

Beyond It All

A Spiritual Journey through the Universe

(An exploration of theology, astronomy and memory)

By Edmund Schilvold

August 2008 (Revised in 2015)

A poem written as a play.

Persons in the play:

A grown man with a strong, steady voice (“A voice” and “The voice”).

A young man, preferably in his late twenties (“He”).

Another young man with a voice that is noticeably different (“Himself”).

Scene:

A wide-open beach where waves come sweeping in from the ocean. Parts of the beach are slightly elevated, forming great expanses of dry, golden sand where one may sit and ponder existential questions while resting one’s eyes on the vastness of the sea and on the distant horizon, which almost blends with the sky. Behind this great beach, hills and gentle mountains rise green and partly forested into the changing skies. A lone individual, the young man, is seen sitting on the sands with his face against the water, his back erect and his eyes almost closed, as if meditating or absorbed in thinking or in prayers. It is late in the afternoon. The sun is low and sinking, and the soft, yellow light permeates the landscape, creating an increasingly ethereal, otherworldly atmosphere. The shrill, frenzied cries of foraging seabirds mix with the heavy, rhythmic sound of waves that break upon hitting land and flow across the glistening flats before retreating and seeping into the sand.

A voice. [The elderly man, whose person is hidden from view.]

I can feel that you are sitting by the sea again.

He. [The young man. Interrupted in his solemn contemplation, but not incredibly surprised, he opens his eyes and tries to locate the area where the voice has its origin. His vision is temporarily obscured by shimmering tears, and the look on his face is that of one who for a long time has been agonized by painful thoughts and difficult feelings. The voice, though, does not come from a specific place. It is simply *there*.]

And so I am.

The voice.

I can see that you are staring at the waves again.

He.

I am indeed.

The voice.

I can hear that you are crying out in silence again.

He.

I am.

The voice.

I can sense that you are asking for fulfillment of that wish again.

He.

I am.

The voice.

It would be better if you gave it up and waited.

He.

Please, don't leave me in this misery.

Don't leave me trapped in this reality another year.

The voice.

I never leave, and that you know,

Although you sometimes make me wish I could.

He.

Then help me to the exit,

So that I may undertake the journey of my dreams.

The voice.

It is too early,

And you have no idea how great a challenge it will be.

Live out your life. Prepare.

He.

My fondness for the present world is great,

But my fondness for the previous was greater still,

And my fondness for my lady inexpressible.

I will find no lasting consolation here;

Prepare me for that journey now,

Prepare me now,

Or you will have to see me fasting on this doorstep

Till my breath and life expires.

The voice.

It would be irresponsible of me

To grant you such a privilege.

Too quickly could it prove a curse,

A **scourge** beyond your **human comprehension**.
You **would** encounter **places on the way**
Where **even I** may **not** be **able to assist you**.
Quite **possibly**,
You **would** be **lost beyond** recovery forever.

He.
I must find my **love** and **former world** again,
Or **be** in **agony** forever **more**.
Give me the **best** assistance **that** you **can**,
That is **all** I **ask**.
I shall blame nobody **but** myself
If **I** should **fail**.

The voice.
I hear your **words**,
But **realize** that **you** would **risk** it **all**
Without knowing what **I mean** by **all**,
And **only if** you **fail** will **you** be **brought** to **see**
The **nature of** the **jeopardy** accepted.

He.
I know enough to **make** a **choice**.

The voice.
Rarely have **I** run **into** **such** persistence **in** a **man**.

He.
Remembering where **human spirits** **came** from,
You **should** not **be** surprised.

The voice.

Never do I remember or forget;

Be careful with those human terms,

And origin

Is far from all.

Far more noteworthy

Is what happens on the Way.

He.

I apologize. I sometimes speak discourteously.

The voice.

You need not be ashamed because of me.

Did ever any of the glinting fishes

Insult the ocean with the manner of their swimming?

It is your self that needs the humbling and redeeming pain

In which all true apologies have root.

[Being embarrassed, he does not find an answer. For a few seconds, there is total silence.]

The voice.

Well then, my son,

Having felt your yearning for near thirty years,

Having observed your steady growth,

Having heard your many prayers,

And this being our twenty-seventh dialogue on life and death,

Yes, I will help you depart

And make the journey to that place beyond

That is remembered in the ancient fire

Governing the beating of your heart ...

[Hearing this, he lifts his bowed-down head, and an expression of surprise lights up his anguished face. Then, not being able to contain his feelings anymore, he starts crying, and violently, so that his entire body is set trembling, but the tears are tears of relief. The sun is about to dip beneath the faint horizon, and the drifting clouds will soon be transformed into a flaming red of rarely seen intensity. The day is almost over.]

Rarely did I act upon my hearing

The **tender pining for the once possessed;**

Rarely did I help annul a past event

Afflicting **someone's earth-arrested soul;**

Only when observing such a purity of aim,

Only to advance such goals as yours,

Is it possible to justify my interfering

With **what the increase of the universe commends.**

He.

I wish to thank you, but

What **deeds or words** could **possibly compare**

To **that** which **you** have **now resolved to grant?**

At **present, I can only praise your magnanimity with calm.**

The voice.

The **completion of your venture, if you make it,**

Will **recompense my act in full.**

[The dark is falling, but the clouds have dissolved, and the first stars have begun twinkling in the deep blue evening sky.]

The voice.

Are you then **ready**?

