There aren't many such people. Most
must, with their words, illuminate
(especially all women); they
understood to represent specific
laureates. Women who have won
Nobel Prize. Read the full book:

Professor of philosophy – now that
never quite believe in them yourself
they can't avoid revealing their
profession, poets prefer to use the
"poet" with the name of whatever job
they can embellish their calling with
poetry. This would mean, after all,
that poetry is an occupation

Committees was that, in selecting
the academy as the arbiter of the
prize be awarded to the worthiest

But poets are the worst. Their work is
hopelessly unphotogenic. Someone
sits at a table or lies on a sofa while
staring motionless at a wall or ceiling.
Once in a while this person writes
down seven lines only to cross out
one of them fifteen minutes later, and
then another hour passes, during
which nothing happens ... Who could
stand to watch this kind of thing?

I've mentioned inspiration. Contemporary poets answer
evasively when asked what it is, and
if it actually exists. It's not that
they've never known the blessing of
this inner impulse. It's just not easy to

first bars of the melody that rings in
the musician's ears finally emerge as
a mature work in symphonic form. Of
course this is all quite naive and
doesn't explain the strange mental
state popularly known as inspiration,
but at least there's something to look
at and listen to.

For all of them, it means

a capstone in a monumental career
for young ladies from good families,
Sklodowska-Curie never said to
mass and at best he would have stooped to
light and simple to say, "I don't know." Each
and would have ended her days
for years. For all of them, it means

Somehow they have a feeling that the sentences to

will come from arguably reach more

those who lived before you couldn't

And the poem you created is also new

imagine, for example, that I get a

can't possibly come true. I audaciously

that's absolutely inadequate to boot.

We are concealing a logical trap. We're

"I don't know" that's to say, "I don't know," and these

performing this otherwise perfectly

questing spirits are occasionally

saying "I don't know," and these

impressionistic scenes of stifled

lives under Nicolae Ceaușescu's
dictatorship in Romania. No
There aren't many such people. Most of the earth's inhabitants work to get by. They work because they have to. They didn't pick this or that kind of job out of passion; the circumstances of their lives did the choosing for them. Loveless work, boring work, work valued only because others haven't got even that much, however loveless and boring – this is one of the harshest human miseries. And there's no sign that coming centuries will produce any changes for the better as far as this goes.

And so, though I may deny poets their monopoly on inspiration, I still place them in a select group of Fortune's darlings.

At this point, though, certain doubts may arise in my audience. All sorts of torturers, dictators, fanatics, and demagogues struggling for power by way of a few loudly shouted slogans also enjoy their jobs, and they too perform their duties with inventive fervor. Well, yes, but they "know." They know, and whatever they know is enough for them once and for all. They don't want to find out about anything else, since that might diminish their arguments' force. And any knowledge that doesn't lead to new questions quickly dies out: it fails to maintain the temperature required for sustaining life. In the most extreme cases, cases well known from ancient and modern history, it even poses a lethal threat to society.

This is why I value that little phrase "I don't know" so highly. It's small, but it flies on mighty wings. It expands our lives to include the spaces within us as well as those outer expanses in which our tiny Earth hangs suspended. If Isaac Newton had never said to himself "I don't know," the apples in his little orchard might have dropped to the ground like halstomes and at best he would have stooped to pick them up and gobble them with gusto. Had my compatriot Marie Skłodowska-Curie never said to herself "I don't know," she probably would have wound up teaching chemistry at some private high school for young ladies from good families, and would have ended her days performing this otherwise perfectly respectable job. But she kept on saying "I don't know," and these words led her, not just once but twice, to Stockholm, where restless, questing spirits are occasionally rewarded with the Nobel Prize.

Poets, if they're genuine, must also keep repeating "I don't know." Each poem marks an effort to answer this statement, but as soon as the final period hits the page, the poet begins to hesitate, starts to realize that this particular answer was pure makeshift based on comparison with something else.

Granted, in daily speech, where we don't stop to consider every word, we all use phrases like "the ordinary world," "ordinary life," "the ordinary course of events" ... But in the language of poetry, where every word is weighed, nothing is usual or normal. Not a single stone and not a single cloud above it. Not a single day and not a single night after it. And above all, not a single existence, not anyone's existence in this world.

It looks like poets will always have their work cut out for them.

—

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