

# ANIMA

The “soul” – like a painting – of lines, surfaces, colors, contours, figures, sensations, impressions – a face, faces, memories, evocations, nuances, and all that we cannot say. Its material: encounters, experiences, attentions, mishaps, explorations.

“Life is an experimental journey undertaken involuntarily.”  
(Pessoa)

On this journey, there are stops, shortcuts, many detours, and – sometimes – appearances, vivid emotions – delays... and daydreaming, when allowed.

An imperative? *Go into yourself*,” Rilke orders – and Augustine, Descartes, Teresa of Ávila, Agnès Martin, Rûmî, Emily Dickinson – and so many others – did not invoke anything else. Kandinsky: “To shine light into the depths of the human heart is the profession of the artist” – quoting Schumann. Rilke again: *Dig into yourself for a deep answer. [...] And if out of this turning-within, out of this immersion in your world,*” something emerges... then...

Pessoa: “It’s neither death nor life that I want: it’s that other thing shining in the depths of longing, like a possible diamond in a pit one can’t descend. [...] I’m like someone searching at random, not knowing what object he’s looking for, nor where it is hidden.”

Klee whispers: “Fire of flower, at night you replace the sun for me and shine deeply in the silent human heart.”

Rimbaud? “The first study for a man who wants to be a poet is knowledge of himself, complete: he searches for his soul, he inspects it, he puts it to the test, he learns it.” He adds, “All forms of love, suffering, and madness. He searches himself. He exhausts all the poisons in himself, and keeps only their quintessences. [...] He reaches the unknown! Since he has cultivated his soul – which was rich to begin with – more than any man! He reaches the unknown; and when, bewildered, he ends up by losing the intelligence of his visions, he has seen them!”

Char: “How can we live without the unknown before us?”  
The unknown – the area that will light up – opening the field – to unfold or undo – hospitable? – possibilities of existence.

But Rilke warned us: “The fear of the inexplicable has not alone impoverished the existence of the individual; the relationship between one human being and another has also been cramped by it, as though it had been lifted out of the riverbed of endless possibilities and set down in a fallow spot on the bank, to which nothing happens. For it is not inertia alone that is responsible for human relationships repeating themselves from case to case, indescribably monotonous and unrenewed: it is shyness before any sort of new, unforeseeable experience with which one does not think oneself able to cope.”

The poet, he says, is “someone who is ready for everything, who excludes nothing, not even the most enigmatical.” Is that the definition of freedom? “I’d like my life’s activity to consist, above all, in educating others to feel more and more themselves, and less and less according to the dynamic law of collectiveness.” (Pessoa) “Life is a weaving” (Etel Adnan) ... Taking shape – in person... Searching... Searching by oneself for stations – of birth, hatching, flowering, affinity, blossoming, breadth: “The amplification to a thousand joys of the instinct for heaven in each of us.” (Mallarmé)

The poetic shock (Reverdy)? Something – within us – reveals itself... – perhaps (or surely?) by the grace of an image, of a mere nothing – that suddenly lifts us up – and like a boat allows us to pierce seas of difficulties – and densify the energy to live.

(This is why: one should bring together in a library the few books that have had the power, at one time or another, to be such a craft – entailing a crossing – with its opacities, its transparencies – leading one farther – if only by a few millimeters – in order to connect with a world – the “*space*,” to use Klein’s word – that calls).

“*Only an artist can interpret the meaning of life*,” Novalis says. It is a question, more than a statement. For he adds, “*It is very unfortunate that poetry has a particular name, and that poets constitute a particular class... It is not, however, strange. It arises from the natural action of the human spirit*.” It is enough to gather “*some signs that would make sense against the absurd*” (Juarroz), and thus smell the scent of a vital reason: “*The task is to live in such a way that you must wish to live again*.” (Nietzsche)

Bram van Velde: “*By painting, I spurn this world that prevents life and where one is in constant danger of being crushed*.” “*I am always looking for life*.” “*The world is getting sicker and sicker. More and more frightening*.” “*Of course painting is ridiculous. But it’s the only way I’ve got to get closer to life*.” “*We are all in distress. But we don’t have the courage to admit it to ourselves*.” “*You must put up a tremendous battle against the system that kills life*.” And Klee: “*When reality is no longer bearable, it seems like a waking dream*.”

And yet, trying to open our eyes wide, as difficult as it is. Trying to see. And even, out of an instinct for survival and a basic sense of direction, trying to “*summarize the contents of this time*.” (Hofmannsthal) ... Of this time of insistent trouble – teeming with traps?

Or simply saying: “*I love everyone. I do not want war. Or frontiers. I am the earth. I have a home everywhere. I live everywhere. I do not want to own anything. I want to love, love. I am love. I am love. I am man. I am man*.” (Nijinsky) – Even in a corner, the benevolent and beneficial thought emerges – provided that we don't retreat before the “*fog*,” but rather meet it (Etel Adnan)...

Paradoxically, “*the soul emerges, refined by struggle and suffering*” (Kandinsky)? Whatever happens, staying afloat... setting sail...

Yes, “*we are left to our fate [...] We find ourselves sailing without the idea of the harbor that should welcome us*.” (Pessoa) But we will go on, driven by some instinctive art of navigation, by who knows what current – and using as reference points – a few impressions, a few colors, a few presences – a few words, a few gestures, a few sunny spells – nothing to be underestimated.

E. P

(Tr. Jérémy Robert)