Once performed, the **act** is **irrevocable**;

An **entrance will appear** before you;

Simultaneously wonderful and dire;

And **there will be no turning back**;

The **swathe** that **you** are **wearing now**

Will **never know** the **warming sun again**.

From **then** on,

The **far side of the mirror will be yours to know**,

For **better and** for **worse**,

And **though** you **will see through** the **glass**

And **sense** the **objects that are there**

Crossing it will be impossible.

[A few seconds pass.]

He.

I am as **ready as I'll ever be**.

The voice.

So **let it happen**,

But **first**,

You **need to have** some **knowledge**

Of the stages of your journey.

But **how** can **I describe** them **to a man**

Who **has not crossed** the **Bar**?

He.

Although my **memories of it** seem **dreams**,

And **though** **I was** not **yet a man**,

I've **surely done** the **crossing once** before.
Use the **best descriptions that** you **have**,
My **understanding will** uncover **ways**
To **go beyond** the **letters of** the **words**,
When **your descriptions sink** into the **chasms of** my **mind**.

The voice.
Very well.

[A fissure opens in the sky between them; a window into space, not limited by time or distances, the content of which will change as the presentation progresses.]

The **first** one, **though** undoubtedly a **challenge**,
Is the **easy phase**,
Your **current world**, first seeming **huge**,
Will **shrink**,
You will see the **floating city**
And its **countless, colored lights**
Against the **scintillating, quiet black**,
The **marble walls, gleaming in** the **freezing sun**,
Above the **blue**,
And **then** you'll **pass** the **silver of** the **moon**;
The **mines**, the **crystal domes**;

Don't **think about** it **for** too **long**,
That **goes for everything** you'll **come across**.
Never be distracted **from** your **ultimate** objective,
If you are, the **objects that** divert you **will** entrap you
And, **if you don't** escape, **destroy** your **soul** forever.

He.

So there is **truth** to **what** the **ancients told** about Medusa?

The voice.

There **is indeed**, my **son**.

Well,

As the **blue** and **silver disappear** behind you,

Fix your **vision on** the **distant red**

And **you'll** be **there**;

Above the **city of illuminated towers**,

Wherefrom a **web** of **greenery**

Transforms the **reddish soil**

As **Genesis** progresses.

A **lovely sight** is **it**,

But **you** must **bid** **farewell** to **it** and **leave**,

And **that** will be the **last** of **human constructs** **that** you **pass**.

He.

The **very last**?

The voice.

The **last** but **one** surviving **Voyager**,

Out of the **Voyagers** of **golden hopes**,

But **that** is **still** to **come**.

Go on,

And **head** for **mighty Jupiter**;

The **giant of undying storms**

Who **in** its **region holds**

The **ice-covered Europa moon**,

Where **hidden** oceans,

Excited **by** volcanic **heat**,

Give **sustenance** to **incandescent woods**
Inhabited by **creatures that** would **make you faint**
And **fall into** the **solemn depths**,
But **do not halt**;
Pass **by**,
And **gently skirt** the **rings of glittering**
Magnificence that **lie ahead**,
Where, some **way** in, the **misty peach** of Titan
Harbors tiny life-forms in its **juicy heart**
Which **are** as **quaint** as **any you** have ever seen.
But **keep** your **curiosity** in **check**;
Move **on**,
And **when** you **hear** a **chilling hymn**,
Let the **nature of** the **Sirens come** to **mind**,
And **stay away** from **where** it **emanates**;
The **two volupt'ous sisters** in the **shades of blue**;
Do not even acknowledge their existence;
Head off fast and **leave** the **realm of planets**
Circling the Sun forever;
Never will your **sight**
Distinguish **them** again.

He.

Shall I never lay eyes on planets again?

The voice.

Be **calm**, my **son**;

Many lovely planets will be **yours** to **gaze upon**

When the **second phase** is **underway**, and,

Should you **entirely** succeed,

You **will** indeed know **worlds** again,

But **not** like **those** that **mortal humans know**.

But **to continue where we were**;

The **influence** of **sunlight will** be **waning**
As the **compass I** will **give you points** into the **area**
Of **murkiness** and **swirling rocks**.
You **will desire** the **pleasing light** of **day**
More than **you desired any object back on Earth**
But **such** desires **have to be resisted**;
Allow the **needle of the compass to command**,
And **cross the dodgy belt** with **nimbleness**,
To **enter what to you might seem a void**,
But **only infinitely further on**,
When the harshest phase commences
Will you truly come to know what **voids** are,
And **even voids** are **not devoid** of **all**,
As **you will see**,
But **leave the thought of that** for **now**,
As **we proceed to look** at **what you'll spot**
As **you prepare to leave** the **sphere of Helios** behind.

He.

What a lovely image you are **showing me**,
And **how** that **lime-green light** is **flaring up** and **dying**
And returning, **ever-changing**, **like a thin**, translucent
Piece of silken cloth, **blowing moonlit in the midnight breeze**.
It **seems to be behaving like** the **fluctuating, eerie glow**
That **I well know** from **icy regions here on Earth**,
Only in an even grander manner,
And extending further than my earthbound mind

Can **comprehend**.

Oh, the **glory of your manifested dreams**
Brings **me to tears**,
I **cannot even faintly understand**
The **splendor of your boundless thoughts**,
But **help** me, **Father**;
Oh, **help** me **if you can**,
If **there are still some strings in me**
That **might yield pure and gracious notes**
After all the wrongs I have committed,
And **all the wounds I have received**
During my demanding wandering on wintry Earth;
Help me **contribute to your glory**
However **insignificant my contribution proves to be**.

