steep and across ancient river stones, that require the pilgrim's full attention directed toward each step. However, most of the way pilgrims can walk side by side, chat, look out at the beautiful scenery without stopping, or engaging in meditative mindfulness.

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Pilgrimages, such as the Camino de Santiago, and long-distance hikes in the wilderness have similar transformative effects. The hiker's whole person is being transformed during the course of the journey, and this opens them to flow. In the first weeks of the journey, a north-bound hike on the Appalachian Trail starting in Georgia for example, the trail tread, the ascents and descents, and the weather provide challenges that result in blisters, sore muscles, chaffing, back pain, wet clothes, cold, and various forms of mental fatigue ranging from anxiety to loneliness. With the continual rhythm of rising early, breaking camp, finding water, making and eating meals, taking breaks, finding a new camp, setting up a tent and sleeping, enduring diverse weather conditions and environmental obstacles, the hiker's body, perceptions, and emotions adapt: blisters heal, muscles become conditioned and grow, fat burns away, agility increases, and attunement happens. Just as with other skill oriented activities - wherein practitioners require attention to learning coordination between movement, effort, and timing - once mastered less attention focuses on the skill so that the practitioner is freed to explore more depth of involvement in the activity and its relation to an increasing constellation of things that remained invisible during the learning process. Mastering is a kind of personal transformation accompanied by freedom from the constraints of learning. This freedom opens hikers to flow as less attention is self-focused, moving instead to that which transcends the self. As noted in the introduction, the action happening in flow requires "no conscious intervention on our part" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 43) and awareness is of the action "but not of the awareness itself" (p. 45).

Mindfulness Meditation

Kenotic walking has much in common with mindfulness meditation. Belden C. Lane describes mindfulness in the context of wilderness backpacking (2014). His chapter, "Mindfulness: Moonshine Hollow and Thich Nhat Hanh," gives a clear and detailed account of hiking in the Ozarks while both practicing and reflecting on mindfulness. He does, however, articulate a qualifying statement, seemingly distancing his practice from mindfulness: "Contemplative prayer is what gets you out of your head entirely […] The mindfulness that wild terrain evokes is actually a sort of 'mind*less*ness,' an end-run around rational analysis that seeks an immediacy of presence" (2014, p. 98). This seeming paradox points to a distinction that I make between kenotic walking and mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh, in *The Miracle of Mindfulness: an Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* (2016), begins to describe mindfulness in writing, "I'm being completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts

and actions. There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly […]" (2016, p. 4). In another similar passage he writes, "When walking the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting […] conscious that he is sitting […] thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body" (p. 7). In flow, or kenotic walking, one key element, as already indicted, is of "no conscious intervention on our part" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 45). The distinction between mindlessness and mindfulness, in this context, is complex.

Lane outlines four aspects of mindfulness, as he interprets it in the context of wilderness hiking: "welcoming of awareness," "intentionality," "non-attachment," and "engaging the body" (2014, pp. 102-108). Much of his description is consistent with kenotic walking, yet, he may be overlooking the role of consciousness in mindfulness. Mindfulness results from practiced technique and its accompanying knowledge. Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "practice mindfulness in order to build up concentration", and "You should know how to breathe to maintain mindfulness" (2016, p. 15). He continues, "Your breath is the wondrous method of taking hold of your consciousness […] Learn to practice breathing in order to regain control of body and mind, to practice mindfulness, and to develop concentration and wisdom" (p. 22). Clearly, this is a method that brings practitioners into a conscious control of themselves, a practice that can be sustained through wilful action. One of Lane's carefully written reflections illustrates the difference consciousness plays when comparing mindfulness and flow. Lane writes that "Mindfulness is the fleeting instant of awareness we experience just before we begin to conceptualize reality and make judgments about it" (2014, p. 103). Mindfulness as articulated by Thich Nhat Hanh is not a "fleeting instant of awareness," but a practiced and sustained awareness that helps control conceptualizing and making judgements. Flow sometimes happens as a "fleeting instant," but can also be a fleeting hour of awareness. Fleeting is a great descriptor of flow; the pilgrim/hiker does not employ a method to sustain the practice, nor is there any "taking hold of consciousness." Rather, the practice of long-distance hiking facilitates flow, it opens those engaged to this "fleeting" awareness. It is only after being on the trail for an extended time that the hiker's conditioning opens them to kenotic walking.

Facilitating Flow

The transformation that conditioning of the whole person brings allows hikers to walk longer distances with increasing speed. The limited timeframe for the overall hike, Georgia to Maine, takes from four to six months, brings with it an underlying goal to walk a steady and quick pace over as many miles as one's stamina allows each day. The Tennessee/

Virginia border is 465 miles from the Southern terminus at Springer Mountain, Georgia. The trail through Virginia spans about 535 miles, the longest section of trail in a single state. Because hikers experience a transformation of the whole person in the first few weeks of walking, they enter Virginia as skilled veterans. It is no wonder that many long-distance hikers heading north on the AT say Virginia is easy, or that it is relatively flat. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who section hike in Virginia find it extremely challenging and never flat. Mountains in Virginia reach over 5,500 feet and the trail plunges as low as 670 feet near the James River. There are many ascents and descents of 3,000 feet in relatively short spans. While hikers struggled over similar terrain in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, their conditioning propels them over the mountains in Virginia, where the trail is equally as rugged. The increasing speed and determination to complete the hike that some hikers experience facilitates flow.

