

# South London Permaculture

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2011

Issue 7

Spring Equinox

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## News from the mews

### Virgin on the political

Cycling seems to be hot on the agenda. Not least my intended trip to Palestine this Autumn could coincide with a bike ride on behalf of freedom, with Ride to Gaza. "In Autumn 2011, many cyclists will embark on one of cycling's toughest, yet greatest adventures – a ride from London to Gaza. We will be made up of all kinds of people from across the UK of varying levels of fitness. Volunteers are invited from all political, cultural and religious backgrounds. There will be single sex and mixed sex teams. If you wish to join an all female or all male team contact us as early as possible for help in facilitating this. Riders will be raising much needed funds for kindergartens in the refugee camps throughout Gaza."

#### What to expect:

- Average of roughly 100 miles per day, 8-9 hours in the saddle.
- Provision of all that is needed for the journey:

Bike, ferry costs, meals, accommodation (could be town halls, gyms or camp sites, even a tent in the desert) – not included will be personal items, entry visas, bags, toiletries. If in doubt, ask!

- Riders celebration party on reaching Gaza
- Tented Village, mess tent
- Event nurse, first aiders
- Bike maintenance and repairs
- Training schedules (including rides), nutritional support, pre-event briefing

The journey will probably set off in mid-October and starts from London, heading out through France, Italy, Syria Jordan and Egypt. There is a 2 day ferry ride included crossing the length of the Mediterranean. My personal desire is to continue from Italy to Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. Their details can be found on Facebook at [facebook.com/ridetogaza](http://facebook.com/ridetogaza), Twitter: @ridetogaza, For more information contact them at [ridetogaza@gmail.com](mailto:ridetogaza@gmail.com) See also <http://www.100daystopalestine.org/why-pedal/narratives/environmental-justice/> & <http://www.socialistunity.com/?p=6628>

Those with international links can acquire other passports and thus fare better in unstable countries like Syria. My personal alternative of leaving from Spain where a November olive harvest will allow me to gather my equipment and head out east. The intention is to work with Zaytoun, which for me will complete the spiritual journey from one side of the Mediterranean to the other. For those who would join me or support me through sponsorship please contact me earlier rather than later.



If only the world went around on the same energy.

On the 19th June the British Heart Foundation sponsored the organised bike ride to Brighton from London where an amazing 28,000 cyclists turned up. The weather seemed to break just at the right moment for this 54 mile route. For those with a bit more adventure, the London to Brighton Night Ride, is a 60 mile Night Ride, taking place on 26/27 May 2012. "Leave the hustle and bustle of London behind and journey down starlit lanes in time for sunrise by the sea." For more information see <http://www.bhf.org.uk/get-involved/events/bike-rides/london-to-brighton.aspx?TestGet=Y>.

### Membership offers (see back page)

- ◆ **Free DVD**
- ◆ Regular email bulletins on courses and events around the UK
- ◆ A collectable design portfolio
- ◆ 10% discount on courses run by SLP
- ◆ Discounted books and library resources
- ◆ Volunteer and paid opportunities at festivals and other events
- ◆ Workdays and private tuition
- ◆ 2 newsletters per year
- ◆ Reduced prices on plants and freebies

# Chair's Chat

has

## The Virgin

Spring brings many things, not least new growth and new beginnings. The completion of my MA brought an unexpected gift - a relationship to a very young girl close approaching 18. She now reached that golden age, the last I saw of her was celebrating the special day at Stonehenge, but I was not with her. Alastair McIntosh reminds us of the *erotica* lost to our way of life, not unlike some of the biblical Psalms that bind sex with Creation. This is the true sexuality that communises us all counterpoint to repressive culture that pretends to hide it. (See my poem opposite) It only pretends because popular media is so tunnel-visioned, yet this is changing also. Where internet takes over as the favourite form of visual stimulation TV is left for the outright lazy who have no desire to search too hard and like the idea of being surprised by the mounting crap it elicits. But the world is full of crap; one lifestyle is judged accordingly by his or her ability to find purchase in this world, and to take the best from it. That is what I do, and I am good at it. When things look like they are going to drag me into a deep hole I destroy myself. I am not an escapist but a generator, a moulder of new paths, an example, an energy supply.

One would think that a New-Age traveller who has never had a formal day's education in her life would be liberated in her mind. She has her own caravan, cluttered with it is, and I came at that moment in her life when she wanted to escape, from her mother. The lack of fatherly influence is quite obvious. She had all the qualities I wanted, nobility, strength of character, able to develop, and morals. I fell in love. Unfortunately she tried to juggle two relationships at once and she became manipulative. I raised her up and she revelled in the power. I made her happy and that gave her reason to remain selfish. I offered her my life because I thought these were new beginnings, the time when I would put my past woes to boot. I thought she was a gift from God. What happened?

