

On April 10, 1815 Mt. Tambora in Indonesia exploded in what was to become the largest volcanic eruption in the past 10,000 years. The explosion was heard from over 1,600 miles away. It dropped ash over 800 miles away. The eruption column reached 141,000 ft. Because of the suspension of Tambora's volcanic particulates in the atmosphere, the northern hemisphere's summer of 1816, a full year after the eruption, was called the year without summer. Crops failed throughout the hemisphere and when all was said and done, it is believed that the eruption killed close to 100,000 people.

On May 22, 1960 the most powerful earthquake ever recorded, magnitude 9.6, crushed the Chilean coast. The principal quake shook for a full ten minutes. It generated tsunamis that killed people in the Philippines, eleven thousand miles away, generated thirty five foot waves that devastated Hilo, Hawaii and affected other places as far away as the Aleutian Islands. It is believed to have killed over 5000 people.

On October 10 the Great Hurricane of 1780 struck Barbados and then made its way to Martinique, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico and the island of Hispanola. Data suggest that it was likely a category 5 hurricane with winds possibly in excess of 200 mph. It sunk many British warships weakening their hold on Atlantic waters during a key point of the American Revolution. All told, it is believed that 25,000 people lost their lives.

The majority of elements in the entire universe are created under immense pressures in the inner core of stars, or they're created during the cataclysmic deaths of stars. In the core of active stars, under immense pressure, nuclear fusion squeezes hydrogen atoms into Helium, then to Beryllium, then onward until the creation of the iron atom. When a star dies, it collapses into a dense core and then explodes with the power of an octillion (10^{27}) atomic bombs. The violence of this true nuclear Armageddon gives birth to the majority of the elements in the universe.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek says, "This notion of nature as a harmonious, organic, balanced, reproducing organism, which is then disturbed, perturbed, derailed through human hubris, technological exploitation and so on, is a secular version of the religious story of the Fall (Slavoj Zizek, "Examined Life" movie by Astra Taylor)." "The Fall" that he refers to is the great sin of Adam and Eve that led to their banishment from the Garden of Eden - God's harmonious, organic, balanced natural environment.

Slavoj Zizek continues, “And the answer should be not that there is no Fall—that we are part of nature, but on the contrary, that there is no nature....Nature is not a balanced totality which then we humans disturb but [What we think of as nature is nothing but a] big series of unimaginable catastrophes (Ibid).”

Karl Marx famously stated that religion was the opium of the people. Zizek believes that ecological preservation is the new opium of the people. Like religion, it has its own ideological dogma. Often regardless of reason or potential benefits, this dogma says its sinful to genetically modify organisms, alter DNA, develop nuclear energy, burn fossil fuels, etc.

Rather than allow the opium to cloud our judgment, we must look at our lives, what we actually do, with a fresh set of eyes in order to see through our own ideology in order to see our true values. And Zizek believes that if we look closely at ourselves, we will see that what we truly value, what we truly love...is trash...garbage. We value and love materialism. We enjoy indulging in the market’s temptations...and if we are rational, thinking beings we have to understand, it can’t be denied, that today’s temptations become tomorrows trash. (Yet that trash is conveniently hauled away from us weekly on Thursday mornings – out of site, out of mind....to make room for new trash.) Or as George Carlin would say, “We gotta get rid of our old stuff to make room for all our new stuff. We gotta get a bigger, new house...one that will hold all our bigger, new stuff.”

Zizek believes that rather than trying to save the planet through an inauthentic ecological ideology, it would be more authentic of ourselves to embrace what we value and love; to develop an ethic, an aesthetic, a spirituality around trash, garbage and hazardous waste.

Well...

It’s important to listen to those with whom you disagree...well, at least most of the time. I didn’t watch the presidential debate because, if I can help it, I’m not going to allow someone who utters nothing but lies, false narratives and well, made up nonsense to waste my time; its bad enough that I, and many others, are subjected, without having a choice, to real damage perpetrated by a branch of our government. So, if I have a choice, if it’s optional, I won’t subject myself to further nonsense.

But in most cases, it is important to listen to those with whom you disagree. As you are listening, can you see yourself, more importantly, can you see your actions, what you actually do, in your opponent’s arguments? I don’t know about you but I can see myself, my actions, in Zizek’s arguments...and it makes me uncomfortable. Unless I collapse and submit myself to an

authentic ethic and an aesthetic spirituality of trash and garbage, I likely have some real work to do to in order to recover a new authenticity.

It sounds absurd to say that I wish to recover a new authenticity for myself. It's kind of like saying that I'm working on a new personality. The new me is going to be funnier...and better at math. Absurd! Yet there are theorists, the Taoists in particular, who will claim that what we think of as our authentic selves aren't even remotely related to our truly authentic selves. They'd say that from a very early age we've covered up, obscured, our truly authentic selves with garbage, trash, ash that is floating about in our toxic atmosphere, tsunamis of materialism that have rolled over us and drowning our inherent nature...our very being. It's gotten to the point that every year is like a year without summer...yet we often don't even realize it.

Uncover. Undo. Unnerve. Unmake. Untie. Unlash. Unfold. Unlearn.

Deconstruct. Declassify. Demystify. De-order. De-systemize.

Rearrange. Reinvestigate. Reassess. Reevaluate. Reconstruct. Rebuild. Reintegrate. Reconnect. Recategorize. Renew.

Then we can, truly, respect the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part....with our authentic selves.