As the hiker walks with more agility, her pace quickens over the rugged terrain, and her attention to what had been obstacles - such as rocks, roots, mud, and logs - becomes singular. That is, attention itself is not divided between techniques for navigating difficult terrain and the elements that constitute the trail. Instead of learning to navigate or applying learned techniques toward these challenges, her new-found freedom and rhythm opens her to walking-flow, a kind of ecstatic dance. Gerardus van der Leeuw writes:

> The dance, by its very nature, is ecstatic. It makes man beside himself, lifts him above life and the world, and lets his whole earthly existence perish in the maelstrom […] Intoxication and the dance belong together. When the dance is genuine, one can no longer speak of an action which one performs, but of a dance which sweeps one away (1963, p. 29).

In the ecstasy of both dance and flow, the action does not seem to be wilful, it comes upon the dancer or hiker as a kind of irruption. However, it is not an irruption that involves an immediate awareness of being “swept away,” nor of being lifted “above life and the world.” Instead, one is engulfed with such intensity that the attention of the whole person is thoroughly infused in the action, negating any kind of self-reflection. Consciousness of self is emptied and being “beside himself” in this context “sweeps” one’s attention away from self-consciousness and into a full and undivided participation with the constituents of the immediate spatial surround.

This full and undivided participation, or communion, can be understood as unfolding in a kind of orchestral action. On one hand, the hiker and various trail constituents become fellow musicians collaborating under the direction of an unseen conductor. Each footstep resounds in contact with log, stone, gravel, puddle, stream.

Wind courses through tree branches where leaves clap and reveal eddies in the otherwise invisible atmosphere, all the while resonating with various bodies along the forest floor, including that of the hiker. On the other hand, the hiker and the myriad of others present interact bodily in the orchestra, the dancing place. A wild turkey responds to the passing walker, leaving its perch in the nearby tree and beating its wings furiously, crashing through branches as it exits the arena. The hiker adjusts her stride, or maybe pauses completely, in step with the fleeing turkey. As the trail twists around a boulder, she shortens her stride and turns with the arc, gravity pulling, and in response she lowers her center, slightly bending knees and leaning in toward the stone. Just beyond the turn a fallen tree lays across the trail, invisible prior to rounding the bend, and she moves her center upward, lifts one leg over while thrusting with the other, and feels somehow a connection to the boulder and the fallen tree. In the move and counter move she has been dancing, not alone but with elements who remain in place.

Being lifted above "life" and "the world" is not a separation from this life of walking, of this place in the wilderness. It is better understood in terms of Thoreau's reference to shaking off the village, a breaking free from the constraints of life as known prior to the hike, a liminal separation. It is the dance rather than the will distancing the hiker from the village. The ecstatic aspect of the dance also calls our attention to being freed from the constraints of learning; in flow there is a seeming effortlessness that is impossible when one's attention is fixed on acquiring a skill. In this regard van der Leeuw uses the word "hovering" to describe the dance, "here man does not subjugate the world by mastering a rhythm, but by being himself caught up in and ruled by this rhythm" (1963, p. 24). In being caught up the dancers "forget themselves: they lose the heaviness of being bound to earth" (p. 25). The hiker's attention is still highly focused on each step, each careful placement of the foot in between protruding stones, stepping over logs of various sizes, and at the same time watching for white blazes, the trail markers painted on trees, boulders, and posts. As the hiker's whole person is transformed after weeks of walking, attention is freed from acquiring a skill and opened to the ecstasy of flow. Van der Leeuw writes, "It is as though, in rapture, closed doors are opened and all hindrances disappear, particularly those of the body: lightly and freely the ecstatics soar away" (1963, p. 488).

Contemplative Walking

Though there is no memory of the moment the happening began, no recollection of an entrance into the ecstatic walking, the experience can only be recalled in memory as no discursive thoughts occurred while in the happening. It is in the memory that the experience happens as there were no conceptual or self-focused thoughts during the

happening. When the hiker returns to self-awareness it is possible that they may not recognize what has happened, not recall the experience. Maybe a grouse, startled and flushed by the approaching hiker, brings self-awareness back. The now self-conscious hiker focuses, with divided self, both self-conscious and attentive to the grouse, on the bird flying through the brush. When the disturbance settles, walking resumes without thinking about what was happening just minutes ago while in flow. Or, the ecstasy seems to spill over into the continuing walk, as a powerful dream hangs on in the emotions after waking up. But in the case of a dream, one may remember the dream vaguely, specifically, or not at all, whereas in flow everything can be remembered except the moment it began. As in the dream one feels the weight of something forgotten that can be remembered.

Because long-distance hikes extend over months and vast distances, these ecstatic experiences may last moments, minutes, or hours. During my own thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, I recall having this experience for many hours. There were many days when I walked for miles without a thought. Afterward, I remembered everything clearly, the terrain, climbing, descending, sunbeams dispersed through tree branches, the sound of rain, the feel of sweat dripping down my nose, the sense of gravity tugging at my body, breathing, planting hiking poles into the ground, and birdsong. Yet, no thoughts accompanied these memories, only an overwhelming sense of communion, an undivided involvement where everyone participated in the dance. A unique stillness, what Thomas Merton refers to as *quies* or *hesychia* in describing the mystical writings of the desert fathers, pervades, spilling over from ecstasy into self-conscious walking. Csikszentmihalyi writes, “It is quite obvious that certain states of rapture which are usually labeled ‘religious’ share the characteristics of flow with play and creativity” (1975, p. 44).

