

The Secret Life of Plants is a 1973 non-fiction book that stories several scientists' attempts to prove or probe plant sentience. A bestseller, perennially in print, the book, along with its 1979 documentary film adaptation (with a soundtrack by Stevie Wonder), have, like all worthy causes, faced impassioned critique. The go-to insult in this case being: "pseudo-science." The various experiments *The Secret* documents, which suppose to prove that plants have an emotional, physical, and spiritual consciousness, not just *akin* to that of humans, but *connected* to ours (plants read minds), aren't precisely verifiable. They fail the "scientific method" necessity of repeatability.

Marcel Vogel, one of *The Secret Life's* first characters, is a believer (prior to this plant business, he was student of Saint Francis). Philodendrons were his friends.

Philodendrons: large leafed, flowering plants. Their name derives from the Greek: *philo* meaning "love, affection" and *dendron* = "tree."

Vogel noted, not in so many words, of course, that a reason why his test results weren't repeatable is cause we're not dealing with inanimate matter here.

Plants have consciousness. *They can sense your skepticism.* Why should they perform before obstinance? We have nothing to prove.

Vogel did. He would conduct his experiments—which involved wiring plants to some sort of energy measuring device and either inflicting harm (cutting a leaf, e.g.) on them or on a neighboring plant, or even: *just thinking of doing harm* (thinking of lighting a match, e.g.), and watching how the plants reacted; they, energetically, appeared to recoil from even imagined threat and beam for love—in public.

"The feeling of hostility, of negativity, in an audience," Vogel claimed, "is one of the main barriers to effective communication. To counteract this force is one of the most difficult tasks in public demonstration of these plant experiments. If one cannot do this, the plant and therefore the equipment will 'go dead' and there is no response until a positive tie can be reestablished."

To counteract this force, Vogel used Yogic breath. He would suss out who in his audience was emanating negativity and overwhelm it with deep breath, his belief. Thus: re-establishing connection to his plants. Thus: being able to carry out the experiment, which could only really *demonstrate* plant sentience *anthropocentrically* through *his* ability to communicate with plant life and *they* with *him*.

Trust.



I am about to giveaway the premise of a bestselling novel:

I am convinced everyone is psychic. We are. Everyone knows everything about every one and thing. How *conscious* we are of this is the trick. Plants know. And they love and hate us for our forgetfulness like only a parent can. Everything, also, is interconnected. Including you and I. We are one and the same, the boundaries of skin being most seductive illusions. Plants know. And they envy and pity us for our ungratefulness like only a sibling can. Which would you rather: bipedal freedom or a rooted connection to Creator? Imagine! You already have both.

Think about it: if every one and what you call things are psychic, that means every one and thing knows every one and thing you think meaning every thing you think has an impact. Most of it pitiful.

Vogel believed that his research with plants could help man to the recognition of "long-ignored truths":

"They [man]," he swore, "can thus learn the art of *loving*, and know truly that when they think a thought they release

tremendous power or force in space. By knowing that they *are* their thoughts, they will know how to use thinking to achieve spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth...”

How fecund is your soul?



My friend Amalia likes to tell this story about a male barn cat who became feminized to save lives. A litter of kittens was born, not even his own, to a mother who died shortly thereafter. Orphaned, papa was a rolling stone, these wild kitties would've perished were it not for this stallion, she says he really was: a very masculine cat before this, who stepped in, adapting to adopt. He built small nests for his, now, young, regularly moving the lot, steps ahead of predators. And he groomed and warmed and even nursed them: milk came out. When the cats were grown, our hero transitioned back into his stallion self.

By psychic I don't mean future forecasting.

(As if that would be any good to us.)

The psychic pertains to the Eternal Now.

Unbelievable! an editor said.

Sarah says, “You just sound like someone who's done a lot of drugs.”

Like I'm convinced of sum essentialisms. Masculine and feminine. This is not popular yet.

Whatever the setup, biology is part of it, biology being a name we've given to observable phenomena. I have observed myself for approximately 222 fertile moon cycles now and I assure you: there is an imperative.



The Internet Runs like Roots Underground

A man who babysat me when I was too young to remember it wrote me to say that his favorite blogger had excerpted an essay of mine. A few days later, she asks me to write this. She and I met ~ 20 months ago in Berlin through a man I was then committed to, with whom she'd had (he called it) “a romance” while I was dying.

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There's a reason there are two i's in fiction.

This sweet former babysitter though was for real worried by my death threats (I guess I was blogging them, which: we should kill that word too, it's undermining—what Fette does is very good). This man, Dan, was so worried he called my father, or called someone who called him, asking “Is Fiona suicidal?” then dad called me and it was humiliatingly true: I thought I was unhappy.



Dear Fette,

Have you ever known a plant so well,

you swear you'd recognize it anywhere?

You know what my friend Anna calls streets and sidewalks?
"Step Mother Earth"

One more story for the road:

Once an accomplished woman 12 years my senior said that I was great at _____ and from thereon out I sought to be that and I was. I was her employee then, then for four more years. I still consider her a mentor. Before her four words, I hadn't recognized that I was great at _____, or maybe it was that I hadn't considered that _____ was a great thing to be great at, people don't tell you that. (I should say: my _____ served her needs.) Whatever. Being given this recognition transformed me for the better, meaning the greater good, which is also each of our own. Trust. I remember telling my friend Andrew this story, to which he replied, *How very Buddhist, you know that teaching?* She planted a seed.

The End!

P.S. Have you noticed? It is men, in my life, who fear climate change, the immanent destruction of the world as we know it. I was thinking: Maybe it's them because they feel more responsible? Or maybe it's because men are more attached to the world as we know it.

Nature is fine.



Fiona Duncan, *For Noo*, December 2016.

On the occasion of the exhibition

Fette Sans, *ЭПИЧНОЕ РАСТЕНИЕ (hothouse plant)*
December 27, 2016 - February 19, 2017

Metenkov's House, Museum of Photography, Yekaterinburg, Russia

