Practical Animism Online Course: Bonus Live Call, July 5, 2019

Please excuse any typos and inaccuracies in this transcript.

Daniel: Yeah go ahead and record. It's July 5th, 2019. It's a bonus call for recognition of folks, especially in Australia and New Zealand, who got the less favorable settings for the live calls. Because I'm going to be traveling in Europe this summer and I wanted to join for them. And so we are having a gathering to make sure that you all have at least one chance to say hello if you don't like getting up in the middle of the night for your animism.

Daniel: And so mostly, I want to just follow your lead about what questions are great to ask. And if you have been in a lot of other calls and you just happen to have a social life like me, which isn't much on a Friday night, then maybe yield a little bit for the people in Australia and New Zealand to say a thing first. And then it's fine, really, for anybody to chime in too.

Daniel: And yeah, in the course, our most recent lesson I believe was around grief and loss. And I think Marie-Louise has a visceral-sounding story to share. Why don't I let you share that in a more relational voice way, because it sounds alive. If you want to say where you're calling in from too, that's great.

Marie-Louise: Yeah, I'm calling from Victoria, near Daylesford.

Daniel: Great.

Marie-Louise: Yeah. And so what happened to me is that I was driving home from work in the dark and there was a possum that had been freshly hit by a car. I stopped, because I think it's a respectful thing to do for animals, not to let them be run over and over. And it was a mother possum and her guts had been splattered all over the road and there was a tiny baby. With marsupials, the baby are not fully formed and so it looked like a fetus and it was beside her on the road. And I'm a midwife and I thought, if a woman had been hit by a car and her baby killed, it would have been all over the newspapers, basically, and in the tabloids.

Marie-Louise: And it just changed the way I see the world around me forever. And I think it was her gift to me that ... Yeah, it just changed something in my heart. Yeah. Just that. But it also intensified the grief for what is happening. Yeah.

Daniel: What if we pause collectively for a moment together, here? And even those who listen to the recording, and just in that moment participate in receiving the gift of this one. [inaudible 00:03:20] relaying this together.

Daniel: Is there more, Marie-Louise, that feels present on your heart that you'd want to say by way of honoring this encounter?

Marie-Louise: Well, I've got a bucket now in my car and I pick up animals on the road and I bring them home because it feels like a respectful thing to do. And it feels like the amount of animals that are dead on the side of the road in Australia is just unbelievable.

Daniel: Do you have a headphone thing? There's a lot of crackling. I don't know if it's because it's on your-

Marie-Louise: I do actually, yeah.

Daniel: Yeah, it's okay. I'm with you. When you bring them home, do you bury them, then?

Marie-Louise: Yes. Yeah.

Daniel: Let me ... Yeah. Yeah, okay. It's from your side. That might be better. Yeah. I imagine it's a kind of moment that everybody has experienced in some way, in encountering an other than human kin. Though it's not necessarily a companion animal or a so-called a pet, killed and just especially by humans. I don't know. Maybe you've hit a possum or a deer and you just get to deal with that experience.

Daniel: No, let's pause for a minute, actually, and see if others want to say anything about, anything on point with ... Sorry, I don't know why the audio's not very loud here. I'm being told that it's not very loud. Can folks hear me okay? It's just kind of quiet, no?

Marie-Louise: It could be a bit louder. Yeah.

Daniel: Yeah, okay. Let me just move it up higher, see if that makes a difference. Okay.

Marie-Louise: That's better.

Daniel: Yeah, okay. Thanks. I just want to allow for a moment to expand negatives, because it's right where the learning is. And is there anybody else that wants to chime in in this vein that Marie-Louise has brought forward? If so, you can just take yourself off mute and say anything, yeah.

Daniel: I'm going to go ahead and mute you for now, Marie-Louise, it's okay? Yeah?

Daniel: Thanks. Thanks for naming that.

Sibyl: Hello?

Daniel: Yeah. Sibyl, go ahead, yeah.

Sibyl: Hi. I have a lot of this same thing. I do a lot of driving and-

Daniel: Where are you calling from?

Sibyl: I'm sorry. I'm in upstate New York, in a city called Newbird. And it's a city but we have a lot of animals living around and it's set in the Hudson River Valley. And I drive a lot. I'm on the road a lot and I have a lot of experiences with animals on the road and seeing them on the road. And I will stop and bury them or spend time with them any chance I get. And it's a way for me to apologize for them, because it's not a natural way to go. And the way that roads are built, there's no consideration for animals that need to cross the road to get to water.

Daniel: How's your heart?

Sibyl: I don't think-

Daniel: Process. How does your heart navigate it?