She was a virgin, locked up and too reluctant to give away her love if it meant sharing. She got used to the idea of being looked after. I lost out to a drug dealer who had a car and gave her a smoke. She was just a kid, intelligent at it, who wanted to keep me as an appendant. There is no doubt that we fell in love together, we were in communication practically everyday for 2 months using Skype, mobile and email. But I didn't want to be treated as second best. So I laid down an ultimatum: if she wouldn't chose me as her courtier then she should let me go. But she wouldn't, and to prove this she slept with me and kissed me. These were the happiest moments of my life, until her other side reared its ugly head. I destroyed my relationship with her by telling her boyfriend about me, which all got messy. I was threatened and I defended myself. She became vile towards me, and where once electronic communications were used for poetic engagements, it became the medium for attack. She turned her love for me into hatred, and went into a state of denial. Like I said, she was just a kid, an intelligent one at that. If only I accepted her offer to remain friends, releasing her from unnecessary pressure, I would still be kissing her....

So what did I learn? I have been here before. Life for me is about 'What else does it offer if it goes wrong?' So during that creative time I wrote a song for her and am now writing a book around the experience. But it enforces my opinion that the Western world is a broken world, people in denial, who think being hurt is the only way forward. Not least it hangs love up on a coat hanger. Love that is better worn amongst indigenous people who put family and tribal bonds first, food security and camaraderie over quick fixes and emotional evacuation. Not everyone is in this rut, the environmental movement is quick to uphold the higher immaterial values that politicians and economists bombastically "literate". For the first time in my life I held a mobile phone next to me everyday and realised the neurosis that this infectious girl was spreading. Maybe 10 texts a day, so much so that I complained to O2 why they were charging me. I could not believe I had written that many texts - hundreds - all for her. It is neurotic food. It occasionally replaced her crap diet of eating low quality food. It became the panacea for her emotional instability. As I say, she met me on the premise that I would "save" her. Well, I certainly gave her rights of passage. Virgin no more, literally the day she was taken was the catalyst for her hatred towards me. But I still love her and will now follow a life of celibacy because I had my happiest moment with her. She made me complete, and I cannot fight hatred with hatred. She would not admit to it, but she wanted me as her lover, not a boyfriend. Is there nobody safe in this Western world? I needs move on to greener pastures I think and try to bridge the gap to the girl I still love.  
MerlynX

# The Urban Green Fair 2011

If it rains I will still be there, setting up the apple press and having loads of laughs with the kids. Again, SLP will be creating a picnic area, and volunteers are always welcome. Please apply to come either Friday, Saturday, or the Sunday to work. I will guarantee meal tickets and maybe some goodies from the SLP trade stall, including plants and home-made products. If anybody would like to conduct a related workshop within the enclosure contact [info@southlondonpermaculture.com](mailto:info@southlondonpermaculture.com). Likewise contributions to the space should be around (L)earning, (E)ntertainment, (A)rt, and (F)ood. See our website for more information on Re-LEAF.



## DIY fruit trees

We have a number of fruit trees for sale, including family types in which trees bear more than one type of fruit. A few trees should be available all year round at discounted prices for members.

## South London Permaculture

We also run apple days and grafting workshops and have an authentic Italian wine/apple press and scrapper. Please contact us to book in advance.



See the website under 'market' for a full list of plants available.



Tel: 0845 458 1734

## *Peaches* by Merlyn Peter

Her stride, the way she walks  
Upright, her head held high  
She makes me ready

I follow, my thighs give chase  
Bloody, a spear on her gait  
My heart cries rebel

She's close, I feel her heat  
Her scent, leaves a trail of leaves  
A bush who smells of myrtle

A snake, I wind a route  
Her cover, a shady resort  
Brings me unto her bower

Peaches, sticking out of the hedge  
Peaches, I bite into her nest  
Peaches, sweating juice down my neck  
Peaches, leaves my face in a mess  
Peaches, her lips I ingest  
Peaches, I drink of her sex  
Peaches, thrust them down with zest  
Peaches, I giv'em my best shot and no less

What beauty is this creaturely love,  
that binds up like a deer to a hunter  
How majestic she drew me in,  
like a sword into its scabbard.  
Like a seed carried in its husk,  
nurtured in the moisture of the earth.  
Swelling to puncture her hymen,  
to give rise to a virgin sovereign heir.

## Easy Elderflower champagne

1 bowl of flowers picked on a dry day just as they have opened  
2 spoons of cider vinegar  
2 lemons squeezed with skins  
2lb white sugar  
2-3 Gallons of warm water

For a cordial sprinkle sugar over flower heads and leave in bowl overnight with cloth over the top. This produces a syrup which can subsequently be used in cordials without needing to boil stems. For champagne place all ingredients in a large container and let stew for 2-4 days.

