

# COMING UP FOR AIR

A Theory of Poetics

by

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“...although the Cosmic Consciousness can think, assimilate, coordinate thought, and understand, it is nevertheless primarily a *feeling* consciousness.”

Carol Anthony *I Ching, The Oracle of the Cosmic Way*

This morning I opened the back door and stepped outside a moment to notice the day opening up, and I was struck suddenly by an overwhelmingly rich scent in the dawn air, so I walked out into the darkness, closed the door, stood on the back steps, and began to inhale deeply several times. I could pick out the thick sweetness of the flowering plum, pear, and crabapple blossoms I knew were unfolding in my yard and around my neighborhood, the small pink and white pom-pom blossoms that were opening to the warming summer days, releasing their almost pheromonal enticements that I knew had been keeping the local bees crazy at work. I continued to take the warm dawn air into my lungs, and then I noticed the familiar river smell of willow trees, the smooth green supple limbs of riparian willows, an earthy but also sweet smell, not cloying like the sweet blossoms I had noticed in the air, but sweet like the clear water in a mountain stream, like the snow melt in the Boise River, just a half a mile away from where I was standing. I looked up expectantly and inhaled deeply another time to take in the fullness of the morning smells, and I noticed looming directly overhead ominous dark scuds of rain clouds. I smelled the scent of possible rain mingling with the blossoms and willows and river water smells in the air, and at that moment without realizing I began to visualize and then think about how fast the river was running, whether the rain would be enough that I should turn off the automatic lawn sprinklers, if the morning breeze would blow the blossoms off the trees prematurely, and if, hopefully, there was a poem nascent in this moment...I had stopped feeling and started thinking. I came inside, closed the door, lurched into my office, and began to write this paragraph. I had come up for air.

Each of us lives in a feeling world, an inner cosmos of sensation— whisperings and mumbles, inaudible cries, crumbs and chunks of love and hate, bugle calls or oboe melodies, symphonic movements, forests in the wind, arid desertscapes, moon rise, loon and wolf calls, all inhabiting the same apparent locus of perception, metaphorically inside us, but usually undifferentiated. How often have I driven for ten minutes or more totally unconscious right through the scenes, dramas, panoramas, and vistas playing out around me, only to come to my intellectual senses suddenly as a chicken darts out from the side of the road? I hadn't realized that I had seen the short, stocky lady walking her dachshund on her front lawn like she does every day around 3:35; that I had noticed a man with the longbow shooting arrows at a decoy of a deer right off of the road; that I had picked out a huge gaggle of geese spread out pastorally over the marshy field next to the river; that I hadn't paid any attention to the unusually high water in both the north and south forks of the Boise River as I drove over them both; that I had never spied so many large intensely purple lilacs blooming in the corners of many people's properties I drove by. Only when I started to think of what I saw did I become aware of what I saw. When I was actually attending to the spectacle around me with my ears, eyes, nose, body, I was too occupied with the primary experience to step back metaphorically and think or reflect on the experience.

Most of the time we live in this feeling world of more or less pure experience, and it is very much like an undersea realm, predominantly non-verbal, with no air of reflection to breathe while we are swimming metaphorically in and through these layers of sensation. They are layers, perhaps stratifications of old, lost, unrequited, and perchance, new love, sensed as sad, melancholy, or exciting; calcifications of unspoken and resented accommodations we've made with loved ones; a constant fabric of worry or uneasiness about health, money, personal fulfillment, family; dissatisfaction about personal accomplishments, the time left to do anything about it, and the nagging suspicion that time is running out increasingly more quickly; secrets, hidden from even yourself, parts of yourself buried before their time, interred and suppressed from fear. And there are layers there too of constant love, fondness for all things as we feel our way into and through them; a fulfilling recognition of each thing and person's suchness, essence, destiny, their way unfolding that we perceive as holy; our ability to travel

metaphorically back and forth in feeling time to reconcile our past, conciliate our present with some larger vector of our life, hope with ardor into a future that is composed of day-to-days; a quiet acceptance of who we have become, why we are where we are, and what our responsibility to ourselves and to our loved ones is; and the suffusing of the surrounding matrix of the natural world into each breath, movement and gesture, memory and hope, and word of healing, acceptance, and recognition swirling around our bodily nature. This is a sea of rich emotional nutrients we swim in, and from time to time we need to surface to speak with ourselves and with each other about how it is to swim apparently alone in our waters so deeply. This is a purpose of poetry.

