



A (belated) simpler example: As noted previously, I found it difficult to come up with a simple case to work with. Pulling at one thread seemed to bring along with it a whole tangle of related issues. But this weekend while we were in the redwoods at a retreat, there was an incident that seemed pretty compact and easy to communicate, so here it is.

At this retreat place, there were very nice walking trails between houses and the meditation hall. In the early morning, however, these trails could be pitch dark, coastal fog completely obscuring any light from the sky, the flashlight illuminating the path but not able to penetrate the thick tree cover around me, and my mind would turn to bears, bob cats, mountain lions, and so forth. It seemed unlikely that there could be a surprise encounter, but on the other hand, I had certainly seen bears during camping trips in similar areas, and as a city dweller I am frankly unprepared to deal with bears. So, I was afraid. This fear did seem like an appropriate and natural response, however misplaced (because there probably weren't any bears). But it was also possible to sense a turning away from the fear, a secondary reaction to the fear that included a withdrawal from the environment, and bringing forth a clear intention to honor and connect to the fear allowed this secondary reaction to drop off. At this point, the landscape and the functioning of my senses in this landscape could become an ally and a source of connection, rather than a cause of additional mental jitters and fantastic imaginings.