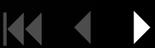




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GESTURES OF A PRIMITIVE MIND



by

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I would like to think that plants have consciousness. I would be comforted by it. The trees would wave hello; the flowers would return my smile. But it is not so. Science assures me of this.

Then again, imagine four billion years ago some astronaut from another world happened to be out surveying the galaxy and passed our sphere of blue and brown. He would no doubt have looked down upon the Earth and noted in his journal “No life – just a bunch of rocks.” Is it possible, on his return trip, he might look down upon us today and correct his entry: “Excuse me! Not just a bunch of rocks. They are *peopling* rocks after all!” For don’t we all grow *out* of this world the same way apples grow from the apple tree? It seems we are *symptomatic* of rocks.

Locked in the acorn is the mystery of how to grow an oak. I can’t turn an acorn into an oak, so is an acorn more intelligent than me? If I kick my neighbor, he manifests his intelligence and says, “Ouch.” If I kick a rock, it manifests its intelligence and goes *clunk*. Different intelligence indeed, but who is to say if one is not simply far more sensitive than the other, far more expressive than the other, far more developed. I’d like to think it’s so.

You laugh. It’s considered sentimental to exhibit such anthropomorphism – the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to nonhuman objects. Nonetheless, I cannot help but feel the grass is trying to . . . *something*. Like when my cat sees my finger wiggle under the blanket and tries, with her limited cat-intelligence, to figure it out – again. She engages her mind, but there isn’t much mind there to engage. I know that plants would like to discuss philosophy and metaphysics and share recipes and humorous anecdotes with me. They seem to try so hard to do so – reaching without muscles and thinking as best they can with brainless roots. And I try hard to listen.

Which begs a deeper question. Which is the more primitive intelligence – the one who rustles carelessly in the breeze or the one who tries so passionately to make it *meaningful*?





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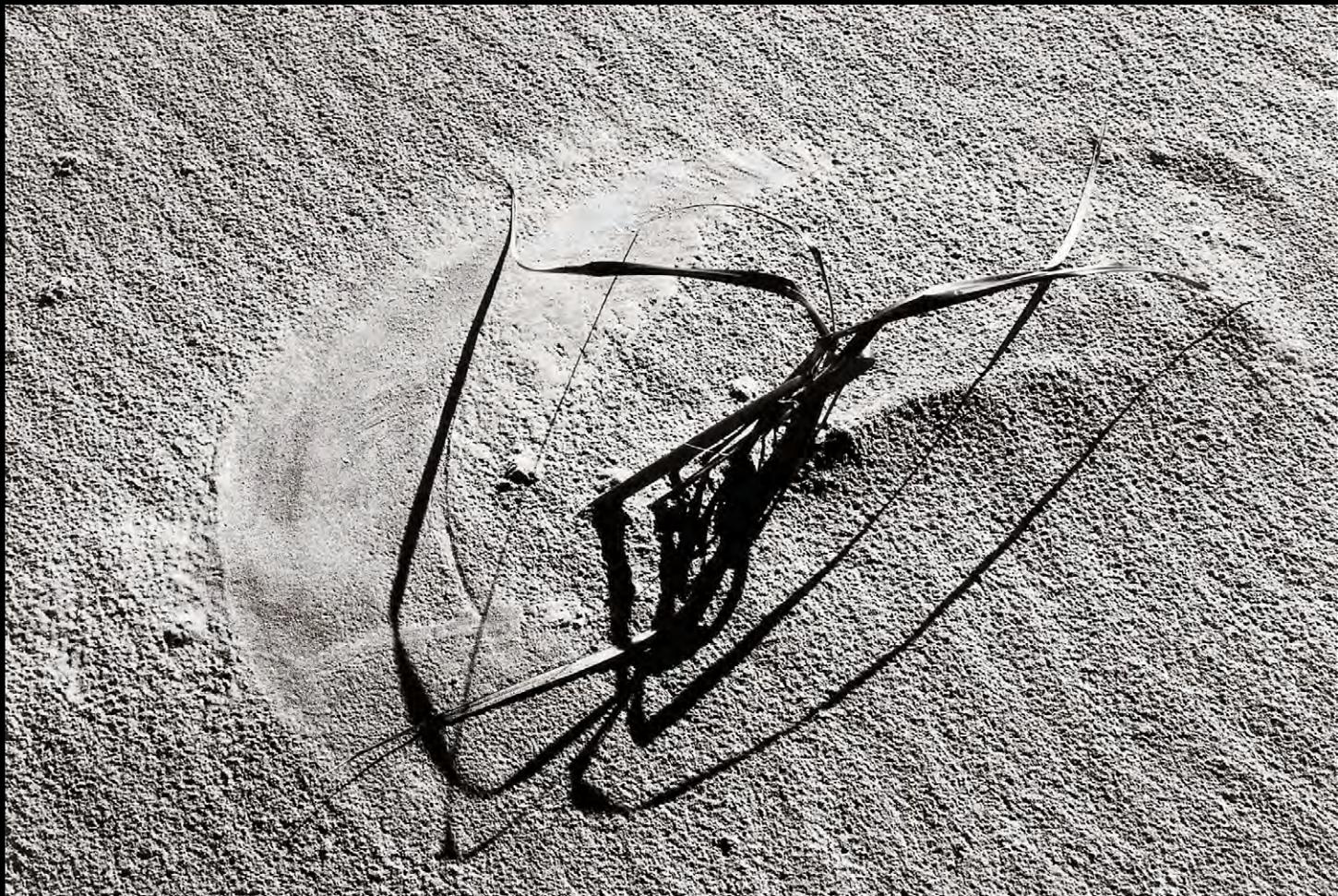




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