



GRESHAM'S GHOST: PROLEGOMENA

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According to a standard understanding of perception, one is able to comprehend the world only as one sees it, within the restraints or limits of a particularly human sense and reason. When we imagine what it's like to be a bat, it is still a human attempting to think the world of a bat, not actually becoming the bat. Nevertheless we are wrong to assume that our subjectivity is totally our own to begin with. We are constantly dependent upon many other living beings to reach any of our aspirations, but we rarely acknowledge their assistance or the possibility that our living is translated in part through theirs, and perhaps vice-versa. There is a whole contagion of life forms that survive within us. Some help with digestion, others with joint-movement, and so many others with basic upkeep. Our lives are heavily dependent on the lives of others.

Our intentions and motives are constantly both siphoned through and indebted to many other material beings or objects, and larger social organisms. If we are willing to acknowledge that social, political, and capitalistic forces all make a claim on us, and that we're able to understand those forces to some extent, then we should also be ready to say that non-human beings influence our ways of being, that the trees exhale our air and thus create a different atmosphere, that mosquitos orient our behavior towards minute movements very differently. These interactions, where the human and the non-human overlap, folding into one another's worlds, makes explicit the fact that all beings are translating one another, sentient and non-sentient, and that we are not trapped in thinking the world just as we see it, but are able to see partially through the eyes of various creatures.

The response will be that this is simple anthropomorphism, but just as knowing another's mind is an impossible task to achieve fully, we still assume that we can empathize, understand, and comprehend the pain, pleasure, boredom, success, and consternation of another. Likewise, as the rest of the world actively affects us in both large and small ways, it is when we highlight these moments that we realize that who we are in the world is not just contingent upon humanity, but upon all the world's wealth.

We've made quite a big mess for ourselves, but we must attempt to widen our scope of how to tend to the world, how we intend it and likewise how it's been tending to us, intending us - sculpting our sensibilities outside our knowledge. We will never exhaust such relations of care and caution, whether they be human to human or otherwise.

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