

Us and Bees: The Metaphysical and Reality

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Bees are incredibly important and complex creatures. As the pollinators of 1/3 of our food crops (not to mention flowers), they are entirely responsible for our consumption of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, and most interestingly, honey – the only food that includes all the substances necessary to sustain life, including water.¹ This complex yet perfect structure of honey allows for the longevity of bee culture, also reflected in our long history with bees. Bee keeping, or in its original form, “honey hunting,” has existed since 6000BC, and is now one of the most valued processes within agriculture. Bees have also been quite present in our mythology, portrayed as gods and goddesses or simply used for ceremony and ceremonial magic in Greek, Egyptian, Sardinian, Southern European, Mediterranean and West Asian cultures.² They are present in literature and art, being mentioned by noted authors such as Henry Miller, and explored by artists such as Wolfgang Laib. Bees’ simple yet effective hive structure has been mimicked all over the world, from homes to tombs, and they are celebrated by all cultures for their extraordinary organization.³ Every part of a bee, a bee hive, and bee behavior has precise intent. Nothing is wasted: not time, nor space, nor materials, nor life. It is because of this intent that we can compare them to functions within our society: machines, human bodies, maps, political campaigns, poison, and ghost towns.

BEES//MACHINES: *Apparatus's or apparati or apparat or an apple rat or just plain locks that clasp indemnify each wax hexagon like the metal case holding all the wax hexagons together in a wooden systematic and controlled clarity like no other. Clear as a bell. Clear as a bell that hooks up to a lever that turns a switch that opens a hatch (while closing another) and discharges weight. Of course, the weight may return, at any time at all, so long as the state or the condition or the circumstances allow. These instruments of contraption that moved from moving as timed moved and now only one moves enough to potentially move a person to tears. Or move them at all. But while these people move or don't move intent continues. The hand that raises its, someone's, or everyone else's young, from youth rises. As the young rise out of youth while being raised, they become the hand. The way the cog becomes the bell that hooks up to a lever that turns a switch that opens a hatch (while closing another) and discharging the weight. Whose job is equally as important.*

A beehive is scientifically considered a super organism – an organism consisting of many organisms, a social unit where the work is divided into highly specialized categories only meant for a specific type of organism. A worker bee is meant to raise eggs, make honey, and pollinate plants, while a drone bee is meant to fertilize the queen bee, and the queen is meant to lay eggs.⁴ Similarly, all the parts in a machine, for example a car, have equal and indispensable jobs. The brakes stop the car, the

1 *Silence of The Bees*. By Doug Shultz. PBS, 2010. Film.

2 Ransome, Hilda M. *The Sacred Bee: in Ancient times and Folklore*. Burrowbridge, Bridgwater: Bbno, 1986. Print.

3 Schweid, Richard. "Bee Season." *Gardening & Landscape Design, Ideas and Tips | Garden Design | Garden Design*. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.gardendesign.com/>>.

4 Beverley, Claire, and David Ponsonby. *The Anatomy of Insects and Spiders*. Camberwell, Vic.: Penguin Group (Australia), 2004. Print.

acceleration pushes it forward, the steering wheel controls wheels on the outside, turning them one way or another. Both of these entities, which interchangeably can be referred to as machines or organisms, depend on every element in order to function. A beehive will fail and die without a queen bee, and a car will fail to work without an engine; both perform specific functions within their organisms that are integral to the working of the whole.⁵

BEES//HUMAN BODY: *An emblematic drudgery work, sans drudge, without working, depending on a number of factors – siestas, foodstuff, fodder, affection and self-worship. A body won't have siestas, foodstuff, affection and self worship but for saving. Five feet high and one foot wide three feet high and eight feet wide no feet high and all feet wide look at it vertically. And cover or clothe in yarn and wood. Or rubber and wool and string and metal like a candy mix and match in a putrid movie theatre in the English countryside where your cousins took you to view watch ingest eat a movie and look at the candy mix and match which you used to call sweets, one penny sweets. Declining in form and taste and they're engulfed downwards or sideways in a throat or hexagon. Talk talk talk or bzz bz bzz. Coveting straight upward - wood hierarchy based on siestas, foodstuff, fodder, affection and self worship. Execution. Life.*

