

PHILIP LAMANTIA

TESTAMENT OF THE INTER-VOICE

Poetry is life, i.e., the greater life of man. By *poetry* I mean the transmutation of human desire into a higher form of existence than its so-called “natural” state, manifested visibly in the poetic imagination and in the transformative poetic act. The imagination, it must be understood, is an autonomous & mysterious elemental power within all of us, the “maker of images” elementally, but whose extensive liberation is a power of the nth degree, determining *a possible transmutation of psycho-biologic life!* Under the auspices of a certain interior voice, the voice—as André Breton so beautifully said “that ceases not above the raging of the storms and goes on even to beyond death”—this power of image-manifestation can be rendered as a superior instrument of self-creation and a way of life superior to the derivative & watered-down “mystiques” & “yogas,” et al., sources all the more suspect as they negate the unity of natural and unknown powers within us in preference for some “quiescent void,” the opposite of vitality and of liberating power. The universe (s) is ultimately unknown, its source and aim incomprehensible to reason and no “void” can shed led light on its nature; the “void” understood and discernible in natural phenomena can be represented by the knot on a tree which has gnarled & ceased to bear fruit or branch; we can expect neither enlightenment from this “stage” analogous to our psychic voids and the famous “emptiness” of mystics is no more than a stage, preliminary, perhaps, to “new life” coming forth at some other level of the trunk of the tree! There is a kind of absolute knowledge which refuses cerebral & rational forms of comprehension but which *living poetry*—*poetry lived*—may reveal; by imaginative transmutation, a poem or image—painted, sculpted or written—gives testament and is a sign of direct knowledge-in-being. Glimpsed even so at times, beneath the layers of our so-called rational & cerebral consciousness, is a beam of unflinching light from which images issue and it’s from here the poet is born to manifest by *meditation* their inter-play; it is essential that the poet allow the inter-play of images from these depths of being, hence fulfilling the inborn power of imagination to combine these dimly seen images; for there is a voice there too, in this *place*, within us all, which seems to speak their absolute manifestation always “original” and analogic, uniting the most opposite of images in new synthesis & unity—the *materia prima* of language, it is—and all wisdom is to listen and *mediate* the transmission purely of this original and originating and inexhaustible realm of being from which all we have and know has come!

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