Well then, when we do come up for air, take a few metaphorical breaths, what is that breathing like? The breathing is not a gasping for breath, not a frantic panting, but it is a quiet and regular inhalation of the current experience and an exhalation of all the experiences we have ever had, and somewhere in that cyclic breathing in and out, the experiences metaphorically mix, resolve, reconcile, reunite. In psychology, cybernetics, and linguistics, this process is called transderivational search.

*...a transderivational search ... is essentially the process of searching back through one's stored memories and mental representations to find the personal reference experiences from which a current understanding or mental map has been derived. (Dilts)*

Transderivational search or TDS is a term used when one tries to find the meaning of ambiguous or incomplete statements. When a message is unclear, we try to supply the missing information from our own knowledge and experience to give it meaning. (NLP)

In poetics, transderivational search plunges back into the ocean of our feeling world and rummages through the shells and odd stones we picked up because they felt right at the moment, walks quietly along a peopled shoreline at sunset, looks out longingly to the glowing horizon, watches with wonder the waves break one after another without end, wades barefoot like a child into the chilly water,

builds a sand castle then kicks it over with glee, and laughs at the children playing in the shore break surf—all because there was something we metaphorically left there that we need now, to figure something out, to be the final piece in an urgent puzzle, to stabilize something recently shaky, to provide a needed perspective, to make us feel deeply chilled or warmed again, searching so that we can get on with the ongoing process of external changes and internal transformations that life uses to contour and flesh out our selves. Writing poems forces us back into that feeling ocean where we were swimming before, and the words we use to write the poems are the stepping stones back up to the regular world, bread crumbs we dropped on the trail, markers that guide us, and perhaps, if we are lucky, guide others too, to go back there anytime we need, and once there, to feel our way around that ocean again to reestablish our bearings. That's the power of poetry.

The transderivational search not only looks for the markers in previous emotional experience that guide us in the present challenge of understanding by identifying inner resources that we connect somehow to a current need, but it also hunts down and captures the perfect word or phrase—that is, a word or phrase with the exact denotation and connotation—suited to create the multidimensional metaphorical embodiment of emotion desired in the poem. The only way to fully express and access a portion of our multidimensional emotional ocean is by using metaphors, and metaphors are composed of words that have the desired denotation (literal definition) and connotation (mental and emotional associations).

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,/ With the twirl of my tongue I encompass  
worlds and volumes of worlds. (Whitman 213)

The perfect numerical combination and sequence opens the lock; the ideal mixture of distance and direction gets you to your destination; the correct mix of heat and time creates a perfectly risen cake. So it is with choosing metaphors for the poem: the words the poet chooses must mean exactly what the poet is feeling; the words must create parallel mental and emotional associations that are harmonious with

what the poet feels; and the metaphor itself, the combination of words used to create the multidimensional image, must be accordant with the poet's feeling. No easy task if the poet has no time or patience, or even worse, is not lost in a love affair with words.

The analogy of being in love and having an ongoing intimate relationship with words— as if the words were a flesh and blood lover in whom we needed as often as possible to lose ourselves in a weightless and kinesthetic union of body and soul to find ourselves unfolding into the continually blooming Spring of each other and of ourselves— this analogy is itself, at least for this author, metaphorically appropriate (connotatively!) in the way it conveys the many dimensions and energies involved in the experience of choosing the right word for the appropriate denotation, connotation, or metaphor. The analogy is powerful not only conceptually, but also experientially. We can nod our heads and agree, “How clever it is to compare the word search to the experience of the lover; that’s really intriguing.” Yet as a flesh and blood experience, the word search and being in love both marshal many of the same physical, psychological, and emotional energies.