There is much resemblance to be found between the human body, specifically the head, and a beehive. The outer structure of a beehive is made of wax, made by the bees. Similarly, a body has an outer structure, being muscle and skin. And like a beehive, no part of the head can be removed or manipulated without considerable damage to the rest of the structure/inhabitants of the structure.⁶ Bodies and beehives also have similar parts, such as nerves, which can be compared to Drone bees, both of which are worn out easily and must be rejuvenated. Blood cells have a development time similar to worker bees, the shortest of any part of the body or beehive. Both perform digestion separate from the rest of the body/beehive, within themselves. Workers go out of the hive to collect pollen the way blood cells leave the head and explore the rest of the body to collect sugars, which they then process, producing energy within the brain or honey in the hive. Finally, both are delicate structures that need food, rest, and general caretaking.⁷

BEES//MAPS: *Floral pursuit and success, found...blue, green, yellow, orange, purple, pink. Up in the air to upwardly suggest/discover locality in comparative, or perhaps virtual sense, to the domicile, to the house, to the home, to the factory that's made of the same stuff the current pursuit searched for and found. Blue, green, yellow, orange purple, pink. And put into 2D. Flat paper that folds up into 5 or maybe 6 or as many folds as the folds allow and falls under the seat and you spill something on it and*

5 Steiner, Rudolf. *Bees*. Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic, 1998. Print.

6 Utah County Beekeepers Association. Web. 13 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.utahcountybeekeepers.org/>>.

7 Steiner, Rudolf. *Bees*. Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic, 1998. Print.

then it's shoved in the glove compartment and forgotten until remembered allowing one to remember where they are where they're going and how to get there (If they can read the colors through the folds). 16MPH or comparatively 60MPH, sequence arrives. And begin circuits one through one hundred, in a figure 8 or the long stretch and curve of the Eastbound 110 highway, taking you straight back to the original place you wanted to go or the one you started at or a new one. If you can read the colors through the folds. Waltz left right spin produce and therefore releasing stomach maps – is it traced? Trace it and relate it to the sun, or the center, or the 'you are here' sign, and reach back. To the original place you wanted to go or the one you started at or a new one depending on how you read the colors through the folds.

Bees have one of the most fascinating communication systems in all of nature. The “Waggle Dance” - a movement bees are never taught but simply know by instinct, is a sharing of information between bees, an informative performance comparable to our maps. When a bee finds a particularly sizable patch of flowers (which include every color except red, which bees cannot see),⁸ it is now their impulse and duty to report it's location to their hive mates. This impulse to communicate locations parallels human's instinct to organize, categorize, or communicate locations – to map. However, bees' literal form of mapping is not linear, or of two dimensions, but rather physically performed. The waggle dance commences upon the bee's return to the hive, and is made up of one to one hundred circuits, organized into two parts. The first is the “waggle phase,” and the second the “return phase.” In waggle phase a worker bee (the only type of bee that can perform this dance) runs in a figure eight, wagging its body. In the return phase, the bee turns to the right in order to circle back to the starting point, and begins again, this time turning to the left in the return phase. During these processes, the other bees pay attention to the direction and the length of the waggle runs, as they describe the direction and distance to the flower patch the bee is presenting. These movements from the original worker bee, and the attention paid from the other bees, can be related to both human mapping (the waggle dance itself), and the decoding of a map (which the other bees participate in). The highly developed system of relating the dance to actual distance mimics the system of our maps, which often need keys to decode. Flowers directly in the line of the sun are advertised by a waggle run in an upward direction, and ones angled to the sun are seen as angled dances; the farther away the flowers, the longer the waggle phase.⁹

BEES//WAR: At three years old and no tears high bare feet are trusting, more trusting than they should be in high grass. In high grass and on pool side patios and then again hundreds of years ago on sun baked mud, in deep rain and mud filled trenches and again high grass. Number unknown. Whether the wood or the hard skin lodged in the flesh the wound the dent is choosing based on chemical elements and perhaps emotional as well - whether to form a cadaver. And again whether or not it does create such the alarm is ringing louder than the school fire alarms set off by toast (brusque) and causing

⁸ Welcome to BASC | BASC. Web. 12 Apr. 2011. <<http://BASCBEES.org>>.

