

THE WORLD IS A RICH OCEAN OF POSSIBILITIES. It is immense and wild, with boundless energy and deep subtlety. Unfortunately, we feel overwhelmed by the storm, and are intimidated even if we have not been hurt. We learn to distrust our imagination and intuition, and restrict ourselves to a pale shadow of what we could be.

We cut ourselves off from the ocean's vast horizon, and reclaim a small stake of land as our own. We think we understand our little world, and that anything outside need not concern us. We nurture this illusion to resist the beating waves of the unknown, to limit our anxiety by looking away from all we truly fear. Some of these illusions become well-entrenched, as socially accepted, sacred myths. Life's force, however, crashes through, and we are shocked to feel ourselves swallowed by a living fluid. We wake from our dream of an understandable life, and are forced to acknowledge that the world, and even our very selves, are not as predictable, or as clean, as we would like to think.

When the messy wetness washes away our illusions, we have a choice. We can drink from this reality to understand more, or pull back, afraid or disgusted, within shelters we make harder and larger.

If we forge a shield of hard metal at the edge of what we understand, we feel protected, but are blinded. Our decisions are not informed by the bold gaze of the explorer, but by the useless perceptions of a locked-in hermit. In our darkness we lose even the ability to distinguish what is inside us. Happiness, love, sadness, and hate are confused. We may think we are on solid ground, but without guidance of clear thought, or ballast of clear emotions, our lives are merely tossed about as we navigate the never-ending night. We drift so far from any successful way of life, that we can relish destroying others and ourselves, and cherish seeing ourselves as justified, pitiable, and crippled. Our overly shielded vessel is a ship of the damned, floating aimlessly through the stormy seas of a world we refuse to face.

## The Living Sea

We are not sentenced to pass all our days in this secluded existence. At each moment we could look outside the shelter to see the wild flux of life's flow. Though we are filled with dread, we can set ourselves upon the untamable sea, and face the world and ourselves without illusions. When we recognize the damage from our mistakes, guilt crushes us. When we grasp our naked exposure, terror seizes us. Our openness to see and touch the world, however, lets us grow. By accepting our responsibility and the constant risk we face, we give up distorted roles, such as false victim-hood, false innocence, and false contentment, and leave behind the smothering cage of our treasured shield.

When we – give up our cherished illusions, accept responsibility and risk, embrace the unknown, and realize the divine potential within each of us – we take command of our journey, and are filled with love for both the beautiful and the wild and sticky in life. In the clear light of day, we see that this vast sea is our support, our sustenance, and our source of adventures with challenges and rewards beyond our imagination.