Sibyl: Well, it's very sad. And I get angry at this situation. But a lot of times, it's a way for me to commune with the animal that I wouldn't normally have. And there have been a couple of groundhogs hit in my neighborhood, we have a lot of groundhogs in our city, this spring and summer. And I buried both of them. And there was an experience that I had in both cases, picking up their bodies and putting them in the ground, that filled me with a kind of tenderness and grief, but a feeling of connection with that animal that I've never had before. And I also buried a cat a few years [inaudible 00:08:32].

Daniel: You're breaking up a bit, Sibyl.

Sibyl: So horrible, got over it. Like it was [inaudible 00:08:45].

Daniel: Sibyl, you're breaking up a bit. But I think it's what you shared-

Sibyl: Oh, sorry, okay.

Daniel: Okay. If there's something else that you want to add in a bit [inaudible 00:09:00]. I'm going to ... But it's welcome.

Sibyl: That's it.

Daniel: Thank you.

Sibyl: Thanks.

Daniel: Look, if part of what some of you take from the time is to see that the others, when we talk about them as people, it's not some intellectual maneuver, really. That it's a real affirmation of kinship that is psychologically devastating in some ways. Then that's a good development, that's a movement back into reality.

Daniel: Others? I see Seyta will respond, Carol, to the question about the technical stuff. If anyone else wants to speak on this thread, then just take yourself off mute and go ahead and say. Anything is welcome. You can raise your hand if you want to do that.

Daniel: Yeah, Carol, go ahead.

Carol: Can I speak now?

Daniel: Yeah, you can. We can hear you. Go ahead.

Carol: Okay. I just didn't want to interrupt someone else. Hi, everybody. I'm here in just south of Cape Town in South Africa and I'm actually on the territory of the baboons. And I am concerned at the moment because there's genocide against the baboons where I live. It is the territory of the baboons. They were here first. And there's a lot of conflict between humans and baboons because the humans are now on the baboons' territory, but then the baboons will raid the food. But there was another baboon shot this week, killed by the authorities because apparently it was a nuisance baboon. And think last week, two.

Carol: And yeah, I went to a meeting at the weekend and it just seemed such a mess. And I just feel so powerless. Everyone's powerless to do anything about it and it's kind of stealth, the way the authorities just take out the baboons. And it is a slow genocide. And it's just horrible.

Daniel: How do you work on it on a heart level?

Carol: Sorry?

Daniel: On a heart ... On the level of your heart, how do you work on it? I [crosstalk 00:11:33] don't know if working with it is the right-

Carol: I'm just sad. I'm just sad. But also I kind of feel a sense of guilt. There was an encounter I had with a pack of spirit baboons at the beginning of April. And it kind of made me sensitive to their plight because basically, I started swearing at them and that and I didn't realize what was going on. And then I came to my senses and I realized that I was on their territory. It wasn't that they were on my territory and my space.

Carol: But yeah, since then I've been paying a lot of attention to baboons. And I just do feel a sense of guilt and responsibility, but also helplessness and just sadness because yeah, it is a slow genocide. And I don't know what to do about it.

Daniel: Well, one of the ... Even in good times, even when there's not a few thousand years of systemic oppression and other really complicated, problematic cultural and human patterns, there's still death and tragedy. And so part of it is having a heart big enough to allow for that and to recognize that violence is intimate. And that killing is intimate. And that when we take another life, even we explored this a bit in the lesson on eating, just I feel like for the most part, is taking, often. The response isn't necessarily, "I'm sorry," but there's a connection formed when you consume the life of another.

Daniel: And I'm not saying that that should get used as an excuse or a bypass to accountability the necessary changes for the systems, but one of the things I think, as Marie-Louise and Sibyl and we're speaking to, is just we love them all the same. And by having a recognition or kindness or love for the beings that are killed, that that is a way of honoring them.

Carol: But they don't need to be killed. I mean, if the authorities are taking them out for no reason and the humans are on their territory and it just ... There's no end in sight. And I feel so helpless to do anything about it.

Daniel: I'm saying it's a rope and a perch. You do what is within your means to attempt to end the injustice and the harm and oppression. And if you don't stay emotionally connected throughout that, you'll hit a backlog emotionally that will eventually manifest as a health or psychological or spiritual condition. Because you're not staying current at a heart level to what's actually happening.

Daniel: And it's not different with work for social justice or change. People get burnt right the fuck out from doing that work, because there's a lot of heartache and suffering, typically, that's being faced. And if you aren't allowing yourself to feel as you're going along, you'll hit a backlog. And it's important to celebrate them also, so you

have a connection with them now through the violence that your human tribe, if you will, are enacting on them. And you're also part of the subtler colonialist pattern there. And it doesn't mean you should be unusually hard on yourself about it, I don't think that helps. But there's a connection that's formed from it.