Flow in wilderness walking, as well as some forms of religious mystical practice, differ in some ways from other examples mentioned by Csikszentmihalyi: such as with “athletes, artists […] scientists” and others (1997, p. 110). Even though there are some overlapping characteristics of athletes, pilgrims, long-distance hikers, and religious mystics — embodied discipline, askesis — the solitude of the religious mystic and wilderness walker differ considerably from the athletic arena. In both religious contemplation and wilderness trekking there is much less distraction immediately after the ecstasy of flow. Opportunity for reflection opens one to remembering what happened and then to contemplating its meaning. In contemplation, memory is set forth in discursive thought and incorporated as meaningful through description, which may take the form of narration.

Since no thoughts manifested in language while flow was happening, there is no immediate way to describe the moment by moment unfolding between the hiker and the

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place. Looking to memory and setting it forth in thought shows what Hans-Georg Gadamer writes about language, that it conceals "one's whole relationship to the world" (1977, p. 92). He goes on to write, "One of the fundamental structures of all speaking is that we are guided by preconceptions and anticipations in our talking in such a way that these continually remain hidden and that it takes a disruption in oneself of the intended meaning of what one is saying to become conscious of these prejudices as such" (p. 92). As we bring forth memories we are guided by hidden preconceptions. For example, one of my own memories of flow, described in another publication, demonstrates the hidden preconception. I wrote, "My thoughts, while climbing this day, did not reflect on any of this description; I only write this after the fact. My thoughts ran like a river; this rock, this tree, this birdsong, this purple, this bit of blue sky" (Redick, 2016). I never had a thought of "rock," "tree," "birdsong," "purple," or "blue sky." When I recall the memory and describe it, these words I am accustomed to using easily fall into place and the memory seems clearly articulated. But that is the result of a preconception that remains concealed until I disrupt the intended meaning. In questioning the articulation of the memory through contemplation, I disrupt the intention that looks back through the memory. I bracket the descriptive terms, "rock," "tree," "birdsong," "purple," and "blue sky." As a result, I recall the memory more carefully and realize that, indeed I did see a rock, a tree, some purple and some blue sky; I did hear birdsong, but I did not think those words. The solitude and separation from the village, conducive to contemplation, facilitates such careful description and a phenomenological bracketing of preconceptions that mischaracterize experience.

Levinas' distinction between 'saying' and 'said' sheds light on this same contemplative practice of careful description. The happening of walking in flow is a saying that has not congealed into the said. Levinas writes that "saying does move into language, in which saying and said are correlative of one another, and the saying is subordinated to its theme" (2002a, p. 6). Our archeology of memory is the practice of subordinating the saying into its theme, of reconstructing the artifacts of saying found in memory so that they become the said. Saying while walking in flow is prelinguistic, a communication unfolding diachronically toward language. Once we have done the archeological reconstruction and articulate the memory in the said, we forget the prelinguistic expression of our body traversing a wilderness trail, of participation and saying with fellow creatures, and focus on the theme as if it were the essence of the happening.

In addition to specific memories being mischaracterized in the recollection, the description of flow as an experience is also fraught with hidden preconceptions and subordination into a theme. Because the memory is mine and I can recall it, I describe it

as an experience. But a more careful scrutiny reveals the hidden preconception or the theme that subordinates. Levinas writes of experience:

> I can, no doubt, have an experience of another and 'observe' his face, and yet the knowledge gained in this way would be, if not actually misleading, nevertheless truncated as if the relationship with another were lost in the knowledge, which, here, can occur only through 'appresentation' and 'empathy' (*Einfühlung*) […] (1983, p. 108).

There seems to be a distinction between experience and the happening preceding that experience, some profound relation giving rise to empathy that cannot be reduced to knowledge, though through knowledge I attempt to encompass the happening, netting it in experience. Levinas goes on to write:

> What we take to be the secret of the other man in appresentation is precisely the hidden side of a meaning other than knowledge: awakening to the other man in his identity, an identity indiscernible for knowledge, thought in which the proximity of one's fellow is a source of meaning, 'commerce' with *the other* which cannot be reduced to experience, the *approach* of the other, of the first comer (1983, p. 109)

While it was happening, I was not throwing my net of knowledge over the event, I was not thinking it was an experience. Looking back, the memory is clearly my own, and no other shares in the recall of that memory, yet others are with me in the memory, with me in the happening, in the "proximity" of others we enacted meaning through fellowship. The memory of others with whom I was having a relationship, or a meeting, is better described in terms of participation or communion, a kind of mystical knowing.

Saint Paul points to this mystical participation (communion, fellowship) in his letter to the Philippians where he expresses his desire to know Christ (γνῶναι αὐτὸν) and the fellowship (κοινωνίαν) of his suffering (παθημάτων αὐτοῦ) becoming like him in his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ) (3:10). This mystical participation is a "knowing" unlike other kinds of knowing, or what Levinas refers to as "the hidden side of a meaning other than knowledge" (1983, p. 109). "Knowing Him" (γνῶναι αὐτὸν) is a participation (κοινωνίαν) in his suffering (παθημάτων αὐτοῦ).

