

The Forget-Me-Not Letters: III

Pseudo-Tiresias

1 Prelude

There was an outcropping of rocks—where the river had coursed for millenia and in its coursing carved a pool in which endlessly turned round and round a whirl of current and foam and now, only recently, children leaping in from the cliffs above. They'd teeter there a moment and then plunge into the darkling, into the swirling, and pop out bobbing, kicking, screaming, scrambling to the edge and clambering up the rocks again. Some would spin there lazily, arms spread. Others kissed under the gnarled little trees nearby. I followed her to where we jumped. My throat swelled shut with fear. But when she bid me leap, I leapt, dumb and drunk on love, and then there was the madness of lights and water surging, yanking legs, arms, and then I was out and paddling for earth. But I heard her behind me, and I saw her being pulled downriver, and for a moment—that one smallest second—when I reached to pull her up, I felt the whole of existence spread out before me: immortal, heroic, something more than human. It was play, stupid and simple, brilliant and beautiful.

Humanity was never meant to be separate from nature. We are sick for our separation. We have enclosed ourselves in concrete and locked out its brutality but also its beauty. So many have forgotten how to feel that vitality coursing, surging, violent and wonderful in their veins. Our inventions, our artifice, are necessary for the cessation of suffering, for the liberation of all, yet we invent in excess, piling up useless variations, derivations, mockeries of creativity. The first computer was an accumulation of a million human brilliances, but the modern machine is monument to our idiocies: the Windows operating system, the iPhone, the endless insertion of "AI" into everything. We have created marvels of computing power and ruined them with mediocre programming. We have created ingenious information broadcasting systems and filled them with advertisements.

The occasional genius of humanity is kept in check by its rampant stupidity. Our rare heroism, by our constant cowardice. We strive for experience but fear pain. We seek life but fear death. Liberation will come only when we are no longer averse to the essences of life: *to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield*.¹

2 On Anima

We can never grasp the world's being. There may lie, on the other side of the veil, certain truths regarding the eternal, essential character of the universe, but they are superstructural, inaccessible. Thus, the unifying principle of subluminal reality is not being but becoming. We are not characterized by mere existence but by turning, changing, growth, and evolution. There is an *anima* to the world, its essence, and

1. Alfred, Lord Tennyson. *Ulysses*. 1842

it manifests in every subtle perturbation of the most elementary fields; the trembling waves of electrons; the furnace of atoms at the heart of each star; the motion of planets; the waxing and waning of the moon; the currents of air and the accretion of clouds; the plummet of rain; and the squirming, writhing earth into which it falls; the roots feeling through soil; their flowers seeking the sun; and us, walking among them. Nothing is static. Nothing rests. All is excitation. If we may speak metaphorically of a divinity passing into this world from beyond, it is precisely this *anima*, this vitality, this spirit which pervades all things.

I find myself coming into a love, a reverence of the *anima mundi*. There is something sacred in the flowers and the leaves. Biological life is the purest and most brutal manifestation of this becoming—claws, teeth, blood, breeding. Yet, it is on this stage that we are capable of love. Nothing base may love. There is no empathy in iron and stone. By our excessive industry and our idiocy, we have replaced the greater vitality of nature with the lesser of metals, plastics, concrete. There is a balance, somewhere, but it is not here. Liberation lies in the world which knows the full measure of artifice and nature.

Humanity will eventually go extinct. Here or there, sooner or later, it is inescapable. But this isn't to be mourned. Every object of love has within it the seed of its extinction. Our love is contingent upon that death. We cannot love a thing which cannot die. We love a thing because it dies.

3 An Amendment of Vows

In light of these thoughts, I want to amend the vows of the last letter to include a few things pertaining to nature:

1. I will act towards the cessation of suffering and the liberation of all.
2. I will adhere to these vows unless to do so would impede the liberation of others.
14. I will treat the living world with reverence and act to preserve its *anima*.
15. I will, presented with a choice between distance or nearness to nature, choose nearness, proximity, coexistence.

I feel admittedly embarrassed sometimes to be acting so self-serious. Does my goal really require I devise some melodramatic list of vows? No, but I also feel that enumerating it makes it clear and easily referenceable when I am actually out there living in the world. I could reach vaguely, intuitively for this goal, but it is easier to have a hard list, to know whether I am keeping to my word or deviating too far. I am also nothing if not self-centered and vain, so I suppose I am indulging in a little automythopoeia. Forgive me, if you can.

4 In Closing

The world is one, inexplicable, undifferentiated, animated being. We cannot know its true nature, substance, or eventuality. We cannot and should not escape death but come to love and act within it. Life is contingent upon death. Beginning is contingent upon ending. I write these letters for myself. For my sanity. For my love. For the cessation

of suffering. For the liberation of all. But also for death. As the old professor says: *to ruin and the world's ending!*²

2. Tolkien, John R. *The Return of the King*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.