Daniel: We have bears in the yard, but we're also in their space. They have humans in the yard. And so one of things I'm suggesting you can do is actually make the space to listen carefully to the spirit of the animal, if they wish to interact. And to just bring a sense of, "Yeah, sorry we're meeting like this." But then also to listen. So that relationship is a kind of honoring. It is one kind of action that's helpful.

Daniel: I worked as an elementary school counselor for a year, and it was tough to see kids being really drowned in the system, whether it's the family system or the school system. And I would try to just make good contact with them. And see them on a whole person level. And who knows how to measure that impact? But sometimes, just being seen is enough to hold parts of yourself together if you're in a time of difficulty. And to be able to regroup later.

Daniel: So that's all. So, respect, Carol, to what you're sharing and it's good that you're feeling the depth of what's happening. Yeah. Thank you.

Daniel: Others want to say a thing about this? And we're going to go ahead [inaudible 00:17:31] [Melissa 00:17:34]. You got it on mute from your side. Yeah, you're good.

Melissa: Yeah. Hiya, can you hear me?

Daniel: Yeah.

Melissa: Yeah. It's along this line but it's maybe a slightly expanded. I'm just curious around how an animist's perspective sees, what appears to me, like an ethical conundrum. Like the lack of equivalence between us as animals and other animals that we can and are ending life on Earth. And they're not. And everything was fine, kind of, until humans came along. And so the moral equivalency seems different. Does that make sense?

Daniel: Say just a little more. I think I follow you. The worry that we have a disproportionate amount of power to cause harm relative to the other kinds of animals?

Melissa: Yeah, that's it.

Daniel: We do.

Melissa: And so how do we hold that?

Daniel: Yeah, that's the question, isn't it? Fuck.

Melissa: Yeah.

Daniel: Hopefully better than most of us are. There's just a tremendous amount of responsibility in terms of power. And I think I'm biased that when traditional Indigenous systems and wisdoms are functioning well and cultures that, whether or not they're Indigenous per se, give reverence to the Earth, there is a way of relating that's more cautious. It's [inaudible 00:19:15] joyful and celebratory, but there's a sense that because we're so deeply embedded in a web of kinship, whatever we do, we take life and to sustain ourselves is going to be impacting others. And there's accountability and indebtedness with that.

Daniel: That's not a bad thing, but it requires attention and care and ritual maintenance for us to not suffer as a result. And so the real fragmentation and confusion and the psyche of modernity, many people living as modern people tend to, is a function of the lack of connection. It's all the care that isn't being shown for the others that is manifesting. It's all the symptoms, behaviors and self-perpetuating troubles. So do we have a disproportionate responsibility? Yeah, I think so.

Daniel: And the audio is still not so good. Is it difficult for others too? Give a thumbs up if the audio is not so good. Yeah. That's too bad. Let me try to plug in my microphone real quick. Sorry for the audio trouble. It's not usually like that.

Daniel: Feed the soul of the world, audio's bad. Let's see here. Give me a thumbs up if the audio gets any better. Is it actually better? Oh, good. Okay. Let's do that then. Mercy.

Daniel: Your question's right at the heart of the matter, Melissa. It's possible to answer it in the abstract, but what matters, where it really gets traction, is what's my role personally in embracing the tremendous responsibility that comes with our gifts, or with my specific gifts? And then it gets very specific. And that's actually the next lesson, the focus of the next lesson is how do you start to stand in your specific place? Which is terrifying, to do that. But to not do it is even worse, because then you have to face all the powers and be like, "Yeah, I was just kind of scared of my life." I'm like, really? It takes a lot, you know, to have one of those lives. And like, I know. Be less scared next time.

Daniel: So I think that we do our best to show up all the way for our lives. That's one of the things we do. Which means to be loving and kind and to learn and try to, on

the balance, bring more compassion and love into the world than harm and fuckery. To really do better.

Daniel: Sorry. Sorry for that. That's my take on that. Thanks, Melissa. Good. Anybody else? All right, there's a question from Elizabeth. Yeah, real straightforward question. How do you handle the fear and horror that one might feel, not everyone would necessarily feel, of picking up a dead, broken or really injured animal? Well, I think some people, based on their early life experiences, based on your cultural conditioning and based on just your soul level affinities and temperament, are more suited for that kind of work than others.

Daniel: And people had a really tough childhood, I think on the whole are less inclined to things like butchering animals and resetting broken femurs and things like that. But it's not that different from how you pick up a child that just had its kneecap shattered or something and it's just screaming. And that's not everybody's work. But if it's your work, then you have a protocol that you follow and you need to be clear on what's needed in the moment and stay calm and have a certain amount of impersonal way of holding things in order to navigate it well, I think.

