

Tamed through the sculpture of shared past experience

Dear mountain in a foggy landscape,

I am writing regarding a recent interaction between yourself and the small man.

As you are well aware, there are many moments when the small man has been wandering on your paths, admiring your structures and subsequently feeling somewhat overwhelmed. On this particular occasion I believe he was thinking about how the hazy nature of your appearance seemed to mirror the inconceivable details that you behold. And it was about this time that the two of you began your usual conversation about the intricacies of wonderment, and the inadequacy of his general experience. You of course as always spoke rather eloquently, establishing the nuances of being apart of such a landscape beautifully whilst he was unfortunately, again, left lagging behind, paddling upstream in a river of words, trying muster some sort of meaning that he could work with at a later date. The reason that I am writing is that this situation feels a little too common – Is it not a bit unfair to speak in such a way all the time? Could you perhaps slow down, or try to repeat things in a manner suited to his experiential capacity? It just seems unkind and I'm sure, leaves the man somewhat dissatisfied.

Dear valley in a foggy landscape,

Yes, I have noticed this, I know that he is often lost but I find it difficult to be anything other than I am and I refuse to dumb down in such a way that renders my appearance untrue. However, I have also noticed that when *you* and he are conversing certain bodily expressions suggest unease on his part. His neck is often poised awkwardly forward with a slight angle and his face is hesitantly flat in preparation for an adequate reaction that never really arrives. Occasionally he will make a nodding gesture using his head and neck. And it is this gesture that seems to be repeatedly acted out when you make a reference to something as an example to whatever it is that you are trying to convey - something that requires some form of outside knowledge. Anyway, my point is that I'm not so sure that this action of his is actually sincere. It may appear to be expressing interest and agreement, but there is something a little confused about it, a bit unsure, and yes, a little lost. I just wonder if you are aware of this.

Dear mountain in a foggy landscape,

Yes, I am aware of this and I do not mistake it for a false acknowledgement of understanding. I know what it means and I take it for what it is. The small man wants to give me the impression that he and I are momentarily sharing knowledge. He wants me to believe that he is holding in his memory or in his thoughts the very same thing that I am holding in mine – as if something has entered a communal space that we can both collectively own – a piece of reality tamed through the sculpture of our shared past experience. I know that although his gestures are designed to say otherwise, they don't mean that he has a real understanding of what I am referring to. I know that he may not even have a clue. But I think he feels that to expose himself as not knowing such things would be to reveal himself as someone who lacks compassionate understanding. It is his belief that if he were to admit to this - to expose himself in such a way then he would run the risk of rendering the moment as two singular moments as opposed to one shared. Thus, he pretends not only to understand what I mean, but also on occasion, to share my opinion. It is a little unnerving and often annoying, but I forgive him for being misleading, as I believe him to mean well.

Dear valley in a foggy landscape,

I agree, and what you say is true - these gestures of agreement are not anything to do with understanding what you or I portray, or agreeing with how we behave; quite the contrary; these gestures are his confirmation to himself, his agreement with a prior understanding he carries, that we know and contain many things that he does not, and will not. Ever. He wants to highlight the togetherness of the moment and acknowledge his support for what you and I are doing even if he has no idea what we really mean. Although it may appear that you and I are speaking in a language alien to him, at a level unavailable to his ears is not reason not to do so, as it is within the action of the dialogue - not the actual content of the dialogue, where he finds value, and it is for this that he is also expressing his enthusiasm. Because of this, it is my belief that we continue this same discourse – let's not feel bad and accuse each other of naiveté or arrogance, let's give him the interaction he desires and embrace his reactions. And let us continue to ignore the conventional modes of conversation and allow it to be as one-sided as it has always been.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my awareness.

