

Texts for Angelus Novus
All translations and adaptations
by John Aylward except where noted.

I. Angelus Novus. From *Theses on the Philosophy of History* by Walter Benjamin.

Its eyes are staring, its mouth is open, its wings are spread. Its face is turned toward the past. He sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage.

The angel would awaken the dead -- make whole what has been smashed. A storm is blowing in from Paradise. Such violence that the angel can no longer close its wings.

II. Dream Images. From *The Will to Power* by Friedrich Nietzsche.

The destruction of an illusion does not produce truth, but only one more piece of ignorance, an extension of our 'empty space', our desert... Reverence for truth is already an illusion. Value more the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents. The ascertaining of truth is fundamentally different from forming, shaping, overcoming, willing. Thus it is with sounds, but also with the fate of people. We discover in ourselves needs for untruth.

Deception, flattering, lying and cheating, talking behind the back, posing, living in borrowed splendor, being masked, the disguise of convention, acting a role before others and before oneself—in short, the constant fluttering around the single flame of vanity is so much the rule and the law that almost nothing is more incomprehensible than how an honest and pure urge for truth could have arisen among us. We are deeply immersed in illusions and dream images; our eye glides only over the surface of things ... our feeling nowhere leads into truth.

III. The Abstract From *The World as Will and Representation* by Arthur Schopenhauer.

Besides our life in the concrete, we live a second life in the abstract. In the former, we are abandoned to all the storms of reality. We struggle, suffer and die like animals. But our life in the abstract, as it stands before our rational consciousness, is a calm reflection of our life and of the world in which we live. Here in the sphere of calm deliberation, what previously possessed you completely and moved you intensely appears to you colorless, and for the moment, foreign and strange.

You are like an actor who has played your part and takes your place in the audience where you quietly look on at whatever may happen, even if it be the preparation of your own death.

IV. Supreme Triumph. From *Apocalypse* by D.H. Lawrence.

What you really want is pure passion. In your *living* wholeness and your *living* unison, not the isolated salvation of your soul. No! You want physical fulfillment first and foremost, since now, once and only once, you are in the flesh and potent. For the vast marvel is to be alive. As for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly, alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive. The magnificent here and now. Yours, and yours alone, and yours only for a short time. There is nothing of yours that is alone and absolute except your mind. And you will find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

V. Secret Memory From *Aion: Phenomenology of the Self* by Carl Jung (Trans. RFC Hull).

Further, you find unsatisfied longing ... A desire to touch reality, to embrace the earth. But you make no more than a series of fitful starts, crippled by a secret memory. A fragment of the world which you, like any other, must encounter again and again. Never quite the right one since it remains resistant, submits only to force. It makes demands on courage and resolution when it comes to throwing your whole being into the scales. For this, you would need one capable of relinquishing your first love. A faithless Eros.

VI. Anima From *Creative Mythology* by Joseph Campbell.

...An inspiration. Reason for living. An awakening to life! ... But just the same, an illusionist, a mirage. A great paradox: hope and ruin, faith and despair. All a reflection of your destiny. Your lover. The conscious face of your anima. Sating your inmost needs? What about your need for temptation? And experience? Your Ethos. People have hidden desires that society won't condone. Some say these impulses get sublimated, processed down, into the unconscious. Others ask what if those impulses are there always.

From *Freud and the Future* by Thomas Mann

Der geheimnisvolle Gedanke ist der das genau wie im Traume unser eigener Wille, ohne es zu ahnen, als unerbittlich-objektives Schicksal auftritt, alles darin aus uns selber kommt und jeder der heimliche Theaterdirektor seiner Traume ist, -- so auch in der Wirklichkeit, diesem grossen Traum, den ein einziges Wesen, der Wille selbst, mit uns allen traemt, unsere Schicksale das Produkt unseres Innersten, unseres Willens sein moechten, und wir also das, das uns zu geschehen scheint, eigentlich selbst veranstalten.

(Precisely as in a dream it is our own will that unconsciously appears as inexorable objective destiny, everything in it proceeding out of ourselves and each of us being the secret theater director of our own dreams, so also in reality the great dream that a single essence, the will itself, dreams with us all, our fate, may be the product of our inmost selves, of our wills, and we are actually ourselves bringing about what seems to be happening to us.

VII. Truth. From *Phaedrus*, by Plato (Trans. WC Hembold) (Latin Angelus from Catholic Liturgy).

The ancient inventors of names! If they had thought madness a disgrace, would they have called it by the same name as prophesy? Just as prophesy is more perfect than divination, madness is superior to a sane mind, for the one is human but the other divine! Where plagues and woes have bred, madness lifts her voice and flows to prayers and rites. One who is truly possessed and fully out of mind, made whole and delivered from evil.

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae;
Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.
Gratiam Tuam, quaesumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde; ut qui, Angelo nuntiante nostris infunde; ut qui, Angelo nuntiante, Christi Filii Tui incarnationem cognovimus, per passionem Eius et Crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.

Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum.

There is also a third kind of madness, which is a possession of the Muses. This possession is of a delicate and virgin soul, inspiring frenzy.

VIII. The Wing. From *Phaedrus*, by Plato (Trans. WC Hembold)

The wing is the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, by nature it tends to soar aloft into the habitation of the gods. The divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows.

Souls are eager to behold truth, suited to the highest part of the soul and the wing on which the soul soars. The soul which attains vision of truth is preserved from harm. When she is unable to follow, and fails to behold truth and sinks beneath vice, her wings fall and she drops to the ground. The soul which has never seen the truth will not pass into the human form. And he who employs aright these memories is ever being initiated into perfect mysteries and alone becomes truly perfect. But, as you forget earthly interests and you become rapt in the divine, the vulgar deem you mad, and rebuke you; they do not see that you are inspired.

IX. A Distance from the Sea.
From *A Distance from the Sea* by Weldon Kees

The traveler on the plain makes out the mountains at a distance. Then he loses sight. His way winds through the valleys, then, at a sudden turning point of a path, the peaks stand nakedly before him. They are something else than what he saw below.

...the days get longer. It was a long time ago. And I have come to that point in the turning of the path where the peaks are infinite--horn shaped and scaly. Choked with thorns. Life offers up no miracles, unfortunately, and needs assistance. Nothing will be the same as once it was, I tell myself. It's dark here on the peak and keeps on getting darker. It seems I am experiencing a kind of ecstasy. Was it sunlight on the waves that day? The night comes down. And now the water seems remote, and perhaps it is.