Daniel: That's been my experience, at least, with butchering animals. Which is not a passion, but it's something I've found grounding and nourishing. It helps me stay connected to my food from doing that. And so there's an honoring and a direct connection made, but also I'm not getting super bond-y with the animal in the moment. So it's a little bit of both. And I've seen that same temperament. My father's a firefighter, an EMT, and I've done wilderness first responder trainings. And people that are first responders or medics or cops, soldiers, people like that, and who are suited for it, have a steadiness that can be cultivated but a little bit of it's temperamental. So, yeah.

Daniel: It's a good quality to cultivate, to know how to handle the messiness of life. I mean, a lot of people, you need [inaudible 00:25:07], working with bodies and health and all that. You need some steadiness. So, thanks.

Daniel: Yeah. Go ahead. You want to do a follow-up? I'm mute from your side, Elizabeth. Go for it.

Elizabeth: Thank you for that, [Daniel 00:25:28]. I realize that my fear about picking up an animal is because I see the animal as an other. And after you said that it's like going to a child who's injured, I realize that's it. I need to open that heart of compassion and see that animal as my child. And then I could do it. Because that animal needs love. So, thank you for that.

Daniel: Great. Perfect. That's how you do it. Good. Others? Does anybody have any ... Kind of going on the heart cracked open theme here. I could probably say some stuff, but it's more interesting to hear from you all.

Daniel: Yeah, [Tom 00:26:25], go for it. You're up, sorry. It's on mute, I think.

Tom: Oh yeah, okay. There we go. This is a little bit less heart center, perhaps, but I would like to hear your thoughts, Daniel. You spoke in the last call, I think, about the difference between appreciating the archetype of an animal versus or in contrast to making sure you don't view animals as symbols. And I'm still a little unclear about the difference between the two, if you could speak to that a little bit.

Daniel: Yeah. It's a tricky, nuanced question. Because different things can be true at different times. Like in the horse culture, humans probably have a certain symbolic meaning, so to speak, among ... The horse spirit and the humans have a relationship. And so horse can relate with an individual human, but you can't help but represent your group. I can be, okay, I'm just Daniel. But at a certain point, I'm a guy. When I'm interacting with someone, for better, for worse, I'm either going to handle that well or exacerbate whatever historical trouble might be there. And we are part of a group and in that way, you could say we're symbols, or representatives, if you will, of any given group who we're a part of.

Daniel: There is a distinction, that I think a lot of traditionalists live with in some way, between an individual representative of a bigger collective power, like if bear is present in the yard here, now is that a specific bear? Or is that Bear with a capital B-, like bear spirit, the deity that is bear, the big bear consciousness thing? I mean, the traditional answer I think is both, like Bear spirit if you will is showing up in that form. And Bear spirit could show up not in a physical form in the dream time tonight, right? So funny, I glanced at ... I didn't think about it, I just glanced down at the sticker on my computer. It's a bear sticker. What's going on? And so to show up in the form of a sticker. Now, is that a symbol? In this moment, when I'm talking to a bunch of people on an animism course about Bear, it's probably the Bear, so ...

Daniel: Like a lot of truth, what is true is what is relationally connective in the moment. Meaning, the truth isn't fixed exactly. That in one moment, it might be more dynamic and more honoring and more capture the tone of the connection to frame it as Tom relating with the Bear spirit. And in another moment, it might feel a bit like you're really having this very specific relationship with a specific bear. And of course, bear IN a [inaudible 00:29:50] is going to pour through that individual bear, but it also feels more specific.

Daniel: When we're having a conversation, you and I, Tom, sure, I'm relating with human and all of your ancestors and all of humanity through you. But we've been on a call or two, so there's also, "Hey, Tom in Weaverville, how you doing?" There's a little bit specialism also. And so that kind of wide and narrow angle of how we're relating with others, it's not that one is more true, it's that you want to be curious where the energy's at in the moment. And which way of being brings the most love and connectivity?

Daniel: One of the point that you were speaking to, the hazard, I'm saying don't see others as just a symbol. Even stop talking about the animals in that way. If you're like, oh, well, "What's it symbolic of that we're killing the baboons? Are we just killing our own, inner animal nature?" And that misses the heart of the issue. It's like, no, here, hold this dead baboon, if you would. And then that's different. It's like oh, this hasn't actually just only assembled. This is another person.

Daniel: So that's the important thing, is to not let the way in which we are symbols within each others' psyche, human and otherwise, to not let that move us away from the love and relationality that holds the world together. Does that respond some?