First of all, continuing with the metaphor, in the same way the lover needs and wants to be with the lover, the poet has to want and need almost desperately to find the word with the essentially perfect denotation and connotation, and the only way to do that is to yearn for and take the time to look for that word, in the poet’s memory or in a thesaurus, on-line being ideal because of the ease of following hunches and veering quickly one way or the other on the scent of the right word. This need to be with the word, with the lover, fuels the will and provides the energy necessary to keep looking until the poet finds exactly the right word. Without the passion for possession, the metaphor here again, the poet would give up after a few minutes of searching and settle for just a mere clever synonym, and a poem that is just a combination or accretion of synonyms is not powerful because it does not come from the emotionally connotative depths of the poet; it comes merely from the poet’s mind. Mere mind is artifice; the feeling world is a much larger cosmos.

What then is the true function of the intellect within a harmonious cooperation between all the functions of the psyche? It is to form words based on feelings, to give verbal expression to our intuitions rather than to our fantasies, and to fill us with the joy that comes from calling things by their true names. (Anthony xvi)

In order for language to express Cosmic Logic and Cosmic Truths, the formation of words must come from a perception of reality that includes the full spectrum of our feeling consciousness. False names are given to things when our feeling consciousness is ruled out, and our perception is limited to outer seeing and hearing. (Anthony 37)

The second way that the poet's search for the word with perfect denotation and connotation is analogous to lovers looking for and needing each other, is how the search for both follows a similar cycle. At the beginning the poet is bouncing around excitedly trying to figure out whether the hunch or idea we have is enough to hold a poem together; then we have to decide what form of poem to use, to stick with the form we last used, or go with something different; and there is the issue of meter and rhyme, whether to use them or not, and if so, how; finally, we start writing, start in again, hoping to get somewhere with this whole weird poem process. Falling and being in love necessitates a similar suspension of judgment, a willingness to put up with some uncertainty and frustration, a faith in the worth and sustainability of the process. Later, the poet must continue with the line-by-line work of hewing the poem from nothing, sticking with the poem even when there are challenges and disappointments along the way. The faith necessary to keep writing a poem in difficult circumstances is the same faith the lover uses to build up the love relationship word-by-word, act-by-act, even under trying circumstances. Finally, the poet is suddenly finished with the poem: there's no meat for another stanza, we've said what we needed to say, only a little fiddling with the last couplet for the final effect, change the title, maybe one of the lines from the poem itself, there it is, so, that's it, I guess it's done... That mixed feeling of satisfaction and let-down is the return from "The Other" to "The Self." Just

a fancy way of saying that we've built the fantasy world of this poem, lived in it happily for a few beautiful moments, archived the plans for future reading, congratulated ourselves and perhaps swooned a bit at the poem's power, and now we're back inside ourselves, now what? Most love relationships are going to suffer this triumph and emptiness in some form or another. It is, perhaps, the dynamo that drives all love and all creative endeavors. We have stood outside of ourselves through the ecstasy of love and creativity, and we want to buy another ticket over there where it's not just ourselves we're with: it's a person or feeling reality that we need in order to harmonize and complement ourselves. Cosmic Harmony, if you will.

Before we took the pleasant detour into the analogy of how the word search shares similar energies and dynamics with being in love, we had discussed how the transderivational search allows the poet to find the word with just the right denotation and connotation that conjure up the feeling the poet needs to express. Not only should the poet choose individual words according to the basic correctness of the definition (the denotation) and the appropriateness of the mental and emotional associations (the connotation), but also the poet should choose metaphors throughout the poem that share connotative similarity but not necessarily denotative roots. That is to say, choose a poem's words to create a consistent feeling in the reader, and choose metaphors that all cause a similarly consonant summative effect in the reader. That combination of words and metaphors that all work together to create similar associations in the reader's heart and mind is the key to writing a poem that has emotional and mental power. The consistency and nature of the connotative associations is what gives a poem the ineffable power and mystery that draws us back to read it again and again.

