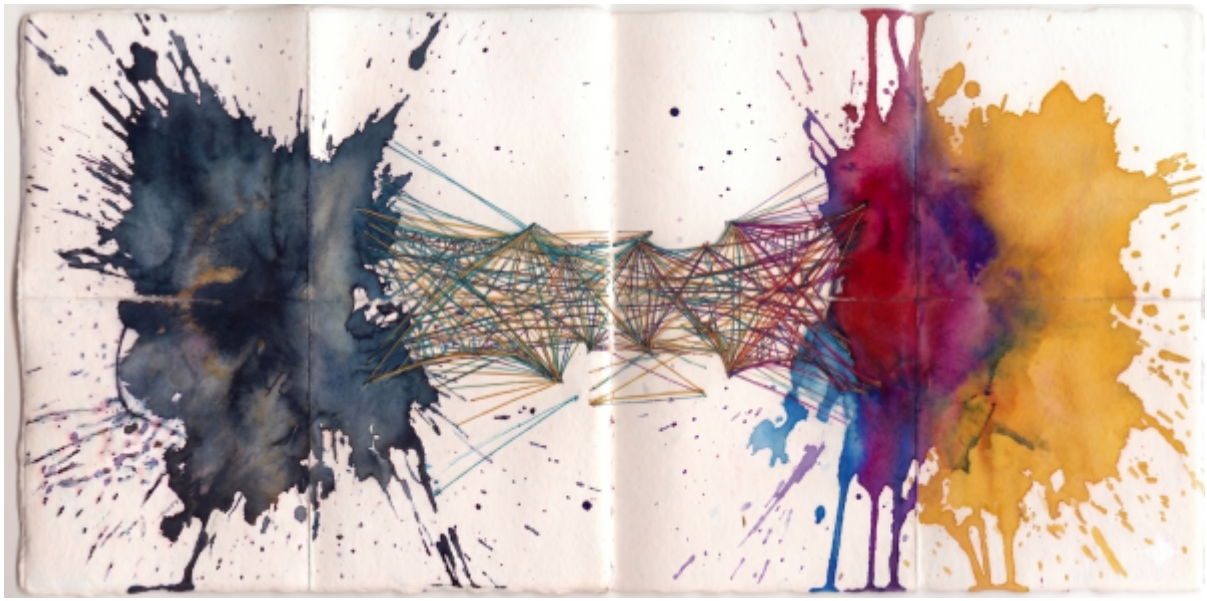
Day 22: Ambivalence



In Theory: Melanie Klein, within the object relations tradition, described ambivalence as the capacity to hold love and anger, admiration and resentment, closeness and the wish for distance toward the same person. It is not confusion or ingratitude, but the initial condition of genuine intimacy. All significant relationships contain it. The psychodynamic tradition treats this tension as the raw material for future relational repair, making the capacity to tolerate it a mark of psychological maturity. What is immature is the compulsion to resolve it, to eliminate one side so that a single feeling remains. The resolution is always a form of simplification, and when ambivalence cannot be tolerated, experience is often simplified in order to restore coherence. In doing so, something of the relationship is lost, even if clarity is gained.

In Experience: A person who speaks about a parent, a partner, or a community without complexity is not giving a full account. Something important is missing when only one feeling is expressed. The missing feelings remain present in what is not said. What surfaces at any given moment may reflect only one part of something wider and more complicated.

In Thought: An honest accounting of anything significant will contain contradictions. The wish to resolve contradictions too quickly may narrow what can be felt.

In Print: Luepnitz, D. *Schopenhauer's Porcupines* (2002)

In Attention: Notice someone loved and resented simultaneously.