Strain through a muslin bag into demijohns with corks. When they start popping their gas levels can be gauged.

Decant into plastic bottles with lids and watch over 10 days for expansion. Refrigerating early on will slow down the fermentation process.

Using small recycled bottles allows for test tasting.  
Serve cool.

In conversation with Zaytoun, at the 2008 Urban Green Fair in Brixton and in private, representing the commercial and humanitarian interests of

the Palestinians, Atif Choudrey, an international volunteer, likened their plight to "death by a thousand cuts" because of the gradual destruction of their livelihoods. In a more recent interview he responded by saying that this has nothing to do with religion. When questioned further he went onto to say that ethnic cleansing has distorted history. Religious narrative is not sufficient enough to do this justice. Rather dehumanisation is the real narrative. It is obvious that curfews imposed by the Jews, and the segregation of Palestinian communities through the creation of a partition wall, are having an effect on the country likened to political and economic genocide. "Our life, our identity, is in the land – even our destiny," says Taysir Sadia Yaseen. "We won't leave it." There is now less than 12% of pre-1948 land titles left to the Palestinian inhabitants who have become "immigrants in our own land" explains Hamda Blilat. Taysir owned 1,000 olive trees before the fence had been built, which had been a family heirloom. What remains are 400, the other 600 are on the other side where he is not allowed access. As a Palestinian farmer he risks confiscation of equipment if he attempts to work his trees. (*Excerpted from my dissertation now available in bounded fashion for £6. The full essay title is 'If land economies are the ecological imperative of the rise of the modern environmental movement, may one find an historical precedent in the origins of Christianity?'. Contact editor for a copy.*)

Zaytoun products are very much prevalent in most health food shops across the country. As an olive farmer myself I hope to offer some expertise on innovative techniques I am using in Catalonia when I go to volunteer this Autumn. Not least I am there to learn also. I welcome group participation.

For more information see <http://www.zaytoun.org/> and <http://www.theironwall>, a video narrative directed by Mohammed Alatar, (2006).

## *Zaytoun: an exploration of Palestine*



ZAYTOUN

# Remembering your Sovereignty Part 2

By Thomas Smith

In this second instalment Thomas Smith deals with the power to assert one's inalienable human rights. In particular he looks at skilling people up to be able to craft their own lawful **Notices**, for use both against public and private bodies. (The editor would like to apologise for misrepresenting the author of the article on previous print runs but is now corrected here.)

Your ability to craft Notices may be incredibly empowering in any number of situations. A letter can be ignored, misinterpreted, lost, forgotten about or responded to in any way. A Notice on the other hand is a powerful document that guarantees careful attention. It is quite simple to create notices, indeed just putting the word; 'NOTICE' at the top of the document you are sending (or 'serving' as it is known) is enough to create that presence. There are a great number of ways to word a notice, and many examples can be found on the internet regarding many different applications of this tool. It essentially allows you to respond with adequate weight to those who might seek to claim authority over you. It is useful to respond to notices you might receive with a notice of your own as any other course will not adequately refute their presumption that you agree to exist within their authority.

It may also be important to remind the reader at this point that none of the options outlined in this understanding are in anyway useful for helping people to 'get away with it' or 'find a loophole', it is not necessary to think this way. If you have not violated the Common Law, you are a powerful sovereign being, residing in your integrity and seeking peace and clarity with those who would claim authority over you. You are hiding from no-one and offering no lies.

For example; You may receive a 'Notice of Penalty Fine' or similar from a council or police department or other private corporation. It will almost certainly do the following, be addressed to a person, 'Mr. Somebody', allege that you have violated a statute, allege that this makes you liable for a fine, or threaten court action should this not be paid in a timely fashion. It is an offer to contract. If this notice is ignored, consent to the terms of the notice will be assumed and eventually more notices about court dates and bailiffs may start to arrive. The act of ignoring this notice does not generate dishonour on your part as it makes presumptions about you that are not accurate and not lawfully binding. It is however always wise to seek clarity between parties at every point possible, challenging presumptions that may be acted upon to your detriment, [for which] nipping this in the bud may relieve you from potential struggle at a later date. In this instance it may be advisable to respond with a notice that acknowledges their notice and goes on to demonstrate your understanding that you are not the 'person' addressed, but in fact a sovereign human being. It should express a desire for peace and greater clarity, and carry the weight of a sovereign individual. It should not plead, appeal or beg in any way. It might offer a conditional acceptance of their offer, subject to your own terms. You might for example, accept their offer to agree that you are the legal entity, the 'person', 'Mr. Somebody' and that you owe a fine on the condition that they can provide 'proof of claim' that;

1. You are that person and not in fact a human being
2. They know the difference between a person and a human being, legally speaking
3. You are a member of the society whose statutes and subsisting regulations they are enforcing
4. They have a signed contract under which you have agreed to perform

And as many others as you wish to include. Notices crafted in this way and many others have resulted in the allegations, threats and fines disappearing rapidly. The notice should inform them that they have a certain amount of time in which to respond (10 days is reasonable) and that all responses must be made 'under oath, upon penalty of perjury and with full commercial liability'. This ensures that anyone responding to your notice is fully responsible as an individual, not protected by some faceless department or agency and should therefore tread much more carefully. Whenever referring to yourself or any other human being, a method of preventing yourself being viewed as a person is to use the following format; 'Joe- Middlename: Bloggs' or 'Joe- Middlename of the Bloggs family'.