While it is happening the encounter itself is pre-intentional. As I describe it, looking back on the memory, I engage in an intentional act. I must take care in the description lest the intention translates the happening into my own experience. Levinas, in discussing substitution but applicable here, writes:

> it cannot be defined in terms of intentionality, where undergoing is always also an assuming, that is, an experience always anticipated and consented to, already an origin and ἀρχή […] The given enters into a thought which recognizes in it or invests it with its own project, and thus exercises mastery over it (1989, p. 91).

Describing flow in terms of an experience mischaracterizes the happening, placing the hiker at the center, a self whose project shapes the meaning of the event, a self who is the sole author of the story. While flow is happening in the context of a long-distance hike, the one walking is not aware of an experience. There is no project, no author. The hiker is clearly conscious of the full surround, but that consciousness is not directed, there is no consciousness of, no intentionality; and neither is she self-conscious.

Kenosis

Kenosis is an emptying of one's self as center, as directing one's project, as authority, and placing one's self subject to others. Saint Paul introduces this to Christianity through his epistle to the Philippians:

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself [ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν], taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. (2: 5-8)

Christ empties himself of his authority as being "in the form of God" and takes on another form without authority, one who does not direct his own project, humbling and subjecting himself to others until the very end. Interpreting this mythologically, and in line with Saint Paul's admonition to be of the "same mind" (φρονείσθω), we, human beings, could be emptied of our being — made in the image of God — and our authority therein to take dominion "over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28). Emptying our authority, we could serve the creatures of the earth as fellows, putting their interest before our own. As fellow creatures our relationship, one to another, would be in the form of Buber's I and Thou, unmediated, no intervening purpose directing one over the other.

Saint Paul's admonition could be interpreted as recommending a wilful act "to

empty yourselves of yourselves," an action of humbling yourself. I take the opposite view, that self-emptying is not an enactment but a passive waiting. The only action is in resting, really an act of ceasing to act. In waiting we open ourselves to receiving the gift of being emptied, and in turn the gift of humbling and submitting. To wilfully submit is to retain some aspect of control, even if it is merely the act of submission. As noted already, Levinas writes, "the given enters into a thought which recognizes in it or invests it with its own project, and thus exercises mastery over it" (1989, p. 91). Beyond thought, the gift gives itself from itself. Marion writes, "Thinking about [...] is one mode of givenness; it is another one altogether to find oneself in the presence of — what gives *itself*" (2002b, p. 29). When we reach out and take the gift, it ceases to be a gift; we make it our own, and it is no longer given. Grace as a given must be received passively as a gift in order for it to remain grace. Self-emptying as a gift is not the self emptying itself of itself, but the self being emptied by another who is gifting the self with a new form. In the death on the cross, Christ passively submits to the gift being given for the salvation of the other. If we empty ourselves, we are in some way still there through the act of self-emptying. Being there, we are, as Heidegger describes, *dasein*. Levinas notes that subjectivity begins on the hither side of being. In being self-emptied we receive the form of "the-one-for-the-other," not *dasein,* but "otherwise than being" (2002b).

Moving to "otherwise than being," kenosis does not void or annihilate the self in pursuit of mystical union. Buber points out two views of union wherein the relation between I and Thou are eliminated: "immersion or descent into the self" and when "the self is to be understood as the One that thinks and is" (1970, p. 131). He writes:

> The former view supposes that God will enter the being that has been freed of I-hood or that at that point one merges into God; the other view supposes that one stands immediately in oneself as the divine One. Thus the first holds that in a supreme moment all You-saying ends because there is no longer any duality; the second, that there is no truth in You-saying at all because in truth there is no duality. The first believes in the unification, the second in the identity of the human and the divine. Both insist on what is beyond I and You: for the first this comes to be perhaps in ecstasy, while for the second it is there all along and reveals itself, perhaps as the thinking subject beholds itself. Both annul relationship (1970, pp. 131-132).

The emptied self opens to relation with another. Levinas quotes Martin Buber, "'Man can become whole not by virtue of a relation to himself but only by virtue of a relation to another self'" (1989, p. 66). The other self is an alterity, neither the self-same nor

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thematized other.

Buber shows that "Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is 'in them' and not between them and the world. The world does not participate in experience" (1970, p. 56). Levinas contrasts Buber with Gabriel Marcel and shows a nuanced distinction helpful in this context. Participation for Marcel "is an intersubjective nexus deeper than the language that is torn away […] from that originative communication" (1993, p. 27). During the happening of flow, the hiker is not directing participation, which would be an example wherein "language petrifies living communication" but mutually and reciprocally participating, in an intersubjective meeting, an originating communication with an array of others.[1] Further, the hiker is not self-aware, that is "not aware of the awareness itself," and therefore does not have any sense of an experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 45). After the happening, while reflecting on it, the hiker characterizes it as an experience by projecting the reflection upon the memory of the happening. Buber contrasts this "internal" experience with encounter, which occurrs between I and You. In the meeting of I and You, or in the meeting happening in flow, there is a pre-intentional encounter.