Tom: It does. And it also makes me think of my relationship with other humans, how important it is to see each person as an individual and to not maybe do the violence of relating to them as a symbol for fear of bypassing the unique interactions that's happening between the two of us.

Daniel: It's good. It's a real ... Speak just to my own angle on the subculture that I'm most immersed in in the United States right now. It's my read ... We're all coming into a much bigger, longer story. But it's my read in some ways that because there's such a terrible, painful, oppressive history ongoing here, that there has been a lot of necessary push for people to really understand their own social position. And their own group and their own identity and their own place and the implications of that.

Daniel: And at least 90% of that's really good and necessary and important. And then occasionally, it looks like people really getting reduced or related with it in a way that feels harmful to me as being seen as only part of that group, and only a symbol and only ... And that also has a unique toll on the individual. Sometimes there's definitely a risk that even well-intended, far-left, radical, progressive, all the things you're supposed to be people, still mess it up by seeing folks only as symbols. Only as a face of a group. And there's a kind of laziness to that, in love. There's a failure to love well that could happen in that.

Tom: Yeah, I very much agree. Thank you. Like you say, it's a nuanced question, so thanks for speaking to it.

Daniel: Thanks, Tom. Yeah. And if you could ... Yeah, thanks. I see [Wendy 00:33:37] and [Sasha 00:33:38] also, and see that Victoria's sent a question of, can I give examples of how other cultures handle grief in a healthy way?

Daniel: Well, I spoke to it some in the lesson. In the culture I was raised in in the States, things are pretty grief-phobic. And so there is a swing in the other direction that says grief is inherently good. You should cry your face off and really go for it. And mostly I agree with that. I think it's a little bit not nuanced, because you want to care for people throughout that process. There are some considerations with it. It's not just all amounts of all grief all the time are inherently good. So there's a little bit of nuance to it.

Daniel: But I think that what's important to add is that grief doesn't necessarily look like strong emotion, always. It can look like virtual action, it can look like group-level choices and decisions and behaviors. And in some ways I think it's really important to enact, ritually, change and loss and to find ways that ... There's not a right way to do it. I guess the right way to do it is to turn toward life and find any way that honors. So there are lots of forms for that.

Daniel: I guess the wrong way to do it would be to avoid feeling, loss. And now the form can take so many forms. And not all cultures are big on crying, necessarily. From my limited in experience in [Yoruba 00:35:19] culture, it's not that people aren't expressive, but they're not ... It seems to be more in the ritual enacting than in the strong grieving. And death isn't always mourned the same way. Some cultures are like, "Good for you. Way to get out of this weird fishbowl of incarnation. Congrats." And so they're happy for the dead, also. But sad also.

Daniel: So there's not a right way to do it. But to get messy and grapple with all of it on a group level, if possible, is the general principle. I know it's kind of a vague answer, but I'm reluctant to speak too much from cultures I haven't really lived at depth in. And I've been more of a generalist in some ways. I don't want to overstep my knowledge. But together, that's the healthy part, is communally, I think. I think the individual, isolated thing is not ideal if it doesn't have to be like that. Yeah.

Daniel: Let me go to Wendy and then I think Sasha had a hand up as well. Yeah. Good to see you Wendy, yeah. I can ... Yeah. You're off mute. Oh, sorry. I got in the way of it. You got to unmute it again.

Wendy: Okay. There I am.

Daniel: Good.

Wendy: Couple of things, just on that last point. I can see why, in our emotion-phobic society, that we would flick to the other side of the pattern. And it does look like crying a lot, grieving, because of the way we were shut down a lot. And so that makes a lot of sense, what you're saying, that grieving doesn't necessarily look like tears. It can be more action. So that's very helpful.

Wendy: I think the other thing I was going to say, I'm grateful for the talk about dead animals on the side of the road. I'm in Queensland, Australia, and I've just got back from Tasmania, where I've never seen so much roadkill in my life. And I think Marie-Louise's question really helped me un-numb. And in relation to what's being said about animals and humans as archetypes and the individual, I can see where crying or grieving for the individual animal is one way of seeing it.

Wendy: And while I was crying, while Marie-Louise was talking, it really became clear to me that the grieving that I specifically went out of my way to do for, around the killings of First Nations people while I was in Tasmania. I'm actually seeing all the roadkill, all the dead animals, as a symbolic representation of the invisibility to our eyes of that in the landscape. And seeing the connection and that that makes a lot of sense for me. And it's both and ... And yeah, so I can be ... I can make use of it in both ways, so thank you.

