

perfect page practice March 7 2022

This morning I noticed how the several deer I see on the trails I enjoy are never a threat to me. There we are, in amazingly close proximity. I could easily be a threat to them, and some people are. But they are never to me. In some ways they are an extension of the forest itself: they watch me constantly. They move aside enough for me to pass through, but not so far as to make me think the forest is mine. They do not actually yield the ground I pass through on. They will reassert their right to it as soon as I am gone. Their cycles and processes here are way older and more resilient than mine are. They will outlast me -- not this specific deer, but Deer. Nature. The world.

I appreciate how this reminder brings me some peace this morning. Like so many "memento mori" -- reminders of my own impermanence -- it is bitter-sweet and comforting all at once. I won't last forever. Neither will that deer. Neither will any living thing I encounter today. And in that similarity we are all filling our role in the divine order, the big plan. Whether or not someone designed that plan is above my pay grade. But down deep it affirms my faith that there is one, and that I have a place in it, and that brings me some peace today.

I was not particularly mindful on my run today; was mostly thinking about what and how I would write later (though I did not mark the deer experience as something worth writing about at the time. That is something I love about PPP: what I notice surprises me later sometimes.

But as I ran by the creek and watched the deer jumping over it I was struck by how the water is such an important part of how life here has been shaped. How many historic homes were built close by the creek, but not so close it might get flooded when it rose. This landscape teaches you how to live in it, and you can learn its lessons easy or hard but eventually you will learn it. That is a wisdom too for me today: listen to the wisdom of what is older than me and connect to it on its terms the best I can. I usually move too fast to do that. I think I will try to remember to slow down and learn from slower wisdom where and when it presents. At least that is my intention.