⁹ Steiner, Rudolf. *Bees*. Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic, 1998. Print.

the children with the trusting bare feet to march to the park where simultaneously in the past the initial alarm is ringing just as loud but in the form of a battle cry from the second lieutenant. Ringing drumming humming buzzing. Tang of blood and smoke. What's a gunshot to a bee sting? Just as important. Just as important is a smothered moth, smothered by heat imagined in an oven to a flat land that once stood so high before this combat. When did the need for emissaries become so pressing, what production is valued so high imitators are weapons? A hive and a home. A hive and a home - with royal furniture like an old easy armchair in which the initial decision for a fight was made. Incessant and endless. Thousands of years ago, before you could have said anything.

Bees rarely need to explicitly protect themselves against predators, but in the rare case that they do, they are equipped with the perfect weapon: a stinger. These stingers contain enough poison (specifically apitoxin) to kill animals around their size, and in cases of those allergic to apitoxin, it can kill people, beings hundreds of times their size. Other weapons bees use are heat and “cuddle death,” which calls for the natural comparison between bees’ methods of fighting and protection with our own. Bees can withstand a couple more degrees of heat than other insects, so when an invasive species enters the hive (a spider, moth, wasp, or worm), the bees will fly around and around, generating heat that they are able to withstand, but the invader is not, so overheats and dies. Bees also use heat in an attack called “cuddle death,” which is used to kill old queen bees and enemies. “Cuddle death” entails tightly surrounding an enemy until they die of heat and suffocation.¹⁰ These violent defenses mirror weapons and guard systems employed by our own armies; poison gas or fire fights (also similar to the tactics of drones or worker bees). Furthermore, bees have spies; much like the people who disguise themselves in order to gather information or invade enemy territory, moths and Cuckoo bees disguise themselves as plain bees. Moths imitate the smell of bees just as spies learn a language, and Cuckoo bees allow regular bees to raise their young as spies sometimes become friends and even family members with their enemies.¹¹ Finally, within both systems of war is violence, death, and destruction, all under the pretense of defense.

BEES//POLITICS: G sharp/A flat – two seconds. Repeat. Vote for me, not no other, no matter no how. Healthcare gratuity – everyone at all corners sucked from the ground (built from pledges, monetary and vociferous) like roses from a corpse. Like the roses from the corpse that was buried by the white wood awning that fell down that afternoon and the boot came out and exposed the event like the roses from the corpse. Like the birth from the queen cell, from the peanut, from the womb, like the G sharp/A flat – two seconds. Repeat. Capital is force and therefore victory, climbing up the hill, a capital one at that, made of marble, or wax, wax hexagons, bee vomit, gold, gold, gold and a hive. Alacrity next, to get to the next sovereign cell, apartment building, B4 to B5

10 Hubbell, Sue. *A Book of Bees: --and How to Keep Them*. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

11 "War and Bees - Military Applications of Apiculture." *Apiservices - The Beekeeping Portal - Le Portail Apiculture - Apicultura - Imkereij*. Web. 15 Apr. 2011. <http://www.beekeeping.com/articles/us/war_bees.htm>.

fast so cell to cell to cell is short. And here - toxin toxic extermination, crushed by buoying up - or lack there of. And there, so immediate that dart penetrates the body of the other or the other body or the same body or this body and one is triumphant. And soon enough, G sharp/A flat –two second. Repeat.

Worker bees, whose job (among many other things) is to raise new queen bees, cultivate several potential queens at a time. They build what is known as a “queen cell” (which closely resembles and feels like a peanut) and for the 16 days it takes a queen to grow, feed these queens “royal jelly” – a special paste made by the bees, that with continued consumption allows the queen to become sexually mature.¹² It is during this process that the queen bees engage in “piping,” which can be compared to the campaigning during a presidential battle. Piping is a battle cry, a sound (a G sharp/A flat) that the competing queen bees make before and after they break out of the queen cell. It is a warning and a promise – a warning to the opposing queen bees (who she will soon fight to death with) to beware, and an assurance to the other bees within the hive that she is the biggest, the strongest, and the best candidate for the throne.¹³ This declaration strongly parallels the campaign trail, which is also filled with oaths and pledges to the people, that the candidate is the biggest, the strongest, and the best candidate for the administrative position. In addition, the fight to the death of the queens mimics the fight for the presidency, which ultimately ends in the selection of a single candidate.