Daniel: Yeah, thank you, Wendy. I tend to ... People sometimes ask me, well, how did things get so jacked up, culturally? I mean, of course they're not in every place, but you've noticed the bad news and the colonialism and the stuff. If you're in the course, you get that there's some things out of balance. I don't know.

Daniel: I mean, I think I've spoke to it before. But one way to read it is that, and this pins a lot of it on European people, but I'm speaking to a certain aspect of our story and history as a certain demographic of European people got really emotionally constipated and blocked up and not able to feel. And just stuck in the grieving. And cultural ... And it didn't get un-stuck. And so it gets played out. When you're really, really un-stuck from grief, or when you're really blocked around it, sorry, one of the things you'll do is hurt other people. You're trying to get in touch with your own pain and because you can't find it in yourself, you hurt other people in order to try to find it. And it's like, I need to find this, but oh. There it is. You're crying? I got you. You're still calling it into the universe but it's being rejected out and replicated on others. And so when a whole culture isn't very good at hurting, start creating a backlog of suffering, then it gets exported.

Daniel: Resmaa Menakem's book, My Grandmother's Hands, he's an African American psychologist, I believe in Minnesota, or Minneapolis. And he writes very

clearly about the transfer of white-bodied harm and pain into brown and black bodies. And the colonization of the Americas and the history of slavery in the Americas. And of course, it applies in other places, Australia, New Zealand, et cetera. And so that very ... I'm going to share some un-metabolized grief with you. Here it goes. Like enacting of violence. Yeah.

Daniel: And so, yeah. How does that feel? Why don't you cry about it? I'm not sure how to. He just passed it along, yeah. If somebody could type that name, if you have it, Seyta. [https://www.resmaa.com/books] It's a solid book. It's recommended. Thank you, Wendy, for speaking. It's good to see you.

Daniel: I think [Pauline 00:41:44], maybe in New Zealand. Yeah. Oh, I see an offering. [Roco's 00:41:50] offering to the hawk. That's good. The vultures are like that here in North America, too. It's good. I mean, the other beings are ... Nothing goes to waste, necessarily, in that sense. Even if it's just the very small creatures eating them. So thank you, Pauline, for that. Good.

Daniel: Yeah, Francis Weller's [inaudible 00:42:20] too, about good things, about his work. Others want to share anything while we're here?

Daniel: You know it's not ... Yeah, go ahead, Marie-Louise, and then I'll share a thing.

Marie-Louise: My take also is that what about if the roadkill was a way of the animals to wake us up and to open our hearts? And that the only time I hit a kangaroo was when I really needed to take notice of something that was happening in my life with one of my client that was really almost life and death. And so since then, what I do is I'll ask a kangaroo, "Please, can you keep yourself safe in front of my car?" And each time I see a kangaroo on the side of the road that doesn't jump in front of my car, I say, "Thank you so much for not jumping in front of my car." And I haven't hit a kangaroo since. It's also that relational, yeah. Just that.

Daniel: Yeah, yeah, that's good. One could worry that reading things like an event, like killing another being in an accident, as just a message for us, that that's self-absorbed, you're self-referential. Now it could be like that. And it can also be a way of receiving the gift of what's happening and be like, "Well, what am I being invited in this moment to see or learn?" It's not the same as saying it's for you, but it kind of is for you. And so there is a way of holding both and not having it get just collapsed in, something like that. So I want to appreciate, Marie-Louise, what you're saying and that there's intimacy with that.

Daniel: I see [Flora 00:44:21] and then [Alice 00:44:21], yeah. You're off mute, Flora, go ahead, yeah.

Flora: Yeah, hi. I'm calling from Vienna, Austria. And I don't know, maybe it's also a bit of a question if you want to speak to that, but also more of a sharing about having a broader sense of ecological grief. Which is also becoming more and more of a topic or also term that's spoken about just in feeling how we're in this deep crisis. And having this sense of just the collective grief of the Earth. And of what's happening. And for me, basically this is something that I've grown up with, so I've always had this sense that it was this deep sadness and grief that was ... I mean, also my parent are ecologists. That probably plays into that. But yeah, just took me a long time to realize where that was coming from.

Flora: And I don't know, something that was helpful for me, I guess, was also [Joanna Macy 00:45:36], who's a deep ecologist and Buddhist and she speaks a lot about that and also about compassion. And how to handle that grief by basically keeping your heart open. And one sentence that stuck with me was when she said, "The heart that breaks open can hold the whole universe."

Daniel: That's right.

Flora: Yeah. That was one thing.

Flora: And then also, something else that I've experienced as I'm training as a nature and forest therapy guide is that often, one of the gifts that the forest offers to guide some participants in the walks is grief, actually. Sometimes it's joy, sometimes it's other emotions, but often it's grief and as a way of connecting.

