

AS WITHIN, SO WITHOUT:: THE FARAWAY NEARBY

One could do worse than begin with Kurt Vonnegut's advice :: "To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it!" Which, to my way of thinking, directly mirrors the following Insight from Carl Jung's "The Red Book" (Philemon, 2009) :: "If you look into yourself, you will see that the nearby & the far-off are one, since the world of the inner is every bit as infinite as the outer." Paul Cezanne's great recipe for delving deeper into what art is about comes inevitably to the art & mind :: "To love a painting, one must first have drunk deeply of it in long draughts, go within, descend with the painter into the dim tangled roots of things, & rise again from them in colors, thoroughly steeped in their light." (as quoted by Peter Fuller in his "Art & Psychoanalysis," Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, London, 1980). Speaking of tangled roots, here's what van Gogh had to say about the core-curricular necessity of going within :: "In the middle of the night light spreads its power." Which is 'echoed' by Albert Camus's profound Insight :: "In the middle of Winter I discovered that there was in me an invincible Summer." (from Camus's 'Return to Tipasa').

Further back, we have Samuel Taylor Coleridge's insistence on the epicentrality of making "The external internal, the internal external, nature thought & thought nature -- this is the mystery of genius in the fine arts." This prescient quote smites me as akin in spirit to Einstein's well-known post-quantum observation that "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art & science." Whereas closer to our own time we find the Stephen Hawking-trained physicist, Peter Russell, in an interview with David Jay Brown in the latter's aptly titled "Conversations On the Edge of the Apocalypse" (2005), emphasizing the innate spirituality of the inner landscape, wherein the external physical world is reconciled with the internal psychic, which presupposes a shift in the focus of one's awareness. For Russell the Divine isn't something 'out there,' but is rather our own essential nature, which necessarily entails 'ever greater levels of Awakening.' Which of course brings to mind Nietzsche's "One must harbor chaos to give birth to a dancing star." But perhaps no one says it better than Matthieu Ricard's Tibetan teacher, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche :: "Those who seek happiness in pleasure, wealth, glory, power, & heroics are as naive as the child who tries to catch a rainbow & wear it as a coat." (as cited in M. Ricard's "Happiness," trans. from the French by Jesse Browner, Little, Brown & Co., NYC & Boston, 2006).

So as we {re}enter this more inward season, let us remember with the great Artist, Bard, & Seer, William Blake, "To see the world in a grain of sand, / And a Heaven in a wild flower. / Hold Infinity in the palm of y/our hand, / And Eternity in an hour."