BEES//GHOST TOWNS: He woke up one morning, or I woke up or we woke up (doesn't matter – everyone was awake) and went to check on all life and sustainability in the most compact of forms and it was half gone and going still and he I or we all realized that we hadn't been quite completely awake. The wax and the boxes and the saloon and the streets were empty or filled or filling with the dead. Why? Trade and industry? Calamity? Adversity? Natural? Self-inflicted? Must be infection, calamity and infection. Regardless, what a marvel to marvel be marveled at. Though repetition is contemporary, not in such a way. And how to patch up, to mend, when origin and therefore produce is so enigmatic? So slipping? And oh there's not even a single pinpricked pinpoint for desertion, nor noble, just scores of what lived while the Hopi tobacco flowers were dying and the oil blew up and destroyed the town hall and the bulldoze stopped showing up and the sickness set in at the Hopi tobacco flowers were dying. And all that's left is the day-trippers night-tripping and tagging the pipes - seeing the sights.

Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, is an increasingly concerning problem facing American and European beekeepers, characterized by the abrupt disappearance of bees. These disappearances shock and devastate their keepers, and the empty shells of hives are strongly reminiscent of American ghost towns. Ghost towns, like CCD hives, are completely abandoned towns or cities. And just like beehives, ghost towns often have

12 Milne, Lorus Johnson, and Margery Joan Greene Milne. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1980. Print.

13 Hubbell, Sue. *A Book of Bees: --and How to Keep Them*. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.

many contributing factors to their desertion. Often times Ghost Town started as new economic endeavors that failed, or railroads no longer reach the town. Additionally there may have been highway or river re-routing that interferes with the location, a natural disaster, government intervention, or the cause that most closely parallel to bee hive abandonment, depletion of natural resources. In fact, all of the aspects of the town desertion are comparable to the reasons for CCD: malnutrition (lack of natural resources), disease, viral and fungal combination, pesticides, genetically modified crops, antibiotics and miticides.¹⁴ These all correspond directly to many instances of Ghost Towns when the town was built on unfertile or poisoned soil. Many argue that importing bees exposes them to viruses and diseases they are unfamiliar with, the way immigrants have historically exposed indigenous peoples to diseases they lack the ability to defend against. Ultimately, both desertions are extremely damaging: financially, emotionally, and most gravely, a blow to the environment. Ghost towns often leave hazardous materials unattended, therefore free to pollute, and after economic endeavors fail, many lose the money they need to live. Bees' rapid and massive abandonment of their hives depletes beekeepers and farmers alike of their finances, and is a huge threat to our consumption of fruit, vegetables, meat, and dairy. As bees pollinate these crops, their disappearance will assure the disappearance of these products.

Every feature and facet of the way of life of bees has a direct and imperative purpose. Whether the bee's body, designed for fast flight and effective pollen pick-up, or the creation of plain honey, containing all the substances necessary for life, there is divine intent in their world. Nothing is wasted and everything is essential, not just for their lives but also for ours. Bees are solely responsible for our vast consumption of fruit, vegetables, meat, and dairy as well as the pollination of flowers. The dependency we have on bees is simply enormous, without these crops the entire human race would vanish within four years.¹⁵ The problem is highly understated: many people are unaware there even is a problem, let alone that it may be our fault. Some are preoccupied with their own tribulations, which are hard to understand themselves, so can't begin to understand the problem of a bee. Bees are extremely cooperative and compromising creatures, understanding that without collaboration they would cease to exist, a lifestyle that seems falsely unnecessary to most people. Hopefully by creating parallels between the intent of their society and our own, we can create parallels between our problems, and work towards fixing them both, comprehensibly, soundly, and permanently.

14 "What's Happening to Our Bees." *The World's Longest Established Apicultural Research Publishers - International Bee Research Association*. Web. 12 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.ibra.org.uk>>.

15 "Life Without... Bees - If They Die, We Die... - Pictures - Digital - Virgin Media." *Virgin Media - Broadband, Digital TV, Phone & Mobile Phone plus Broadband*. Web. 07 May 2011. <<http://www.virginmedia.com/digital/features/species-humans-couldnt-live-without.php?ssid=1>>.

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