Daniel: That's right.

Flora: So, yeah. Just-

Daniel: And they might not lead with that. You have a new friend and you're just hanging out for the first time, you're not like, "Here, let me share the most [inaudible 00:46:54]."

Daniel: "Hey. It has been good getting to know you. Do you want to hear a story?" And then it's, welcome to my pain scape. The others are like that, too. We've talked about that. And yeah, for me to speak to the Buddhist angle a little bit, one of the most inspiring ethical frameworks that I've seen articulated is Bodhisattva ethic and Mahayana Buddhism, so Tibetan, Zen, other traditions. And it's basically a vow of non-abandonment. And that's constructed to include the other than humans, as it often is.

Sometimes it gets more narrowly focused on humans. It basically says, I'm going to turn toward life again and again and until the end of time. Until every being, everywhere, in all form throughout time and space is well, as if these beings are the extension of my own body or vice versa. Because really, it's kind of how it is.

Daniel: And so it can be arrived at through an angle of compassion and caring and it can also be arrived at through a close examination of the nature of things. And to say, "Well, there's actually no separate self. And so how could I possibly be completely well if I'm not separate from others?" It's like if my hand has gangrene, the body's just like, "I'm fine. No big deal. That's somebody else's hand." And then you see your arm, and you're like, "Oh my God. That's my hand." And so we're the same body.

Daniel: That ethic basically, one of the implications is this topic around grief, of course we don't get done with it in the next hundred lifetimes. We just, it's about allowing the whole mess into our heart. And to know that there's not necessarily anything to do about that but be with it. And if you're just being with it and being with yourself really, in that way, then there will be moments when there's things to do. And then your whole life becomes the response. That's good.

Daniel: And I do think, somebody was saying, that the animals are like, "Wake up," so nicely. We could send a little bird, a little hummingbird by, or we could send a kangaroo to smash in the front of your car. But whatever it takes, you know. Because we're really in it. They suffer tremendously from us. So yeah, thanks. Good. I'm glad to see you this month. This month in Berlin.

Flora: Yes, right. Yeah. yeah.

Daniel: I know, I leave in three days for Europe. Mercy. Alice, you had a question? Oh, sorry. I keep messing with people's mute.

Alice: Oh, no, that's all right. Am I ... I'm good? Hey, [inaudible 00:50:10]. I'm Alice. I'm speaking from New Zealand, so thank you for bringing on this call that happens to be at midday rather than midnight.

Alice: I had a little bit of a question that takes some of these threads and joins them in some way. Well, not that ... Everything's joined anyway. But in New Zealand we've got this big push, drive, for pest-free management type situations. I think my trying to tease in from an animist perspective, how would we see coming into the humans', I guess, position of power to act or to intervene in a conservation setting? We've got a current situation where we've got possums and stoats and all of this in our native forests suffering from ... Oh, pest-free, sorry. Yeah, yeah. These little guys that are going and eating all the eggs of our endangered birds and then so I'm trying to-

Daniel: No, you have a big non-native species problem in New Zealand.

Alice: Yeah, exactly. And it's getting to this point where we have a nationwide, really big, staunch policy around it. And we're trying to desperately push for this 2050, we're going to be pest-free island oasis. And it comes and it really smashes into my gut a lot around on one level, there's the poison. But that's a whole nother set. But I think from a more relationality, how do we hold ... What is our position, I guess, as humans, to intervene on something that is maybe created by humans a long time ago, but there is this sense of-

Daniel: No, I understand. I think ... I do. I've reflected on it a bit and I know there's a ... Peter Michael Bauer is one person whose work I respect. Maybe Seyta, who's actually a friend of Peter's, could put a name in the chat. [https://www.petermichaelbauer.com/] And I know a lot of good work among herbalists is being done to be like, "Hey. I know you all like to hate on non-native and invasive plants, but why don't we slow our roll a little bit and be a little more relational about the situation?"

Alice: Good.

Daniel: And I've spent time in pulling up non-native plants and I still have a favoritism toward local or indigenous plants. And so I think from a ecological perspective, it does make sense to me to favor maximum biological diversity. And when there are plants that are ... I mean, in a more biologically diverse ecosystem, typically there's more resilience to non-native species. And so doing things to intentionally tinker with a ecosystem to encourage biological diversity is a very, very old and kind of sacred and interesting human habit.

Alice: Yeah, totally.