A 'Notice of Summons' on a statutory charge is an invitation to attend a private place of business to discuss the 'transaction of a securities interest' (how much money one party will pay another). It may be worded in an intimidating way but it does not create any obligation on you to perform. It can be responded to with a 'Notice of Conditional Acceptance' as described above with additional terms such as letting them know that you charge £1000.00 per hour to appear in court and that any orders received would generate bills to be paid by the individ-

ual placing the order.

Notices should be sent via recorded, signed-for delivery and carry the word NOTICE on the envelope. To ensure that your Notice is noticed, and to make it stronger, it is possible to have it notarised. This can be done by any solicitor or notary public, a profession found in most towns, who will keep a copy of the document and witness it, giving it their official stamp. In this case, replies to your notice should be made to the office in which it was recorded, who will then let you know. As I understand it, they may charge only a small fee for this service. Almost the same weight can be achieved by having your notice witnessed by 3 members of your community who will attest to nothing more than the existence of the document, they do not have to support the content. Their names and signatures at the bottom, below yours, is accompanied by a brief statement stating that they witness this document being served by you. In any later dispute, either the notary or other witnesses can testify as to this document. Yes, you can send it by post as well.

A notary public is a public official who, depending on the state, has the power to acknowledge signatures, administer oaths and affirmations, take depositions and issue subpoenas in lawsuits. Notaries public are most commonly used to acknowledge signatures, especially on court papers such as affidavits. (See <http://www.lectlaw.com/def2/n023.htm>)

The previous example is of a notice that responds to a notice you have received and deals with it specifically. Another form of notice is one that addresses an area where a conflict could potentially arise in the future between yourself and a so called authority. If for example you wish to demonstrate your understanding, state your lawful intent and make a claim of your right(s) to conduct lawful activities without waiting for some authority to hassle you first, it may serve you to serve the relevant bodies with a 'Notice of Understanding and Intent and Claim of Right' (NOUICOR – see previous edition of this newsletter). This document would outline your understanding of the situation, i.e. the difference between Common Law and Statutes, the difference between a man and a person, the contractual nature of statute enforcement and more besides. It would then state your intent to live peacefully in accordance with the common law and perhaps (for the sake of clarity) inform them that you intend to sow seeds of the Cannabis genus, use your car without asking for permission (driving licence, tax) and live and build on land without asking for permission (planning) and any other lawful activities that violate statutes. A NOUICOR should be addressed and served directly upon the heads of all agencies that may potentially seek conflict with you, and also, in the UK, the Prime Minister, the Queen, and the Minister of Justice, and which should certainly be witnessed/ notarised. Remember who you are, a sovereign, free human being.

# NOTICE

Issued to OTHAS, Honor Oak Park, London SE23

I, Merlyn Peter, am asserting my inalienable human rights as a sovereign being. Under common law I hereby offer terms of contract for the upholding of peace and finalisation of these procedures. Firstly, I counterclaim any charges made against me and match any costs imposed upon me by legal authority. In due process I charge the above named legal entity to accept my personal charges in excess of that made to me at the court hearing of 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at Woolwich County Court but that as an officer of the peace wipe out any deficit that in cause would create more dissension. I express these above terms under Common Law, distinct from any statutory or legal claim.

Merlyn Peter,  
A human being

line your understanding of the situation, i.e. the difference between Common Law and Statutes, the difference between a man and a person, the contractual nature of statute enforcement and more besides. It would then state your intent to live peacefully in accordance with the common law and perhaps (for the sake of clarity) inform them that you intend to sow seeds of the Cannabis genus, use your car without asking for permission (driving licence, tax) and live and build on land without asking for permission (planning) and any other lawful activities that violate statutes. A NOUICOR should be addressed and served directly upon the heads of all agencies that may potentially seek conflict with you, and also, in the UK, the Prime Minister, the Queen, and the Minister of Justice, and which should certainly be witnessed/ notarised. Remember who you are, a sovereign, free human being.