The grand and vigorous function of metaphor is the generation of new language as it is needed, as human culture becomes more and more complex...metaphors increase enormously our powers of perception of the world about us and our understanding of it, and literally create new objects...Understanding a thing is to arrive at a metaphor for that thing by substituting something more familiar to us. (Jaynes 49-52)

The job description of a poet can be listed as follows: must love words enough to make time to regularly look for the right ones, must have enough patience to stick with the search until the perfect word is found, must have literary high standards so that the poet will suffer the labor of the above two characteristics, and must have a good ear to be able to hear the music and lyricism of the words, word combinations, and metaphors. The time and patience to write can be leveraged and developed over time: the more successful the poet's poems turn out, the more the poet will be willing to devote more of the 24/7 treasure to the word search. The process either feeds itself, or the so-called poet realizes that writing poems is just a satisfying pass time instead of a consuming passion. The old aphorism about 5% inspiration and 95% perspiration is nowhere more true than in writing., and one of the sweatiest tools in writing poetry is listening to the words we write read out loud, either by oneself or by one's computer (the opposite sex voice is preferable, such as my husky-voiced friend, Vicki, who is always willing to read with enthusiasm but without complaining about whatever poem I choose to highlight). Hearing the sound of the words of the poem read together with an enthusiasm and spirit warranted by the topic, mood, and tone of the poem always informs the poet of how successful the poem is in general, and where attention is needed to adjust the consistency of the meter, the intensity of the meaning, the assonance or alliteration, the rhyme, or the connectedness of the metaphors. The poet's ear has a discriminatory mind inherited from the first poets who uttered and sang their poems for the immediacy of the listening. We are tuned to hear and understand a parallel message of the poem in the sound, the melody, the music of the poem.

So where do the ideas for poems come from? the seeds, kernels, the heart, inspiration, image—all metaphors again for the mysterious and welcome experience of the little voice (another metaphor, of course) that keeps coming back, insinuating itself into our day-to-day mental preoccupations and gesticulations to tell us, "You need to write a poem about this, and unless you get to it right now, I am going to give you no rest." Inspiration for a poem is much like the urgency and intensity of falling in love. (Notice we are using a simile, a form of metaphor again, to describe poetic inspiration, and that we

are returning to the apparently default metaphor for poetry, love.) The ecstatic inspiration hits us, not from nowhere, but from the depths of that feeling ocean we spoke of earlier, where (this is all metaphor) some fissure on the sea bottom of our present experience opens up and hot volatile plumes of perception from our inner core bubble up to the top, and we go over there to mill around and look at the turbulence and commotion on what is normally the calm surface of our ocean (although poets rarely have such calm surfaces). After a while we realize what is causing the disturbance in our field: we either had an experience that affected us deeply, and we need to express ourselves about it; a new, synthetic, metaphorical understanding forms apparently spontaneously about some itchy aspect of life, and we need to articulate the scratching; or an ordinary word or phrase suddenly ingratiates itself in the current of our unspoken verbalizations, and we realize that it is a message we need to decode in a poem. After a while a poet hopefully might notice themes, consistencies, similarities in what the poems are about—love, darkness or light, nature, humanity, for example, and those realizations are one of the flowers of the poetic sensibility and work. We begin to understand our foundations more clearly through the patterns and consistencies of our poetry. Whatever we write about a lot is a reflection, or the mirror itself, of who and how we are.

There is security in the freedom the poet can take in exploring these reoccurring understandings, phrases, messages from and about ourselves. There is not only increasing health in the ongoing expression of our feelings and perceptions, self-expression for its own sake, and also a sharing of an expression of a commonality of being human; but there is also a self-assessment that takes place when the poet moves on from one poetic theme to the hopefully inevitable next, so that we realize that we are moving ahead in life, not “stuck in Mobile with the Memphis blues again.” Poetry is unique in this aspect, in a way that prose is not. Prose works out intellectual ideas to their logical mental end. Poetry works out emotional understanding to its existential mortal end. Who cares what we have *thought* when we are preparing for death? It’s more important to be *feeling* deeply and freely when we are approaching the final couplet of our last poem.