Daniel: And so the tinkering itself isn't inherently a problem. There are some great works from native California herbalists who ... I think I mentioned in a previous course or previous lesson, basically that one of the quotes from M. Kat Anderson's book Tending the Wild. And I think it's from a Yurok, Native California Elder, goes something like, "Well, when the settlers came and a lot of people got sick and died, the land went back to a wild state. It was very sad." And so if you take just that, it flips the idea of this romantic, Indigenous person living in an undisturbed ecosystem.

Daniel: What they're saying is, "We worked our asses off to really curate a living garden and delicate ecological balance, that when there is big cultural disruption for us, it went back into a less human-managed state. And the level of ecological diversity actually dropped." And so the way I would ideally approach the management of an

ecosystem, if somebody actually cared to put me in charge of it, is I'd get a bunch of really intuitive people who've been living in that area to have a council for a while of listening to the other than human people. And trying to negotiate how those things go.

Daniel: There's an invasive fox or something that needs to go, then I would actually ask the fox and ask the others. And the fox might be like, "It's cool. I can go. You all got your thing going on." And some other being that you ask might be like, "I'd love to stay in these places." And so if the ecological management could be approached in a more animist frame, I think the choice to favor some species over others, which is ancient and not inherently problematic, could be carried out in a way that doesn't replicate these colonialist, aggressive mindsets.

Daniel: I don't think it's the outer action that's inherently harmful to curate for biological diversity. I think it's the lack of relational nuance. It causes people who are sensitive to be like, "Wait a minute." So let's say I'm part Maori and part settler, which part of me are you going to pull off the island? Same, right?

Alice: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally. Absolutely. And an inherent recognition that we are all of different ... There is no such thing as a native. Native to what?

Daniel: And in a sense, the native person, so to speak, we can think of it biologically or culturally. Those are not the same, but they sometimes overlap. But then we can also think of it in terms of who is behaving with manners relative to the locals? Because someone of European descent here in North Carolina could be deeply embedded in even intergenerational relationships with the mountains and the plants and the animals. And in that sense, if you interview the mountains, and the other than humans, they could be like, "This is a nice person. We should let him hang around."

Alice: I love that. Thank you for articulating that. I'm actually doing some research on this particular topic and it was ... On a theoretical level you can have these discussions and then people at a conference will be like, "So what does that actually mean on a grounded ... What does this theory translate into the reality?" And sometimes I go ...

Daniel: We're not really interested in the practical part. Yeah, [crosstalk 00:57:35] exactly. It's a question I like to haunt those spaces with.

Alice: Yeah. That's exactly my answer.

Daniel: When it's an opportunity for it, is, "Are the voices of the people you're talking about being included?" What do you mean by people? "Yes, I mean the plant and the animal and the mountain and the river people." They're like, "How would we do

that?" Oh, oh, you don't have the technology for it? Does anyone you know have a technology for it? Oh ... Okay.

Alice: And then they leave. They're stuck with their little tail between their legs.

Daniel: Yeah, kind of. It's like, no, no. Don't be ashamed. Come back. Learn. Be open to learning. Come on. Some Indigenous scientists who actually figured out how to talk to the whales, so why don't you ask them? Good. Good.

Alice: Awesome. Thank you.

Daniel: Thanks, Alice. Yeah. Good. We'll finish up in a minute here, but yeah. Just scanning the chat for stuff. Yeah, that's right, [Kai 00:58:35], about the people not listening to the others. And I think, I haven't done the work deeply from Joanna Macy's approach, but I know folks who find a lot of benefit in the Council of All Beings approach. Anything that moves toward that is good, is corrective.

Daniel: Same like what Alice was just saying, we were just talking about, make sure in your engagement with the course and the material that it doesn't get too abstract. If you follow your personal experience and, like with Elizabeth, appreciated the sense of making an important connection. Or Marie-Louise. And if you follow what specifically is happening for you, it'll open up. The bottom will give out. Be like, whoa. Here's the paradigm shift. And that's what you're looking for, is those spaces where things open up.

Daniel: And we don't love generally, it's usually quite specific. And so the more specific you can make it, the better. That's listening in to who's local to you. And it's the same in part two of the course. We're going to, it's similar themes, but one of the things we're emphasizing there is about really rooting in more specifically with the land where you're at. Even if it's not the most hip and wild and whatever you think of as spiritual place on Earth, where you happen to live. To really see the holiness where you're at. And it's good.

Daniel: Thanks, everybody. I'm glad we made the little extra call. It's good to see some different faces. And I hope you are feeling well met by the course. And I hope the technology holds next week in Portugal. I've never been to Portugal, but that should be good. We'll be in northern Portugal, along the Douro River. And I am glad to be continuing the goodness. Seyta will be there as well. And yeah, glad we'll be continuing. So, thanks everybody. Have a good rest of your night. Okay. Take good care.