**Next issue: Part 3 Visiting the court room**

**Tpuc.org, thinkfree.ca, worldfreemansociety.org, suijuris-club.net** are good research resources.

This notice I crafted during my dispute with the said body. Of course, since it was my first attempt, I mixed the intention from both a legal and lawful standpoint, i.e. I admit to the charges made against myself, and then try to deal with them from a lawful point of view by asserting my own charges. The Notice is self-explanatory but rather contradictory because I had already entered into a contract with the courts admitting to my legal id (entity). And of course, OTHAS had already offered terms of peace which I refused on the basis of how the whole business was being handled by the legal authorities.

## Transcript of interview with Alastair McIntosh, Glasgow 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009

Towards the completion of my MA in ecotheology. I extend my warm thanks towards the man for his time. In this case I was looking at the spiritual connection between the modern environmental movement and the origins of early Christianity.

she's got this bit about once you start to measuring a tree's worth in terms of how many cubic feet of timber you are going to get out of it then you lose your sense of the intrinsic value of that tree and you are left with ecological economists and have universities running around trying to figure out how they can measure the worth of nature, and of course they never get anywhere cos they can't do it.

MP: So, can I just start by saying that if we look at the modern environmental movement, 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the likes of John Muir and Henry Thoreau who lived a way to a sort of modern appreciation of wilderness for the benefit of human health, in particular they thought it as a model for human systems. Umh, since Henry David Thoreau disassociated himself from his Christian counterparts, in fact he accused them of laying waste...

AM: Who did?

MP: Henry Thoreau. It was about 18..

AM: Thoreau.

MP: Since he disassociated...

AM: Civil disobedience and...

MP: Okay, I don't know too much about him but he did accuse them of laying waste nature, the wilderness by building miles of meeting houses and box stoves.

AM: Said he would rather have met the people who didn't build the pyramids than the people who did build them.

MP: (Laugh) Do you think, do you think that this 19<sup>th</sup> century attitude exacerbates the problem of the human condition in general like for instance, Henry Thoreau saw that forest groves were more important than churches; picking berries for him was his version of the sacraments, or a sacrament, and likewise other sort of environmentalists at the time, like Leopold, saw wilderness as a context for human study for which you can gauge land health which is in sort of line with what I actually do, which is very much permaculture and looking at wilderness as an education umh... did this exacerbate the problem of the human condition in general at the time because it had these sort of these neo-pagan sentiments about it?

AM: Your specific question is what?

MP: Yes, considering that environmentalism came in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with industrialisation, and the taking over of land or the reducing of wilderness, for colonisation, the question is, was that really the right way forward to actually look at it from a non-religious perspective, to go forward with this environmental ethos.

AM: A kind of secular environmentalism?

MP: Yes, it was very secular, even though it was very spiritual at the heart...

AM: Yes, it was fairly spiritual I am not sure where it belongs to on spirituality, I can't remember that off hand, but you are suggesting that he was taking a secular perspective.

MP: In fact, it was very pagan. He was looking at wilderness as like Mother nature, sustenance. He didn't go along the lines of regulation. He disputed the whole Christian outlook really although I don't doubt that he had some sort of religious sentiment. But it certainly was a spiritual way. He looked at it as spiritual sustenance if anything.

AM: He's in good company there because there has always been this tradition which is been very strong in the Celtic world, and I must say I don't have a lot of time for those scholars who just miss the idea of the Celtic Church. I think that the Celtic Church was simply the church of the people of the Celtic lands. And it's very clear in a lot of their writings that nature was the other book. You had the book of the bible and you had the book that was nature. You find that I've got here Olivier Clamence's wonderful book, the Roots of Christian mysticism where he's looking at early patristic sources, and you've got things like Evagrius of Puntus saying, 'One of the wise men of that time went to find the holy man Anthony and asked him, Father, how can you be happy when you are so deprived of the consolation that books can bring.' Anthony replied, 'My philosopher friend, my book is the nature of creatures, and this book is always in front of me when I want to read the words of God'. So, that's just one of many examples of the book of nature in early Christianity, Jesus was doing the same thing, 'Consider the lilies'. So, the people you were describing were moving in a tradition. Isaac of Nineveh on page 224 in the book I have just named, 'The humble man confronts murderous wild beasts. From the moment that they see him their savagery is tamed. They approach him as if he were their owner, nodding their heads and licking his hands and feet. They actually sense coming from him the fragrance that Adam breathed forth before the Fall when they came to him in Paradise and gave him their names.' The idea here that you get in some of the orthodox thinking. In my view there were probably a lot to be said of the early Celtic Church which was effectively orthodox, effectively very closely linked to the school of Alexandria which was Coptic Orthodox. So you get these kind of early church fathers who were intimate and that is a long standing tradition. Now if you then separate that from spirituality, then try to make a kind of worldly version of it then I think you are setting up something that becomes more difficult to defend because as soon as the mountain is no longer holy, as soon as the animals no longer have their own place in the Creation, they become vulnerable to exploitation on a scale that goes beyond seeking to live sufficiently in a sustainable way.