The meeting is a happening and "cannot be found by seeking" (Buber, 1970, p. 62). It unfolds as a "deed of my whole being," and as an unmediated, or direct relationship, "passive and active at once" (p. 62). Buber describes this "concentration and fusion into a whole being" as "never accomplished by me," but "never accomplished without me" (p. 62). Experience being within versus between is mediated by the ego: Buber writes, "The I of the basic word I-It appears as an ego [*eigenwesen*] and becomes conscious of itself as a subject (of experience and use)" (pp. 111-112). The objects of experience are a means to some end, as involved in some purpose for the ego. Because experience is mediated, the ego does not participate in the world, or discover a meeting with another, and remains remote from the subjects of the world. The one who is experiencing, who is remote from the other as a subject, is not able to encounter another. The one experiencing is either reflecting, and therefore apart from the moment of encounter, or operating within a desire to use the other, an object for some end.

Encounter involves persons in relation with others—meeting one another reciprocally: "My You acts on me as I act on it" (p. 67). Buber illustrates meeting in contrast to experience in descripting his relation as a youth with a horse. In stroking the neck of this horse Buber seems to have had a profoundly mystical encounter, calling it a "deeply stirring happening" (1967, p. 23). This happening was a meeting with the Other,

[1] Levinas notes that "Marcel opposes language understood as the *element* of the Meeting; he opposes the very term *Relation*, preferring 'meeting' or 'tension'" (1993, p. 27). I will use both Buber and Marcel's terminology.

"the immense otherness of the Other, which however, did not remain strange like the otherness of the ox and the ram, but rather let me draw near and touch it" (p. 23). In proximity and touching; both participate in the encounter, which unfolds reciprocally. Buber elaborates on the participation writing that in:

> the life beneath my hand, it was as though the element of vitality itself bordered on my skin, something that was not I, was certainly not akin to me, palpably the other, not just another, really the Other itself; and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me, placed itself elementally in the relation of *Thou* and *Thou* with me (Buber, 1967, p. 23).

He writes that the two became fellow-conspirators and Buber felt approved. However, at some point while stroking the horse's neck on another occasion, Buber became conscious of his own hand. He writes, "I do not know what came over the child, at any rate it was childlike enough — it struck me about the stroking, what fun it gave me, and suddenly I became conscious of my hand" (p. 23). In the consciousness of his own hand stroking the horse's neck something profound changed. The two ceased to be conspirators. Buber became self-conscious, and the horse became the object of his intended consciousness.

In relation to Buber's theory of knowledge rooted in the I-Thou versus I-it pairing Levinas writes:

> The I-Thou relation consists in the confronting a being external to oneself, i.e., one which is radically other, and in recognizing it as such. This recognition of otherness, however, is not to be confused with the *idea* of otherness. To have an idea of something is appropriate to the I-It relation (1989, p. 64).

Levinas points to the objectification of the other through conceptualizing. We can either encounter the radically other or self-consciously experience the other who has been transformed into an object of understanding. Levinas goes on to write:

> The being who is invoked in this relation is ineffable because the I speaks *to* him rather than *of* him and because in the latter case all contact is broken off with the Thou. To speak *to* him is to let him realize his own otherness. The I-Thou relation, therefore, escapes the gravitational field of the I-It in which the externalized object remains imprisoned (p. 64)

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William Cavanaugh points to this relational matrix in the context of pilgrimage writing:

> The pilgrim preserves otherness precisely by not seeking otherness for its own sake, but moving toward a common center to which an infinite variety of itineraries is possible. If God, the Wholly Other, is at the center, and not the great Western Ego, then there can be room for genuine otherness among human beings (2011, p. 83)

Kenotic walking opens up the possibility of this authentic and existential relation.

Saint Teresa of Avila, Ecstasy, and Flow

As already noted, Csikszentmihalyi points to religious "states of rapture" that share "characteristics of flow with play and creativity" (1975, p. 44). He writes:

> most states of religious ecstasy are reached by following complex ritual steps, yet for flow to be maintained, one cannot reflect on the act of awareness itself. The moment awareness is split so as to perceive the activity from "outside," the flow is interrupted (p. 45).

Saint Teresa's detailed description of her own ecstatic encounters with her Divine "His Majesty" evidence an absence of complex ritual steps, and rather than self-awareness, she discovers absorption in "states of rapture." She writes, "The senses are all occupied in this enjoyment in such a way that not one of them is at liberty to be able to attend to anything else, either outward or inward" (McGinn, 2006, p. 116). In addition, she practices careful attention to the description, bracketing conceptual framing and focusing instead on the encounter itself.

Conceptions of ecstasy explain it in terms of an experience of rising above or standing beyond oneself, or, of a radical immersion into oneself. Bracketing these conceptions Saint Teresa writes, "It is sometimes said that the soul enters within itself and sometimes that it rises above itself; but I cannot explain things in that kind of language, for I have no skill in it" (1999, p. 40). She limits herself to a careful description, free from conceptions, writing of absorption that:

> When His Majesty wants to suspend understanding, He busies it in another way and sheds light on a knowing so far above what we can achieve that He leaves it

> absorbed, and then, without knowing how, it ends up better instructed than all of our strivings to hold it still (2020).

Being left "absorbed" transcends conceptual frames, resisting thematization such that the soul "should not try to understand what this state is" (1999, p. 43). Saint Teresa's description is not an explanation: "How this prayer they call union happens and what it is, I cannot explain. Mystical theology explains it, and I am unable to use the proper terms" (2006, p. 116). Is she unable, or simply approaching "it" from another point of view? In this same vein she writes of not succeeding in describing such things "in such a way as to be understood, except by those who have experienced it" (1999, pp. 75-76).