Oh, how **many in this dire world**
Who **blatantly deny you**,
And **worse**,
How **many that detract from**
And destroy the glory you provide,
Or **haughtily refuse**
Even to look!
I **tried to stay erect**;
To **keep my pathway clean**
And **not fall down**,
But **it is hard to walk erect**
When **there is sewage all around you**;
I **pity those who fail and fall**,
More than I can tell in words,
And I fear that I might be among them.

The voice.
Not to worry, son,
There **are** no **grounds** for **such** intense anxiety
That **I** can **locate on** the **pages of** your **life,**
And **rest** assured; I **know** them **all.**
If **such** were **there,**
The **opportunity** that **you** accepted
Would **never have** been **yours to choose.**

As **for** the **many that** you **cry** for,
You **do** already **know** the **truth**
Of **what** intrepid **minds** discerned
Millennia ago;
The **kind** that **you** have **been** acquainted with
By **being born** into it,
Has **always, since** its **vehicle** for **the** encapsulated **soul**
Was **liberated from** the **jail** of **instincts,**
Had the **freedom** to make **choices,**
But **liberty** entails **responsibility,**
And **thus,** **accountability,**
And **every single soul** that **leads** a **human life**
Will **come** to **know** the **consequences of** its **choices**
For itself, and **for** the **future and** the **greater world,**
And **every single soul** will **through** the **detriment,**
Impediment or **progress it** created **by** its **actions**
Or **non-action** **during** **freedom,**
Find **just** **rewards** and **penalties;**

The **only two** **redeeming** **factors** **being**
The **limits of** the **knowledge**

Available when **choices** were **produced**,
And, **last** but **most important**,
True, **unselfish love**.

[The image displayed in the fissure of the Heliosphere, an image which is actually not just an image, but a view of the object itself, continues to change. There is a brief silence.]

The voice.
Enough of **that** for **now**;
I must go on;
Your **transformation cannot safely be postponed too long**
As the **window** for your **leaving**,
Like the **window** for a **launch**
Might **close**,
And **another one** might **not** be **ready**
Before the **next** time **leaves** are **budding**
In this capricious **land**,
So **feed** your **memory** with **my display**;
The **recollection will** be **needed rather soon**.

[The fissure alters and shows the solar system from outside.]

The aurora that incited **awe** in **you**
Skirts the **edge** of **the** transparent **eggshell**
That **guards** the **egg** where **Helios** sits **like** a **yolk**
Nourishing the **fetus** of **the** **thinking kind**
I hope to **grow** into a **greater being**
That **better can** exploit the **possibilities**
Of **the eternal soul**,
And **that** may **leave** its **nest** before the **yolk** is **gone**
And **be** my **noble representative** by **helping Genesis**

Expand into still **barren worlds**,
And **battle** the **relentless adversary**
Causing pandemonium throughout my **dreams**.

He.

How **often I** have **noticed, Master**
That **Nature's structures and** phenomena
Are **echoed in** still **larger ones**,
And **thought**: “It is indeed as if an **ancient order**
Of unspeakable and **never-ending loveliness**
Pervades it **all**,”
And **during my** encounters **with** the one
We **should** not **name**
It was by way of **such uplifting signs** alone
That **hope** was **kept aflaming in** my **heart**
And the **distant light** of **greatness**
Sustained before my eyes,
And **now** I see the **echoes here** as well;
How **true** the **hope** I **clung** to was,
But as you **know**,
I **could** not **help** but **fear**
That **I** was **merely living in** a **self-delusion**;
My **faith** kept **wavering**,
My **doubts** were **strong**,
And **still** you **came** to **me**,
Without a **trace** of **wrath**,
And **listened to** my **childlike questions**,
And **now**, today
You've **even granted** **all I wished** for;
Why, my **Master**, **why** such **mildness**
And such **kindness**

When every **one** of **those** distrustful **thoughts** I had
Lies **naked and illuminated in the light**
Of **your** unbounded **knowledge**?

[The view of space is temporarily obscured, and the fissure is filled by short-lived images from the young man's life.]

The voice.
No **human faith**
Was **ever free** of **errors**,
Such **are** the **imperfections**,
The **many limitations**,
Of the **thinking kind** on **Earth**,
That a **measure of uncertainty**
Is **unavoidable** and **necessary**;
It **shows** a **basic insight**
Into what **humans are**,
And the **kin of this uncertainty**
Is the **virtue of humility**.

Far **worse** than **lack of certainty**
Is **certainty** that **leaves no room**
For **understanding that** each **human mind**
Has **flaws**, and **that it only with** great **difficulty**
Might **foster the ability** to **peek beyond** its **boundaries**;
The **kin of total certainty**
Is the **vice of arrogance**,
And the **road from arrogance** to **evil**
Has **often proved** a **short** one.

Reflect on **this**, and **you** will **realize** with **ease**

Why **reasonable doubt** and **its effects**
Are **never held against** an **individual**
When the **time** for **validation of his days** has **come**;
Any other action would be **vengeful and unjust**,
And **only humans and** the **Head of Chaos**,
Do **ever long** for **vengeance and injustice**.