MP: Which is, you would agree, the road we have come down.

AM: Which is where we are at now. I mean Starhawk who is a neo-pagan thinker, feminist thinker as you probably know, she says in her book Dreaming the Dark,

you see I question a lot of things and I question my own suffering and the concept of suffering within the Christian movement, and not just in the Christian movement but in other religions. So, and I'll come to that a bit more, but if I'll just go onto this next question, you'll see how that's related. I make the case that it was partly due to the military impact of the use of land by the Romans and that environmental degradation went hand in hand with some sort of social or anthropogenic extinction which is the words that, have you heard of Earthfirst! and their commentaries about monkey wrenching and why they do it? But the Jewish land ethic had been severely affected, and this is my own personal opinion, which gave rise to some sort of internal disruption and the forming of some sort of new order, which is what we were discussing downstairs, this idea when Christianity was coming up and not just Christianity but a whole wave of spiritual or heretical sects at the time. And, if we look firstly the Israelite wanderings in the desert and we see how the Mosaic law was formed and we can relate that to maybe a lack of nutrition or at least issues with food during their sojourn, and secondly with the food burden that the Romans would have effected on the peasantry to a degree, this leads to the importance of something within all religions which is communal eating, and that the early Christians took their inheritance from the Jewish dietary laws. Food deprivation was an expression of, for the Jews, of sorrow, guilt, fear and suffering which later, one can assume became codified in ethical and moral laws. So, the fact they they gained their freedom through the sojourn in the desert, and Moses laid down the law then at a time when they would have been surviving.

AM: Well, those were laws that Jesus specifically repudiated. Jesus said it's not what you put in your body that matters it's what comes out of it. So he didn't seem to buy into dietary fads.

MP: This is true and in fact Christianity differed from Judaism in that respect. In fact, even when Paul came along he actually said what's important here is that we don't have to follow vegetarianism or not follow vegetarianism, we don't have to fast and not fast. What's important is that we eat together and we don't dispute that occasion or we don't find that occasion for disputation. The coming together is the most important part of the communal thing. So, I mean, there is a lot to talk about fasting, it was strongly denounced by the sages, Jewish sages, if the life of the community was going to be effected, especially like for instance the destruction of the Second Temple, I think it was about CE70 or something like that. You know, the dispersion of the Jews and everything else, it was not ecologically or biologically sensible to fast. Everyone had to survive at that moment and so, I surmise...

AM: Jesus fasted of course, and a lot of the early Christians fasted.

MP: Yes, very much so. I think they fasted on the, was it not, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> days of the week. You know, you have the Jewish festivals and the Day of Atonement when everyone is supposed to fast. And Christianity borrowed in to those festivals until the created their own. What I am alluding to here is that Christianity took this suffering element from Judaism and justified its own development through it as a sort of mnemonic, something that reminds them of the formulation of the law in the desert, you see. And I want to ask you, do you agree with this viewpoint that Christianity did take this suffering element and brought it on a different level? I think you have sort of alluded to it before. And secondly, is there not a link when you look at how since the post-reformation period when you get the great scientific movement and when you get an abundance of food and colonialism, is there not a link there to the rise of secularism? The fact is, that when it is difficult we come up with religious morals but when we've got an abundance of food and people are not fasting it just seems that religion takes a backdrop. And with colonialism, expansion of populations, that just suggests there is an abundance of food available or at least the potential to obtain that food. What we see in the early Christian period and the Jewish period, when the Mosaic law was put down, was this suffering, and it is somehow connected to the inheritance from the sojourn in the desert when they had to live with frugality. When they could not grow crops all the time. When they had to forage off wild foods. Is there not a link when religious laws are created to this moment when people are trying to survive, literally they're on edge?

AM: I am struggling slightly to get exactly where you are coming from with all this.

What I'm thinking of, what you're speaking there is, let me just get the chapter. An article I did some years ago called Pagan Presbyterianism when we were having a protest down on the Pollockthry estate? You mentioned Earthfirst! This is a very "earthfirsty" type of issue. The Book of Numbers, chapter 11. Have a read of that. I've done a kind of take-off from it. Here, related to the protest because what's going on there, you got the people going through the wilderness feeding off manna. And they are all getting fed up of it and they say to Moses that they wish they were back in Egypt, for at least they had quails and watermelons to eat. So Moses and his fare comes out with that famous line, "were if all God's people were prophets". So you have this sense that it was the luxury of the food in Egypt that helped keep them in slavery and they were actually resisting Moses trying to lead them out of that. So I don't know if that helps out.

MP: But that's my point. I'm looking to see whether that sort of Mosaic heritage carried through into the early Christian period and contributed to the rise...

