

## Part Nine

### Animism and human creations—technology, art, waste, etc.

There is no reason to assume that the things that modern humans do—creating technology, making scientific discoveries, trying new social systems, creating new forms of art, and so on—are not of interest to the other-than-human persons who are affected in their creation, who are often created or modified, or otherwise positively or negatively affected through our actions.

When we extract metals from ore, for example, we end up with a lot of the material matrix wasted, disrespected. But the atoms of the metal have been brought into a state that has never existed before, and it is entirely possible that those other-than-human-persons of that metal, created through human technology, wish to participate in what it is us human persons are doing, to creatively experience something new, to see what can be done with this life, other than just accepting the way things are and not altering them.

After all, when we take a rock and chip it into a projectile point or other tool, we are wasting part of the rock to create a tool. That rock may have agreed that “you can chip off part of me to make another part of me into a tool, so that I may take part in a relationship with you, and with those that you hunt and consume—something that my kind has never done before the human lineage arose.”

It's been about 3 million years that human-type persons have been doing this, and probably longer with sticks and bones and unchipped rocks and suchlike that don't survive well in the archeological record. But why should we

expect that those things we modify and use would not be persons, and would necessarily object to our using them?

It may be that the other “things” we create also become other-than-human-persons. What is so different between flaking a piece of obsidian and excavating native copper or gold, and molding it into decorations or tools, and doing so with other materials that may take even more effort from the “natural” state to the modified state, such as extracting iron ore and smelting it? A difference in degree, certainly, but hardly in kind.

Our created “things,” are still made of matter and perhaps the immaterial things that we animists posit, and therefore become “new” spirits. In some traditions, weapons and masks and other manufactured items have their own personages, their own voice, and so on. So why not our plastic bags and cars and computers?

Sure, animism applies to plastic bags, or anything else that’s produced by humans or other-than-humans for their own use out of other “other-thans.” After all, beavers cut down and use trees not only for food, but to build their lodges and dams, which then become spirits on their own.

All kinds of animals and birds build nests, some animals digging into the soil to do so—things that affect other beings to create things that they need for themselves. And all animals eat other creatures, either plants or animals.

We produce things—take portions of other beings, often while wasting or setting aside much of them, often with little or no respect—to create new beings that have a purpose.

As far as I can tell, those created persons want to be used and useful, to do the job they've been created for, to be respected and honored for their service. Many cars certainly do. So does my computer. That we WEIRD humans don't do a good job of respecting our tools, etc., is our problem, and it's no wonder that we get ill and hurt etc., while using our created other-than-human persons.