Her description can be interpreted as a phenomenological bracketing allowing the thing in question to give itself from itself. Her care in describing calls attention to Marion's fourth and final formulation of phenomenology, "as much reduction, as much givenness" (2002, p. 17). Her qualification of understanding brings to mind Merleau-Ponty's characterization of phenomenological description, "To turn back to the things themselves is to return to that world prior to knowledge of which knowledge speaks" (1956, p. 60). Absorption precedes knowledge but has been thematized in such a way as to produce various methods with the purpose of leading practitioners into the experience. Knowledge translates being absorbed into a "state of absorption," but Saint Teresa turns back to that which precedes experience, to allow the encounter to give itself from beyond conceptions.

In addition to bracketing conceptions, Saint Teresa combines this practice with a negation of "complex ritual steps," or what I refer to as techniques for obtaining flow, ecstasy, or rapture. She writes, "Do not suppose that the understanding can attain to Him, merely by trying to think of Him as within the soul, or the imagination, by picturing Him as there" (1999, p. 41). Her negation excludes techniques for attaining communion with God and instead highlights the particular prayer practice that opens one to absorption. On the other hand, she does say that there are "excellent" practices of meditation, "founded upon a truth" of God being "within us" (p. 41). Even though this is a truth, the prayer she describes "is quite different" (p. 41). This prayer is not a wilful enactment leading to absorption; she writes, "With us it is not a question of our will — it happens only when God is pleased to grant us this favour" (p. 41). A wilful act or an enactment of a set of "complex ritual steps," an employment of techniques, places the practitioner in the center and the one invoked as an object of manipulation. Just as long-distance hiking and pilgrimage open those engaged to a happening of flow, Saint Teresa points to a way of opening oneself to an encounter with God, "One preparation for listening to Him, as certain books tell us, is that we should contrive, not to use our

reasoning powers, but to be intent upon discovering what the Lord is working in the soul" (p. 41). Just as with flow, the discovery happens afterward in the careful description of memory, in bracketing conceptions in order to reveal what the other has done, whether the other is God, as Saint Teresa describes, or fellows both human and extra-human along a wilderness trail.

Saint Teresa's description of her own mystical encounter shows an ecstatic negation of self-consciousness, or an ego-less passion, in conjunction with avoidance of techniques conducive to the encounter. By surrendering even the desire for the "greater glory of God" we are lead into a much higher degree of knowledge. She writes:

> the very effort which the soul makes in order to cease from thought will perhaps awaken thought and cause it to think a great deal […] how can a person be forgetful of himself when he is taking such great care about his actions that he dare not even stir, or allow his understanding and desires to stir, even for the purpose of desiring the greater glory of God or of rejoicing in the glory which is His?" (1999, p. 43)

Toward this higher degree of knowledge, she says that the soul should try "without forcing itself" "to put a stop to all discursive reasoning, yet not to suspend the understanding, nor cease from all thought" (p. 43). Her recommendation involves suspending a way of knowing but remaining open to thought. The negation of discursive reasoning voids self-consciousness as a center of knowing. Remaining open to thought indicates that absorption is not self-oblivion but a possible approach to non-discursive communication. This is similar to flow in that the hiker remains fully aware while walking but thoughts are not self-generated.

Though Levinas casts the mystic project as "idealist, solipsist, amoral" (Rigby, 2011), his description of substitution sheds light on Saint Teresa's exposition of absorption. Rather than a knowing, her rapture can be interpreted as proximity. Levinas writes:

> in starting with sensibility interpreted not as a knowing but as proximity, in seeking in language contact and sensibility, behind the circulation of information it becomes, we have endeavoured to describe subjectivity as irreducible to consciousness and thematization. Proximity appears as the relationship with the other, who cannot be resolved into 'images' or be exposed to a theme (1989, p. 89).

He goes on to call "this relationship irreducible to consciousness obsession" (p. 90). It is irreducible even though it "overwhelms" consciousness (p. 91). "It undoes thematization, and escapes any *principle*, origin, will, or ἀρχή, which are put forth in every ray of consciousness" (p. 91). Obsession is an "inversion of consciousness" and a "passivity beneath all passivity. It cannot be defined in terms of intentionality" (p. 91). In intentionality "the given enters into a thought which recognizes in it or invests it with its own project, and thus exercises mastery over it" (p. 91). In this way "The *for itself* in consciousness is thus the very power which a being exercises upon itself, its will, its sovereignty" (p. 91). With the obsession, "the consciousness is affected, then, before forming an image of what is coming to it, affected in spite of itself […] being called into question prior to questioning" (p. 92). "Substitution is not an act; it is a passivity inconvertible into an act" (p. 107). Absorption and rapture, like kenotic walking, are acts of ceasing to act - resting, waiting.