The **one necessity**, in **order to avoid** creating
Some **dire penalties ahead** of **you**
Is **this**:

The **opening of hearts** to **hope**
And **selfless love**,

And **that**, my **son**, you **did**,

And **if** you **wish** to **lubricate** your **wheels** some **more**,
And **bend** the **rails** that **lie** before you
Into the **higher realms**
Of **time** and **space**,
An **honorable course** in **spite** of **doubts**
And **obstacles**;
A **life** in **service of** the **good** and **just**,
Will **aid** your **wheels** in **turning smoothly later on**
And **help** that **bending of** the **railway** **happen**,
And **I** can **tell** you **this**;
There **is** still **oil** left **in** the **hubs**
That **you** will **soon** rely on;
The **golden oil** from **gracious deeds** committed
In the **very place** which **holds** the **objects**
Of your **ardent longing**.

As for **what** you **felt**
When **seeing** **sacred** **structures**,
Those **feelings** **have** their **origin**
In **memories** **contained** **within** your **fire**;
Although **suppressed** since **early** **birth**
Due **to** **deficiencies** in **human** **brains**,
They **still** make **structures** **that** your **soul** has **tasted**
Reverberate in **complex** **corridors**
Submerged **beneath** the **fussing** **water**
Of **temporary**, **shallow** **consciousness**,
And **this** is **also** **why** a **sudden** **feeling**
That **seemingly** has **no** good **reason**
In **certain** **cases** **is** a **better** **guide**
Than **anything** the **logic** of the **earthly** **mind**
Can **possibly** **uncover** **and** **present**.

Back to **where** we **were** now;
I **can** **allow** no **more** digressions
No **more** **delays** that **might** **endanger**
Your **departure**.

[The rift clears, and again acts as a shortcut for viewing places far away in space.]

The **eggshell** of **auroras**
Is **where** the **winds**,
From **your** **star**, **and** from **others**
Do **collide**, and, **having** **lost** their **force**,
Come **to** a **poignant**, **short-lived** **halt**
Which **you** must **pass**,
And **pass** you **will**,
Provided **that** your **effort** is **determined**,

And **as** you **exit**, **say** farewell,
For **you** will **never know** the **influence** of **Sol** again.

And **then**,
Emerged and **ready for** the **second stage**
Of **your** **demanding** **journey**,
This **unobstructed view** of **nearby suns**
In **the enormous spiral of** the **Milky Way**
Will **for a moment be** your **property**;
The **territory of** the **three uneven sisters**;
The **brightest and** most **lovely being called**
Alpha Centauri A
In **human terminology**,
But **even greater beauty has** the **realm**
Of **Sirius**,
Which **lie approximately twice** as **far** away,
Where **one** star **failed**, but **where** its **twin**
Lives **on** in **youthful, ice-blue glory**
Though **as** you **know**;
The **ones** who **live intensely**
Will **be** the **first** to **perish**,
And **so** the **avid Sirius**
Will **never in** its **haste** have **time**
To **father any** **thinking kind**.

Not **so** with **Epsilon Eridani**
A **unpretentious one**,
Where **ancestors of you**, that **is**;
Your **current biological encasement**,
Discerned an **extrasolar planet**.
I **can** disclose no **more** till **later**

Or **strings** of **fate** would **be** disrupted,
And **merely** for the **sake** of **curiosity**.

He.

I **hear** a **strange**, **unsettling** **sound**
Originating **from** the **aperture** you **opened**;
It **seems** like **that** of **distant** **choirs**
Singing **chants** in **cloisters** on a **quiet** **morning**.
It is **slightly** **intermingled** with a **droning**, **though**,
Which **makes** me **think** of **flying** **bumblebees**,
Those **gentle** **beings** **that** still **haunt** my **memories**
Of **sun-lit** **childhood** **hours**,
Pollinating **countless** **flowers** in the **fruit** trees
High **up** in **lofty** **boughs** below the **sky**.

[The opening briefly shows scenes from sunny summer days in his childhood forest, and the scenes are not merely moving pictures; they are the actual events.]

The voice.

It is the **sound** that **will** **escort** the **ember**
Of your **essence**
As **you** **proceed** through **interstellar** **space**
Where **nothing** **can** **obstruct** your **hearing**;
It is the **sound** of **myriad** connections **and** occurrences
Behind the **tapestries** of **cosmos**;
Behind what **you**, still **being** **human**,
Think of as the **universe**,

It is the **whispering** behind the **carpet**
Of the **greatest** **theatre** that ever was,
The **sound** of **Dreaming**, **if** you **will**;

The **greatest genesis** of **all**
In **never-ending change** and **progress**.

It is a **sound**
That **no existing earthly ear** can **sense**,
But **you perceive it now**
Because my **demonstration of** how **places are**
Behind the **glass** which **seems a mirror**
To the human race,
Makes **more** than **what** you **normally** would **hear**
Perceptible to **human faculties**.

Well,
Enough on **interesting areas**
In the vicinity of **Sol** in **Via Lactea**;
We **cannot even briefly look** at **all of them**
Or **we** would **spend** more **earthly years** on **that alone**
Than **even Pax Romana** **once** made **calm**;
So **do not settle down**
In **any of** those **worlds** close **by**;
For **you** must **head** for **something else** entirely;

Andromeda, the **little cloud** beside the **constellation**
Of the Wingéd Horse,

But remember; **constellations are illusions only**,
Figments that will **change** with **vantage point** and **time**,
So **find** the **galaxy Andromeda**
And **do not let** your **vision leave**,
Then **make** your **gaze** one **filled** with **yearning**,
And your gaze will **bring you to Andromeda**

With **such** a **speed** that **you** will **seem** to **move**
More **speedily** than **anything** you ever **knew**
But **movements** **happening** behind the **mirror** **glass**,
The **glass** which **you** will **soon** see **through**,
Are **not** at **all** like **those** occurring **here**,
On **the** **opaque**, **reflective** **side**.