The prosaic method was invented by the Greeks of the Classical age as an insurance against the swamping of reason by mythographic fancy. It has now become the only legitimate means of transmitting useful knowledge... As a result, the poetic faculty is atrophied in every educated person who does not privately struggle to cultivate it...And from the inability to think poetically—to resolve speech into its original images and rhythms and re-combine these on several simultaneous levels of thought into a multiple sense—derives the failure to think clearly in prose. In prose one thinks on only one level at a time, and no combination of words needs to contain more than a single sense; nevertheless the images resident in words must be securely related if the passage is to have any bite. This simple need is forgotten, what passes for simple prose nowadays is a mechanical stringing together of stereotyped word-groups, without regard for the images contained in them. (Graves 223)

Perhaps the most basic characteristic all individual human creatures share is that we live our lives through constant striving to belong to something larger than ourselves. If fortunate enough, we begin life as a member of a family, we are a partner in a neighborhood, we attend a local school, we enjoy a circle of friends, we become a member of a club, perhaps we attend a university, we get a job, we find someone to love, we make our own family, and the circle ends. This is the external wheel of belonging, and it provides the experiential and metaphorical underpinnings for the equally necessary inner belonging. In the same ways we oriented ourselves by referring, either with other people or reflexively back into our feeling self/world, to our childhood friends and experiences, to our educational experiences and mentors, to the few people we loved, to our spouses and children; we also eventually suffer the need to *feel* connected and a part of something larger, more enduring even than our childhood, career, or family. We need to *feel* part of something, some process, some perspective, some conviction, that we know existed before us, that is current at this moment, and that will continue after we leave this life. Even the external world of our dear families and friends does not meet this definition. What meets this characterization more is, for example, a life of politics, agriculture, medicine, education, religion,

and the visual/literary/culinary arts. These endeavors are part of the basic human, growthal, healing dynamics that are husbanded and transferred from one person to another, from one generation to another. Yet, even these noble endeavors, in the middle of the night, the dark night, the night of the spirit and soul, even these magnificent endeavors do not provide an impenetrable shield, an armor, that is impervious to the realization and *feeling* that we will die eventually.

The night of the spirit discloses our finiteness, contingency, mortality; it awakens us to the tragic in life. It questions the meaning of one's life, hints at the nothingness which we suspect is at our core... The night of the senses attacks the religious persona and its rigid hold on the ego. It helps free the ego from the collective consciousness on which it relies for identity and meaning.

Projections of the self are withdrawn as people and objects lose their numinosity. The power of these symbols to hold the personality diminishes as psychic energy seeks a fuller outlet. These symbols are inadequate as ultimate symbols—every symbol is inadequate—and the psyche's need to move beyond them undermines their power. They no longer fascinate. The energy of the psyche, having for now no other expression, regresses into the unconscious, and darkness settles in. The self-images die. (Welch 158-9)

The apparently contradictory nature of life—that we strive to live fully and uniquely every moment in a limited lifetime that inexorably moves toward death—is a persistent phenomenon each of us has to deal with, cope with, accept, work through, however metaphorically we want to express it. No one can avoid or escape the inevitability of mortality, yet how we learn to feel and subsequently think about our life and death is the battlefield, so to speak, where the contentment/satisfaction battle is won or lost. One of the most powerful ways to deal with the phenomenon of our life being conditioned by our death is by perceiving, thinking, and expressing ourselves metaphorically, poetically. By their very nature metaphors can at any one moment express many dimensions, facets, and impressions about the reality that is life and death. The metaphors themselves, being conceived and imagined by us, and being

re-created every time we conceptualize them from memory or from print, are immortal in the sense that they take us, the imaginer, into a timelessness based on the past, present, and future of human experience; and these metaphors are infinite in that they transcend the duality, limitations, and dimensions of mortality. The hewing of this kind of potent and, shall we dare say, magic language and the ensuing inner-personal transderivational search allows us to experience the non-dualistic, holistic reality of which our lives are a mere aspect.