Further elaborating on the passivity of waiting Saint Teresa notes that the encounter happens "when a person is quite unprepared […] and not even thinking of God, he is awakened (1999, p. 76). He does not waken himself but is moved from beyond himself to wakefulness. The call comes from the other who is not me, and I recognize that it is not my own inner voice but another. She writes, "the soul is aware that it has been called by God […] it begins to tremble" (p. 76). In this case the soul recognizes the wholly other and so trembles, encompassed by rapture, "so clearly conscious is it of the presence of its God" (p. 77). She writes of the encounter that the person "is conscious of having been most delectably wounded, but cannot say how or by whom but it is certain that this is a precious experience and it would be glad if it were never to be healed of that wound" (p. 76). She could be alluding to a mystical participation (communion, fellowship) in Christ's suffering and death, as we already explored in Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians.

In her participation in Christ's suffering, passion (πάθημα), she uses phrases reciprocally juxtaposed such as "great grief" and "sweet and delectable" to describe the ineffable and sublime encounter of rapture. In her clear description, seemingly inspirational for Bernini's sculpture located in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome (Fig. 1), she writes, "I know that this distress seems to penetrate to its very bowels" (p. 77). "*Sé que parece que le llega a las entrañas esta pena*" (2016, p. 174). She continues, "when He that has wounded it draws out the arrow, the bowels seem to come with it, so deeply does it feel this love" (1999, p. 77). "*Cuando de ellas saca la saeta el que la hiere, verdaderamente parece que se las lleva tras sí, según el sentimiento de amor siente*" (2016, p. 174). She continues:

> the fire is not hot enough to burn it up, and the experience is very delectable, the soul continues to feel the pain and the mere touch suffices to produce that effect in it […] this delectable pain, which is not really pain, is not continuous: sometimes it lasts for a long time, while sometimes it comes suddenly to an end […] for it is a thing which no human means can procure. Although occasionally the experience lasts for a certain length of time, it goes and comes again […] never permanent […] and leaves the soul yearning once again to suffer that loving pain of which it is the cause (p. 77).

Bernini's sculpture is beautiful and draws onlookers into the small chapel to gaze at his depiction of Saint Teresa's ecstatic vision. Even though their gaze focuses on a master work of art, the sculpture fails to communicate her carefully articulated description. In reality the image captures the audience's visual attention in a kind of mirror. One aspect of the mirror is that Bernini's work obscures the aim of Saint Teresa's description. She is pointing to an encounter with transcendence, a mystic communion. She does not call

Figure 1: Bernini's Ecstasy of Saint Teresa

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attention to her rhetoric but continues to point to an alterity, the wholly other who touches her with love. Bernini's beautiful sculpture causes us to praise his skill as an artist. We are looking at his imagined interpretation chiseled in stone. We gaze at the human, looking into a mirror at ourselves; our look cannot penetrate the opaque marble and bring us into communion with mystery.

Jean-Luc Marion's distinction between idol and icon helps us here. He writes, "the idol and the icon are distinguishable […] inasmuch as each makes use of its visibility in its own way" (2012, p. 9). Bernini's sculpture works in the same way that Marion describes the working of the idol, which "fascinates and captivates the gaze precisely because everything in it must expose itself to the gaze, attract, fill, and hold it" (p. 10). The idol places the one gazing upon it in an experience of their own making. Saint Teresa shows the reader that she is not in control, she does not make the experience, while it unfolds, it is not an experience. She is in communion with "His Majesty," not experiencing the wholly other but participating in love, which is a meeting of the two. Marion writes, "The idol thus acts as a mirror, not as a portrait: a mirror that reflects the gaze's image, or more exactly, the image of its aim and of the scope of that aim" (2012, p. 12). There is no meeting between an idol and the one who gazes. There is only the one gazing back at their own gaze.

While Saint Teresa has painstakingly qualified her experience and incorporated a nuanced communication involving the ephemerality of time and feeling, Bernini fixes the experience into a state, freezes it into a moment so that those looking at the sculpture might linger over the experience, make it their own. Looking at the sculpture is singularly pleasurable. Looking into the eyes of your lover, who looks back at you, involves two in an encounter. Saint Teresa's encounter with "His Majesty" is both "delectable" and painful, ingulfed in a fire hot enough to bring suffering and at the same time love. The sculpture attempts to communicate these contrasting feelings, but those gazing can only look on from without, experience the ecstasy from a safe distance, and only within themselves rather than in a meeting. Magnifying this effect, Bernini includes a gallery of onlookers, witnessing her ecstatic vision. They are depicted interacting with one another while marveling at the angel preparing to thrust his dart into the reclining Saint. They engage in a mutual admiration of the idol, a mirror reflecting their own souls.

Saint Teresa's encounter results from a kind of iconic prayer. Marion writes, "The icon does not result from a vision but provokes one." Her self-emptying prayer is a waiting. She has continually reiterated that she does not cause the encounter. "The icon is not seen, but appears, or more originally seems, looks like" (2012, p. 17). Saint Teresa cannot explain the encounter, she only gives us a "seeming," a "looks like." Marion writes, "Whereas the idol results from the gaze that aims at it, the icon summons sight in letting

the visible . . be saturated little by little with the invisible" (p. 17). Marion's description shows how Saint Teresa encounters her "His Majesty" wounding her in love, "the icon opens in a face that gazes at our gazes in order to summon them to its depth" (p. 19).