And as the **coiling** **Milky** **Way** starts **fading**,
Look **back** just **once**, and **shed** a **tear**
At **the** **immensity** of **gyring** **beauty**
That **humans** **thought** The **Winter** **Road**,
The **Fair** **Cow's** **Way**, or even
Stream of **Heaven**,
For **you** will **never** **know**
The **galaxy** that **cradles** **Earth** **again**.

Then **let** **immensity** turn **tiny**,
And **tininess** turn **vast**;
The **princess** **comes** before you, **looking** **splendid**,
Having **hair** of **glowing** **gold**,
And **being** **dressed** in **cyan** **blue**;
She **is** a **gorgeous** **one**, **Andromeda**,
But **be** not **led** **astray** by **her**;
If you **are**, the **marvels** of her **billions**
Might **seize** your **heart** for **centuries**,
Until the **ember** of your **essence**
Is **utterly** **exhausted**, **dead**, **extinguished**,
And can **never** be **revived** **again**.

He.

I **must** **admit** that **I** was **puzzled**,

Even **frustrated** at **times**,
When **watching** **humans** **studying**
The **wonders** **of** the **cosmos** and the **world**;

Ignoring **the** **apparent** **beauty**
Such as **that** I **now** am **shown**,
They **unabashedly** called **everything** a **game**
Of **dice**;
The **hoof**-marks **of** a **beast** run **wild**,

And **for** some **years** I even **listened**,
Uncertain **which** was **better**; **my** own **heart**
Or **their** cold **logic**, **finally** **deciding** **on**
A **mixture** **of** the **two**;
At **first** an **odd** concoction,
Acceptable, but **unresolved**;
I **kept** on **searching** **and** **amending**,
Endeavoring **unconsciously**

To **shatter** **my** **confine**.

My **Master**,
How **dazzling** those **days** still **are**
Before my **inner** **sight**;
The **ones** that **saw** the **lifting** **of** the **veil**
That **had** descended **on** my **human** **eyes**;
How **overwhelmed** I was by **beauty**,
How **sensitive** I **suddenly** became
To **the** **intrinsic** **greatness**,
The **wonders** **that** would **budge** and **change** me
And **make** my **consciousness** **anew**;

A **consciousness** that **lets** the **River** **through**.

And **after that**,

My **puzzlement** grew **even greater**,

As **I** with **eyes refreshed** **viewed those**

I was to think were **wise and educated**;

Men and **women**

Who **due to education** **ought to have** no **veil**

Across their **eyes**,

But **whose** sight, in **spite** of **their** **purported learning**,

Indeed was **far** more **clouded than** my **own** had **been**,

And **to this day**,

Their **ignorance** **surprises me**,

Though **I** am **equally perplexed** by **obstinate** **believers**

Who **snub** sound **reason**, and **reject** the **undisputable**,

Disrupting science **for the sake** of **their** **unconscious fear**.

The voice.

I force no **mind** to **see** the **many signs**

Or **to interpret them** in **other ways**

Than **it** most **fancies** and **feels justified**,

And **free will** **does indeed** make **destiny**

A **game** of **dice** **sometimes**;

If **will** could **not** throw **dice**,

It **would** not **be** a **free** one.

The **same** **applies** to **the** **autonomy**

Of **every true** creation;

Without a **certain independence**,

No creation **could** be **called** **complete**.

Though **only to a limited degree**
Are **these considerations fully relevant;**
Beyond the many imperceptible constrictions
Within which free will lives,
There **are no games of dice,**
And **beyond the countless fashioned fabrics**
Within which sovereignty resides and acts
There **is no independence;**

My son, if **you could penetrate it all**
With **clear and unconstrained perception,**
As **you might in the distant future do,**
You would see what cannot be expressed
In **human words,**
Nor **possibly translated into human thought;**
The **largest clockwork you could ever know;**
The **widest river you could ever swim;**
The **deepest ocean you could ever dive;**
The **brightest brilliance you could ever find;**
And **even that would be but tokens of activity beneath**
For **even massive clocks need maintenance,**
And **even rivers that seem endless have an origin,**
And **even oceans that seem free are governed,**
And **even light which blinds its witness has a source.**

He.

Would the place of which you speak
By **any chance resemble that which I,**
In **certain treasured moments,**
Have experienced,
If **only very briefly,**

And **which** I feel a yearning for which often is as strong
As **that** for **where** I came from, **far** beyond?

No **words** can **quite** convey the exaltation
With **which** I was infused,
But **you** can see those **moments** in my **memory** **unaided**;

My **own** remembrance of them seems to be
A **dawn** more **beautiful** than **any** of a **worldly** **day**,
A **dawn** viewed **through** the **bars** of **tiny** **windows**
In a **prison** **wall**,
Which I climbed **up** to **when** the **guards** were **not** **alert**.
Please **tell** me, **was** there **any** **truth** in **what** I sensed?