Like physical phenomena, the mind is a field of forces, no more the seat of intelligence than radiation or gravity is. Just as the world dissolves into a sea of energy, the mind dissolves into a river of impressions and thoughts, a flow of fragmentary data that do not hold together...the mind looks at unity and sees diversity; it looks at what is timeless and reports transience. And in fact the percepts of its experience are diverse and transient; on this level of experience, separateness is real. Our mistake is in taking this for ultimate reality, like the dreamer thinking that nothing is real except his dream. (Bhagavad 10-11)

The poet, the human being, in looking for and creating the appropriate metaphor to point to the multidimensionality of our experiences, and additionally, in combining those metaphors into a poem—really an amalgam of metaphors, a multidimensional metaphor—we can create a living and ongoing (in text) storage device that can be accessed at any time by a reader. The metaphorical symbols in language again allow this resplendent phenomenon to occur.

Symbols hold in relationship that which consciousness would separate. (Welch 142)

The mature person has to live with paradox which can be done only if one's language and imagery are capable of supporting apparent contradictions. (Welch 144 quotation by Gabriel Moran)

So now, at the end of our discussion of poetics, the only issue left to explore returns us appropriately to the beginning where we were swimming metaphorically in that feeling ocean. It is there that poems, the writing of poems, and we who write these poems summon energy. The question then is, How do we get into that feeling ocean anyway? Where is that ocean? Are we in it now? The answer, of course, is that we are already and always swimming in the feeling ocean.

...there is an infinite, changeless reality beneath the world of change...this same reality lies at the core of every human personality...the purpose of life is to discover this reality experientially...(Bhagavad 4)

...the world of “name and form” exists only as a condition of perception; at the subatomic level, separate phenomena dissolve into a flux of energy...the world of the senses *is* real, but it must be known for what it is: unity appearing as multiplicity. (Bhagavad 14)

The process of letting go of the habitualized and too often constant stream of mental conceptualizations is the key to allowing the fullness of one’s perception and sentience to swim in the oceanic feeling cosmos mentioned in this poem’s epigraph from the most ancient Chinese oracle. Whatever form of meditation that trains the mind to let go of purposeless and habitual conceptualizing will provide the ultimate training to return perception to its holistic foundation.

As a tethered bird grows tired of flying/  
About in vain to find a place of rest/  
And settles down at last on its own perch,  
So the mind, tired of wandering about/  
Hither and thither, settles down at last/  
In the Self, dear one, to which it is bound. (Upanishads 183)

The training is simple. Do not let it (the mind) fling itself about, forbid it its fruitless quests, make it concentrate. Easier said than done, you say, but to say it is to do it. Simply tell it to stop. It will listen—for a moment or two. But the minute you relax, off it goes again. Drag it back. Again order it to stop. Do not allow it to wander away. Attach it to something...Therefore, train it by day as well as by night...It will grow more quiet. It will also grow more sly...If you persist, however, you will discover that the mind becomes docile. Finally, it will come when you call it and sit with you...to wake your mind is the first step toward wakening yourself. (Zen 12-13)

...most of our conscious mind consists either of states related with objects that we have experienced in the past—recollections of past experiences inform our present consciousness—or it consists of some kind of feeling or sensation. As a result, it is very difficult for us to glimpse the actual nature of consciousness, which is the sheer state of knowing or the luminosity of mind. One technique that we can use in order to do this is sitting meditation, through which we free our mind from thoughts of past experiences and from any form of anticipation of the future. Instead, we abide in the nowness of the present...When you are able to clear away thoughts of the past and the future, slowly you begin to get a sense of the space between the two. You learn to abide in that present moment. In that space, you begin to glimpse what we call emptiness, and if you can remain in that emptiness for longer and longer periods of time then gradually the nature of consciousness itself, which is the sheer luminosity and natural awareness of mind, will slowly dawn in you. (Gyatso 80-81)

From another perspective, we need to consider an aspect of difference between the brain's two hemispheres. The basic nature of each side points out the predominance of conceptualization in our modern state of consciousness.