Wilderness as Idol or Icon

Both religious mystics and pilgrim/hikers, absorbed or walking self-emptying, encounter others as subjects, meeting empathetically in communion. Some pilgrim/hikers never discover flow, remain self-conscious throughout their journey. Like Bernini's gallery of onlookers, they look on and experience scenery, admiring the sublime. Their gaze is intentional, a consciousness of the other, which places them in the center, around whom the other as object orbits an ego. In a previous publication I asked, might an "interpretation of the wild as sublime be another conceptual strategy toward taming the wild? Are wilderness trekkers really domesticating the wild, establishing their dominance over raw and strange environments" (Redick, 2018, p. 82)? One concept, encompassing a human orientation toward the scenic environment, is that of "nature." Nature is conceived, an abstraction that facilitates human manipulations of their environmental placement. The concept of nature brings with it a thematized divide between human beings and the rest of the cosmos, the nature culture divide. This divide only exists conceptually, anthropomorphizing the other.

In *The Discarded Image*, C. S. Lewis asks what "is Nature? Where is she? Who has seen her? What does she do? In answer to this question he writes, "The pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece invented Nature […] the great variety of phenomena which surrounds us could all be impounded under a name and talked about as a single object" (1994, p. 37). We have no concrete, lived experience nor communion with nature. Such communion would be a participation with one's own self or with the abstraction of humanity, koinonia with an idea.

Communion happens in wholeness, one's whole being participates, meeting with the other. While engaging in communion, their saying disrupts sedimented or thematized conceptual frames of understanding, the said. These conceptual frames are the focus of Gadamer's hermeneutical reflection, applied to "the kind of concealment through language that determines one's whole relationship to the world" (1977, p. 92). Preconceptions remain hidden, and as noted earlier in the essay, Gadamer writes that disruption makes us conscious of prejudices (p. 92). An irruption of kenotic walking disrupts. In reflecting on the irruption, we open ourselves to uncovering conceptual frames of understanding through translation. Gadamer writes, "Translation allows what is foreign and what is one's own to merge in a new form by defending the point of the other

even if it be opposed to one's own view" (p. 94). Our encounters during the irruption of kenotic walking happen beyond language, beyond concepts that makes objects of others. We fellowship extra verbally and are awakened to a kind of communication that is foreign. In reflecting on the walk, we engage in translation and might employ hermeneutical reflection, further disrupting intended meanings.

Nature functions as an idol rather than an icon. It is a mirror into which we look back at ourselves. The aesthetic tourist interacts with nature like one who peers at Bernini's sculpture of Saint Teresa. Pilgrim/hikers do not find fellowship (relation, meeting, communion) with nature but with the other, particular constituents of an ecological place, an eco-place: The orientation of aesthetic tourists involves experiencing rather than encountering the other in ecoplaces, immediate geographical areas wherein the hiker walks, which is also encompassed by a larger ecoregion.[2] The other within a particular ecoplace is home, and pilgrim/hikers are guests in the home, recipients of hospitality.

Hospitality

While on their journey pilgrim/hikers are liminal. Leaving their own dwelling places, they become strangers. As strangers they become open to what Derrida refers to as unconditional hospitality. Tourists, on the other hand, participate in conditional hospitality, established by institutions of the recreation industry. Tourism ambiguates hospitality because recreation companies self-reference as operating within the hospitality industry. This "hospitality" operates in economic exchange and negates the gift of hospitality. Marion writes, "the gift begins and in fact ends as soon as the giver envisions that he owes something to someone, when he admits that he could be a debtor, and thus a recipient" (2008, p. 91). The giver in this exchange, the recreation establishment, becomes bound to giving in that the giver becomes a debtor through the commodification of the gift. Marion explains that this annuls the gift because, "it does not belong to the economy of exchange" (p. 96). Hospitality becomes similar to other economic exchanges. Derrida writes:

> absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner […] but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I

[2] Ecoplaces are encompassed by larger ecoregions. Ecoregion is defined as a "relatively large units of land containing a distinct assemblage of natural communities and species, with boundaries that approximate the original extent of natural communities prior to major land-use change" (2001, p. 933).

> offer them without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names (2000, p. 25).

Pilgrim/hikers as liminal open themselves to receiving hospitality. Tourists retain status and enact an exchange. Though both pilgrim/hikers and tourists travel beyond their places of dwelling, they occupy different spaces.

Conclusion

Scenic tourists colonize with their gaze and so perceive the surround as nature; they are in natural space. Pilgrim/hikers walk through the home of the other, an ecoplace. Ecology is a metaphorical concept indicating the web of interconnections. Conceptually it has been thematized, consisting of layers of representation. Kenotic walking serves to disrupt representations, returning to the metaphor's lively way of showing interconnections between whole beings in their lived situations. Buber writes that "I and You can only be spoken with one's whole being. I and It can never be spoken with one's whole being" (1970, p. 54). One's whole being manifests in the encounter of I and You. In kenotic walking, as has been shown, encounters happen between whole beings in their meeting one with another.

We have engaged in a unique archeology, digging down into memory to uncover an interaction between a pilgrim/hiker and the ecological surround. Levinas has shown us that our responsibility to others lies deeper still. We must dig below history to that which precedes our activity, where we find a trace of the anarchic responsibility of the one-for-another, only appearing when we are in proximity to the other as an obsession. In kenotic walking the archeology lifts away the self as center, as sole arbiter of meaning. In reflection, afterward, the hiker finds that the trace of the one-for-the-other gives rise to the one-with-the-other, a realization of fellowship, communion, participation with human and extra-human in their ecological placement.

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