The voice.
There **was** more **truth**
Than **you** can **know**;
You **caught** a **glimpse**,
A **glimpse** indeed;
Such as a **human** **with** some **effort** **might**,

But **now** my **lecture** **must** continue;
Time is **turning** **precious**,
Thus, **what** I **show** will be but **sketches**
Of the **stretches** of **dark** **space**
That **you** will **cross**,
And I can **merely** **give** you **hints** of **what** they **hold**;
Of **the** **amazing**, **drifting** **clouds**
Of **star**-birth **and** of **forming** **worlds**,
And **all** I can suggest of **transformations** **in** **between**
Will be like **nothing** **but** some **leaves** in **autumn** **winds**

When **later you** compare this session **with** the **changes**
Which **you** will **have** to **overcome** when **moving**
Between the **major phases** **that** remain.
But **drafts** should **be enough** to **get** you **going**,
And **even if** we **had** a **hundred years**,
My **demonstration** would make **nothing more**
Than **simple outlines**;
Such is **the** complexity and **depth** of **what** you **face**;
You **will** most **definitely** **have** to **use** your **better judgment**
As your **foremost guide**,
And **one** out of **the judges** **in** your **lonesome soul**
Will **be** the **more** important;
The **umpire** of **the loving heart**.

With **this** in **mind**, employ the **vigor** of your **senses**
And **fix** your **full** attention
On the **rift** you **have** before you;
Andromeda, though **truly lovely** **in** its **garments**
Of translucent **hues**,
Is **not** a **place** for **you**;
And **do** not **mourn** it,
Even if you **should** feel **so inclined**;
The **spouse** of **brave** Perseus **is** but **one** of **many**;
Of **billions**, **multitudes** of **billions**,
As **visionary Sagan** **knew** and **wrote**;
Galaxies of **all** appearances,
Distributed through **space** like **pearls**
Of **gleaming morning dew** in **one** great **web**,
More **intricate** and **three-dimensional**
Than **any** **spider** ever **made**.

Some **pearls** are **close** to **one** another,
Forming clusters of companionship,
And **some** are **more** alone
And **drift** in regal **solitude**,
And **some** form **groups** which **then** form **endless chains**
Which **now** and **then** cross **other** **endless trains**;
The **points** of **contact** looking **much** the **same**
As **those** that **see** the **threads** in **cobwebs** **meet**,
And **in** this **manner** **they** go **on** and **on**,
Endlessly, in **human terms**,
And **almost** **endlessly** **indeed**,
Looking from afar like **Christmas lighting**;
Like **tiny bulbs** a-glowing **on** the **blackened trees**,
Or **like** the **neural network** of the **human brain**.

As for **you**, my **son**,
You **need** to **follow** **one** such **string** to **reach** the **goal**
You **have** been **yearning** for,
So **leave** the **group** of **pearls** **belonging** to the **Milky Way**
And **to** **Andromeda**,
And **to** the **clouds** named **after** **brave** **Magellan**,
And **search** the **universe** that **comes** **within**
The **grasp** of **vision**;
The **winding** **mesh** of **shining** **gems**
That **seems** to **fade** into **infinity**,
Until you **spot** a **filament** that **clearly** **differs**;
It **has** no **human** **name**,
And **even** **sharp-eyed** **human** **telescopes**
Have **only** **seen** a **tiny**, **fuzzy** **fraction** of its **total** **length**,
But **I** will **tell** you **how** to **recognize** its **special** **properties**;
Its **most** **important** **signature** is **piercing** **color**;

A **flawless, potent blue** that **radiates** straight **through**
Your **frightened** essence;
A **color that** no **earthly retina** did ever **catch**,
There **is** no **need** for **fear**, however;
If **you** hold **onto** **true** intensions,
The **light** will **only** **aid** and **strengthen** you,

But **be** forewarned; It **burns** deceit and **hatred**,
As **well** as **the** self-righteous **lack** of **tolerance**
Exhibited by **those** who **dare** monopolize
The **never-ending** river of **Divinity**;
It **burns** such **primitive** and **petty** traits
Like **dried-up** **timber** in a **white-hot** furnace
But **do** not **think** of it as **vengeance**
Exacted by an **angered** **mind**;
It is in **no** way **retribution**,
Such **words** apply **exclusively** to **worldly** matters,
And **were** invented by the **human** **brain**.
The **one** and **only** reason for the **burning**
Is **incompatibility** between such **light**
And **savage** choices;
It is as **natural** and **unavoidable**
As **when** the **prairie** catches **fire**
Because a **thunderbolt** strikes **withered** **grass**,
And **when** there is no **dry** grass **left**,
Combustion **ends**
And **new** life **springs**,
Rising in the **manner** of a **phoenix**
From **what** seemed **sure** and **merciless** destruction.

But **like** I said, no **need** to **worry**,

Provided **that** you **keep** attention **pinned**
On **your** objective.
You **may** feel **pain**, but **it** will **pass**,
So **do** proceed to **near** it,
Even if it **seems** too **far** away,
And **in** a **while**, an **instant** **really**,
You **will** be **homing in** on **it**,
But **when** your **vision** **starts** discerning
The **galaxies** of **which** the **string** consists,
You **have** come **close** enough,
And **if** the **galaxies** start **breaking up**
Into the **countless** **worlds** they **do** consist of,
You **have** come **dangerously** **close**,
For **if** your **curiosity** is **not** restrained,
Or **your** amazement **not** sufficiently controlled,
You **will** most **surely** **be** engulfed
By **what** you **find**,
And **possibly** consumed forever.