...we have made so much contact with left-brain functions and so little with right...the brilliance of our most recent evolutionary accretion, the verbal abilities of the left hemisphere, obscures our awareness of the functions of the intuitive right hemisphere...the left hemisphere processes information sequentially; the right hemisphere simultaneously, accessing several inputs at once. The left hemisphere works in series; the right in parallel. The left hemisphere is something like a digital computer; the right like an analog computer. (Sagan 177)

Of course, writing poems involves both sides of the brain, and it would be facile and misleading to say that one side was more important or that one or the other side carried out this or that function in poetry. Generally, though, let us say for our purposes here of writing poetry, that our brains experience and gather intuitively from many experiential sources simultaneously (right brain), and our brains arrange, sequence, and rearrange our perceptions of those experiences (left brain) to our holistic satisfaction in a poem. Clearing the brain and mind of unnecessary conceptualization when we should be just experiencing life tunes up the poet to better be able to swim in the experiential ocean of feeling and then create some metaphorical sense of it in a poem.

The final way to swim in the ocean of undifferentiated essence of reality when the mental conceptualizations are stopped is by taking in the visual field, not scanning it, which is what most of us do moment by moment, but actually looking at scenes and object for more than a few seconds. Not only is the visual field the portal of non-sequential experience (in that we can perceive many apparent objects simultaneously), but also the visual lens allows us to perceive things and events in the natural contextual matrix of surrounding things and events (so that we can perceive a larger chunk of cohering reality).

...things and events arise purely as a result of the aggregation of many factors, and their conventional existence stems from the identity we impute to each aggregation... Emptiness

should be understood in terms of the interdependent nature of reality: it is by virtue of their dependent origination that things are devoid of independent existence. (Gyatso 133-35)

The hackneyed expression, “Everything is connected,” is literally true, connected as an aggregation of things and events that arise from other previous things and events.

...things and events come into being through dependence on other factors, which means that they do not possess independent, autonomous, or absolute existence...(Gyatso 129)

When we look at things and events for more than a second, we begin to actually see aspects of those phenomena normally not available to us when we just scan the visual field. We see and sense the natural and artificial characteristics of phenomena—the proportions, coloration, movements, location, development, and when we recognize the naturalness or artificiality of new and emerging phenomena, we understand more about the underlying and enduring characteristics of the larger reality. We can predict backwards and forwards logically with our feelings (a new metaphor) that the phenomena we are now perceiving were similar before we existed and will be so after we cease existing. At the same time, we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of such a easy and obvious interpretation.

...stricter determinism and apparently accidental development are not mutually exclusive, but rather...their coexistence is more the rule in nature. Chaos theory and fractal geometry address this issue...(and) radically question our understanding of equilibria—and therefore of harmony and order—in nature as well as in other contexts. they offer a new holistic and integral model which can encompass a part of the true complexity of nature for the first time. (Peitgen viii)

When we actually look at phenomena for more than a few seconds, the deepest essence of reality is mirrored back to us, whether of a determined or accidental nature. Poets find an abundance of

inspiration (or perhaps better, patterns) in a determined universe. Yet the exciting developments in chaos theory and fractal geometry show how we can't bet on phenomena staying boringly the same.

Linearity means that the rule that determines what a piece of a system is going to do next is not influenced by what it is doing now. (Peitgen 3) In principle, the future is completely determined by the past; but in practice small uncertainties, much like minute errors of measurement which enter into calculations, are amplified, with the effect that even though the behavior is predictable in the short term, it is unpredictable over the long run. (Peitgen 11)

It is this unpredictability that pulls the poet towards the possibility, the probability? no, the certainty, that we will find new, more deeply expressive ways of saying what we experience and understand. The work, the responsibility, the privilege, of the poet is to immerse ourselves in and look at the phenomena of life, and to see more deeply into this our life by means of the metaphors we invent from our perceptions of our experiences and of reality. Poems are like crystals that are formed from natural forces, objects that make us wonder about the magnificence of nature, objects about whose nature and creation we know much, but objects that make us marvel deeply and look all the same. After we go through the cathartic, love-like process of creating a poem, we sit back and realize that the poem will exist for as long as there is print, and that fellow human beings hundreds of years from now can and will read and feel what we feel at this moment of creation and re-creation, like when Walt Whitman, one of America's greatest poets, more than 150 years ago wrote what will serve as our epilog.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now;  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.  
Urge and urge and urge,

Always the procreant urge of the world. (Whitman 28)

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