AM: Yes, it is not just Mosaic. You find it in many different spiritual traditions where

basically the idea... So you got many different traditions. Fasting is used as a way of deepening spiritual experience. You are cut off from the outer world and you go into a different state of consciousness.

MP: I fasted for one and a half years, two to three times a week, and I fasted on fluids. And it needs spiritual guidance without a doubt otherwise you can lose the plot.

AM: I would think so. If you don't have a context that's holding you... you get into what our society would call psychotic space. Jesus maybe didn't call it that when he was up the mountain but you know, you start meeting the devil and all the rest of it.

MP: So, my relationship was with that and the rise of the modern environmental movement and secularism in particular because really, you would agree that with the agricultural revolution, and there has been a few, comes the time of the colonial wars, colonialism, and the discovery of new land and the extending of the fertile growing areas into the western hemisphere and those places, so we get this move towards wanting to break the hold of the Church on the land and on the people.

AM: Well remember, the whole idea of the Romans was that they would send out *colonia*, which was a body of militarised settlers who'd colonise the place and set up large farms - *latifundia* they called them. And they would remit back to Rome a portion of the proceeds. So you had mass agriculture being established by the Romans in places that they colonised specifically to exploit the people. And you could say that model is what we still have today.

MP: It is very interesting. When they discovered the new lands of Australia and those sorts of places as well they used to just throw the pigs out and come back a few years later sometimes and they would have bred to such great proportions that there was this protein running across the whole of the landscape. That just these techniques. And of course, that was biological, a way of manipulating the landscape before humans needed to go on there. That mentality though, the exploitation of nature, certainly I feel, gave rise to secularism and eventually the industrial revolution; their desire to continue, or to exponentially grow from that moment onwards in all directions. Okay, if now we look at the Greco-Roman background, they gave a very philosophical understanding to the nature of health. That was probably the inheritance to, for the Christians, that there was this great philosophical body of knowledge passed down through the Greeks. The basic rule of Hippocrates, who is considered the father of rational medicine, is that the opposites combat disease, for instance idleness is combated by exercise. So bear in mind that the Roman Empire was at its peak in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries and that it only converted to Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century with Constantine, when the Empire was diminishing and land degradation was taking its toll, there's no doubt about, there has been really important studies been done, that ecological degradation is one of the fundamental reasons why the Roman Empire started to diminish. Does it not suggest that the Christian ethos, that its based around suffering, is in fact, quite attractive to people who are suffering?

AM: If you are going to be suffering its nice to have a framework that helps you to make meaning of it. I don't think that is the case for looking for suffering, or trying to be a martyr, and there's plenty of work needed doing in the world without having to make martyrs of ourselves, though we may find ourselves becoming martyrs in the process.

MP: Okay, my point that I was trying to make there is that I feel as though the Roman Empire was converted over to Christianity because, to a very large degree, and not just because of the growth of Christianity at the time, and it was quite prevalent across the whole landscape, rather that they had, could foresee, in a sort of implicit way, how land degradation or erosion of our landscapes will contribute to downfalls of empires. You know, everything was in God's hands, and even if you would trust in God you could not foresee the suffering that was ahead of you. So I saw that as an attractive thing for the Romans.

AM: The is a theme of linking degradation of the land to a deficit of spirituality in the people. It's very clear in some of the Old Testament prophets, particularly Ezekiel and Jeremiah who saw the land as suffering because of what human beings were doing to it. Romans in the New Testament sees the whole of creation as suffering at the hand of what humans are doing. And there are some wonderful quotes from Jeremiah especially to that effect. He saw very clearly that biodiversity was going under because of human wickedness. So it is an old, old theme that well pre-dates the Roman but it is kind of inevitable one because whenever you get a people not trying to live in a right relationship with their environment and one another, our fragile ecosystems are going to suffer.

MP: Okay. The modern scientific movement has supposedly, from an academic point of view, no direct relation to the classical Greek equivalent which sort of died out at the time of the Romans. Instead what we observe, I believe, are cycles in human nature. The Greeks and the Romans ate like the gods, they ate abundantly. During illness instead of maybe going to the gods they had this option of trying to discover a new medicine or cure. That was their way of dealing with their own illness or their own suffering. This whole pattern, for me, is anthropological. And I believe that we are not any more healthier or more ill than we are now. Let me rephrase that. There is no difference in our state of health between now and then. This is my viewpoint and the reason why I take that viewpoint is because I think the whole of human civilisation is premised on a changing diet. The fact is, we have to make our bodies adapt to this continuing change of diet in order for us to evolve and to be able to take in these new foods. And if we went back five million years when we supposedly started emerging from the forests and into the savannahs we can see the dawning of civilisation. We can see that we needed to change our diets in order to survive.