So **find** a **distance** **that** is **safe**,
And **let** the **shining** **string** provide you **with** directions,
As you **set** the **ember** of your **essence** **into** **motion**
By **purifying** **mind** and **will**,
And **as** time **passes**, and **you** pass **countless** **gems**,
Never **fail** to **heed** the **guidance** of the **filament**
That **they** compose;
The **structure** **that** for **ages** **will** go **on** ahead of **you**,
Continually **showing** **more** to **you**
Of **what** it is;
Thousands of new **pearls** per **what** you **call** a **second**;
Billions of new **stars** per **what** you **call** a **heartbeat**;

Millions of new worlds,
This is what the filament continually will display,
While also constantly departing into darkness far away,
Creating the impression that it has no end,
All the more because you will be moving faster
Than your world-locked mind can presently conceive.

But **do not lose your courage,**
For **this one promise I can give you:**
Have **fortitude,** and **you will find the end,**
As **surely as a boat that heeds the current of a waterway**
Will slip into the salty ocean
If it has a sober captain.

When **time at last has come**
For **you to leave your guide**
Of **piercing, purging, purifying blue,**
A **bend of unmistakable appearance**
Will show up ahead
As the **filament begins to turn,**
While **further on,**
In **the direction you have long been following**
There will be no other strings to see,
No **stars that twinkle in the depths of blackness,**
No **clouds that gyre in the burning cold,**
No, **nothing will there be to see,**
And **still there will be all**
That **ever really was,**
And **even though you have put all behind you,**
There **will be more ahead of you than ever.**

It is the **border of the human universe,**
My **son,**
The **moving edge**
Which **always will be out of human reach,**
And **in this borderland** you **might see lights**
Not **too unlike** the **ones that mark the end**
Of **solar realms;**
Auroras, **flaring up** and **dying**
Across the **vast, invisible horizon,**
Where **Genesis expands** into what **always was**
While **deep down being part of it;**
It **must indeed seem paradoxical** to **beings limited,**
But **trust my words;** accept it **as the truth,**
For **at the ultimate, impenetrable level way below,**
Or **at the highest peak;** both **sentences are valid,**
There **are no contradictions or absurdities;**
At **that concluding plane,** there **is but oneness,**
Truly indestructible and **never-ending;**
A **unity that will outlast all else;**
An **ocean of illuminated, living water**
Knowing neither floor nor surface;
A **consciousness divine** and **always dreaming;**
Removed, but omnipresent, all at once;
Removed from you, while being you,
Allow my **words an honest entry;**
Then **you might one day grasp,**
If **only for a fleeting, overwhelming moment,**
The **undeniable veracity** of **what I tell you.**

[The young man wants to speak, but the voice continues.]

But **I** will **talk** no **more** of **this** for **now**,
For **words** can **form** but **allegories** of the **deeper** **planes**,
And **will** be **misinterpreted** too **easily**;
You **have** no **choice** but **to** show **patience**
Until the **day** when **other** **languages** are **spoken**
By your **mind**,
And **such** a **day** will **surely** **be** possessed by **you**
If you **keep** your **ember** **radiant**
Throughout the **journey**,
And **lead** a **life** of **rectitude**
When **you** reach **home**.

I was **showing** **you** the **border** of the **universe**
Inhabited by **humans**;
The **changing**, **blurry** **edge**
That **marks** the **ending** of the **second** **phase**;
You **may** **rejoice**, my **son**,
If **you** **accomplish** **this**,
But **with** **restraint** and **caution**,
For **soon** the **third** phase **must** **commence**;
The **third** and **last** before reentry,
But **also** **the** most **taxing** of them **all**,

So **when** you **pass** the **unseen** **rim**
And **seem** to **enter** **utter** **loneliness**,
Remember **how** Endeavour **carried** **on**,
And **let** the **compass** **guide** you,
As **when** you **in** a **mountain** **snowstorm** **cannot** **see**,
And **must** **rely** on **the** **magnetic** **pole**.
But **first**, look **back** and **see** if **you** can **spot** the **string**
Which **holds** the **Milky** **Way**,

Then **say** good **bye**,
For **you** will **never know** this **universe again**,
Unless an **incident** like **that** which **brought** you **here**
Should **happen for** a **second time**,
And **that** is **too unlikely to** be **worth** considering.
Then, as a **final preparation**,
Make a **heartfelt prayer**
In **order to** consolidate your **weary mind**,
For **if** you **are not vigilant**,
Then **you** could **very quickly cease to be**,
As, **due to the** autonomy of **which** I **spoke**,
You **might run into independent forces**,
Randomly distributed in pockets,
That **will attempt to have you join** their **ranks**
Of **chaos and sedition**.

And **if** you,
Facing distances that seem impossible
To **ever cross**,
Feel that your resolve is dwindling,
Take **comfort in the sound**
That **will stay with** you;
The **sound** that **you already have detected**;
The **one** that **will escort** you
Till the journey is completed
Provided **that** you **listen for** it **zealously**.

And **of** the **goal ahead**,
I **cannot tell** you **much**
For **fear of compromising its integrity**;
Eavesdropping for evil purposes is rife,

But **cannot be** put **down** without **infringing**
On **self**-rule,
And **such** an **action would** endanger
Far too **much**.
This I **tell** you, **though**:
Your **recollection is** **impressively** correct;
The **goal**, your **home**, is **there**,
And **you** will **surely reach** it **in** the **end**
If **caution and** **endurance are**
Unswervingly **exhibited**.

