Essential Nature

The Koan:

What Is essential nature?

The leaf of the lotus is round, round, rounder than a mirror. The spine of the water nut is sharp, sharper than an awl.

Questions:

- 1. Carrying this koan around with you these last few weeks, what do you notice?
- 2. What feelings or sensations does the koan evoke?
- 3. When are you struck by essence, by nature?

Poem

Blue Jay Way by Jerry Gagnon

Most of what I know about them is hearsay: that they're demons who prey upon the offspring of songbirds, worse than cats.

But that blue! Flaming indigo in the pine, and within this, the dark flash — beak that signals love or danger or both.

This morning, I watched from the window as a female dropped from a branch to the rim of a hollowed-out rock filled with rainwater.

Primly, she splashed blue under her wings and then, back to the branch. Splash and branch, splash and branch.

I don't know how many times she made this journey or how long I watched her lift from her spidery clasp, each time landing on the edge of the unknown,

head turning, warily, this way and that before she entered the abyss, and —

shivering,

flung lost epiphanies over the round stones and tiny ears, flowering in moss.