AM: There is archaeological work, anthropological work on different diets and different civilisations. When you say that you believe that you need to ground what you're

saying in evidence, how long people lived for?, how was that diet impacted upon? Life-span and so on.

MP: Am I not allowed to make that assumption that because cross-cultural contact, and because our bodies are not allowed to go into those harmonious spaces we find that we're always adapting to new foods. And that brings on illness.

AM: You can make whatever assumption you want but in academic work you have to be able to back it up with evidence. So if you are going to make that assumption or put that forward as a hypothesis you then have to look at what supports a view and what doesn't support it. If it's just an idea of the top of your head then it's just dreaming, which is fine but you are not likely to get very much sympathy from your examiners with it.

MP: I've got interesting people who I work with who are looking at the relationships of processed foods, for instance, with cancer.

AM: There is a big body of literature on that. Let at this book here, *The Good Scots Diet*. Where she has studied the Scottish diet. What was in it? Why people ate what they did? You know, there is a whole body of literature on that kind of thing. You need to investigate. Unless you have done the primary research yourself you need to investigate.

MP: Okay, my point was, the Greeks had this rationalistic approach and rather than going to their God and saying 'God, I am suffering'. We could take the story of Job for instance, who lost hundreds and thousands of cattle and sheep, and his family, but he never lost faith in God. Or we could look at the rational viewpoint, which the Greeks gave. Which resurfaces again, I think, with the modern scientific movement, and that is, we can find a cure for our illness. And we don't need a God for it. We can just find a cure or we can try even prevent it. Through medicine.

AM: Well, there is plenty of medicine around. It depends on the illness, depends on the medicine doesn't it. And if you think you find the medicine you got to ask, 'Did the medicine cure you or was it just your body's natural healing properties that made you feel better at that time?'

MP: There is a continuum there then, for me, the rational approach of the Greeks. And the fact is, they are asking us to go beyond this supplication to God, we don't need that, here's a medicine, here's a cure.

AM: Oh, I see, you mean they were substituting God for medicine.

MP: Yes, and even though they had their gods of medicine, their approach was how to deal with the basics on ground level. And they did that with plants, through behaviour, practice.

AM: Well you notice that Jesus didn't heal using medicine but you got to ask what was going on in Jesus' healings? Was he dealing with the neurotics in his culture and getting to the source of what was giving them pain as a human being and tackling that? Or are we, in fact some of the early Christians would say to read these signs allegorically and so when Jesus let's the blind man see it is about learning to see spiritually. And when deaf it is about learning to inwardly. The gathering demoniac is the propensity to self-harm within all of us, when we are cut off from the source of life, in the gathering demoniac's example by colonisation, because who was it that ate pigs in that culture? It wasn't the Hebrews, it was the Romans who predominantly ate pigs. You can see that whole story is a metaphor for what colonisation does to a human being.

MP: And you refer to that as this darkness that you need to come to terms with, this psycho-spirituality, to be able to heal on a much deeper level, psychological level. You actually say, 'psychologically naïve groups are always in-fighting'.

AM: Yes, yes, very much so.

MP: So for me I want to ask you if human consciousness is premised on expectation of disaster and is it psychologically naïve to attempt to control nature?

AM: Yes, definitely. I think if you go with the mind set that you are going to control nature, you are always going to be trumped by nature in the long run. You can only short-circuit nature for so long and get away with it. Sooner or later there will be feedback loops that catch you out. The trick of right living is to live in accordance with nature.

MP: Absolutely, and maybe the story of Job is actually saying to us, 'This is what you need to prepare for because it happens to everyone, or every empire, this disaster.'

AM: A lot of people are saying that, that we are bringing our own unravelling upon us. That this is a cyclical process. I mean I was listening to Lovelock speaking in Edinburgh last night and he said you know, we have to be careful how much we beat ourselves up about this because he uses a metaphor of us as being like a child wandering out onto a road and finding a gun, picking it up and not knowing what it was, and pulling the trigger. And it is a bit like that the way we have related to nature. He suggested that we hadn't realised that this was going to happen in terms of the impact of CO<sub>2</sub>. Just as we see CFC's and what have you, that made the ozone hole, we didn't realise it was going to happen. It's a learning process.

MP: And Lovelock has given enough evidence to suggest that micro-organisms, microbacterias, are responsible for keeping the balance, and that balance is upset. Maybe, what we are finding is, the religious sentiment, the spirituality that evolves from that is very much a factor of the imbalance in the animal kingdom including bacterias.

AM: Oh, definitely. But I couldn't speak for the spirituality of bacteria.

MP: My point is, maybe the evolution of human consciousness is somehow linked to the way this bacteria is released through civilisation.

AM: You can certainly make a scientific argument how human civilisation, if you like want to call it that, has evolved is very closely linked to bacteria, not least pathogens.

END

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