[It is nearly dark. Only a faint blue glow, almost black to the naked eye, persists in the western sky. The fissure that showed the various stages collapses and disappears. There is a short silence.]

He.
Is it **then** time?

The voice.
It **is** **indeed**.

[A brief interlude.]

The voice.
My **son**,
Considering the **road**
That **you** have **chosen**,
It **is** not **with** an **easy heart**
That **I** let **death** take **you** away.
I **wish** you **all** the **fortune**
That the **cosmos may** **bestow** upon you;
I can **do** no **more** for **now**.

May your **journey be** successful,
May you **enter into love** and **valiance**
When **you arrive**,
And **may** we **later meet** again.

One **last advice**:
Do not call upon me
Unless all **other options are** exhausted,
And **keep in mind** that **there are places**
Where **inattentiveness** might **bring** you **into situations**
Where **even I cannot intrude** to **help**.

He.
That I have accepted.

The voice.
So **let it be**.
Farewell, my **child**.

He.
Farewell.

[Most of the stars have become clearly visible in the night sky. The water of the sea laps quietly against the unseen beach. Sitting on the sand, barely visible against the sea, he appears to lose consciousness gradually, then lies down on the ground, as if slowly surrendering to sleep. After that, he is seen from above, lying calm and almost outstretched at the fringe of the dry land. His eyes seem to be gazing firmly at the stars, his eyelids move just once or twice while his lips slowly utter some unknown word, then his face comes to a complete standstill. Seconds pass, but his eyes remain wide open and his lips do not move. A lone tear leaves his left eye and lingers for a moment on his face, then drops from his chin and disappears into the sand. Utter darkness has descended on the landscape around him.]

[*]

[A new stage. The location is somewhere in space, not too far from Earth. The blue oceans and the white, drifting clouds are seen below. In the other directions, there is blackness, but also the twinkling of countless stars. A faint, uncanny sound, not unlike that of distant singing, pervades the ambience. Then, all of a sudden, the young man is heard speaking, which is particularly surprising since he is nowhere to be seen.]

He.

Oh, **dear,**

Oh, **dear,**

Has it actually happened?

How **wonderful** the **oceans look** from **here,**

How **stunning are** their **shades of blue,**

Their **shimmering** in **endless sunlight,**

And the **twirling filaments** of **white** upon them

And the **continents** they **cradle in** their **bosoms ...**

Though **far above,**

I **hear** the **breaking of** a **billion waves,**

And the **singing of** a **million birds** at sea,

And, **oh,** the **lamentations of** a **thousand lonesome whales;**

How **truly staggering** Creation **is;**

How **dizzying** the **energy of breathing Life;**

Oh, how **truly beautiful** is **not** the **world**

That **is** forever **lost**

Through **death** and **strife?**

And, **oh,**

How **frighteningly beautiful**

The **space around** it **is,**

The **space** that **it** is **dashing through**
With **such** commendable serenity;
The **space**, the **space**
Of **velvet dark**, and **scattered stars**,
And **emptiness**,
Or **emptiness**, it **seems**;
An **emptiness** that **is**
And **still** is **not** ...

Himself. [Representing a different part of the same being]
Well, **you** have **really done** it **this** time, **Michael**.
Yes, **you** have **really done** it **now**.
Oh, **dear**,
What **trials I** would **have avoided**
If **you** and **I** were **not inseparably linked** together.

He.
But **lo**, behold;
The **sights** and **sounds** of **this** new **sphere**
Go **far beyond** my **powers of appreciation and** expression.
What **did I do**?
How **did I wind** up **here**?

Himself.
Come **on**, my **friend**,
Do not tell me **that** you **still** do **not recall**
Your **recent dying**;
The **shedding of** your **earthbound shell**
That **freed** you **from imprisonment**
Just **instances ago**?

He.

Hey, **give me time to reconsolidate my dazzled mind, ok?**

This **isn't something we do every day.**

I need to liberate my mind from all the staleness

That, **after thirty years in prison, still impairs me;**

Just **like a butterfly that, having left its pupa,**

Must **fill its wings with blood and let them dry**

Before it may attempt to use them,

So **I must gather strength before I may look back**

And **see my memories with clarity;**

My **being is a river in upheaval**

That **must be calmed before the rocks below**

Can **be discerned, and what they tell be fully understood.**

But, I am beginning to recall it all;

Though **slowly,**

It **is all coming back to me,**

I do remember now,

Remember now,

Remember ...

How I saw the whole world stir;

Oh, **how I saw the whole world change,**

Oh, **how I do;**

I am intoxicated, dizzy, dying;

Intoxicated with the wine of death;

Lo, **all around me, all is flowing, growing, altering**

As **if insanity has entered time.**

The **clouds, the days and nights, the greenery,**

The **weeks** and **years**, the **ice** and **snow**, the **falling leaves**,
The **grass**, the **sea**, the **cities great**, the **human life**,
It is all **moving at a frenzied speed**,
It is all **coming, going and returning**
Disappearing and appearing like the thunderbolts
Of **raging storms**,
Or **like the shining bodies of a school of fish**;
I see a **thousand skyscrapers crop up and crumble**;
I see the **pyramids reduced to dust**, and **new ones rise**;
I see the **earth itself erupt**, and **new lands green**,
The **mountains fall**, the **smoke comes billowing**
From **bombed-out, burned-out conurbations**,
A **new Republic finds foundation**,
Another **Caesar has success**,
Another **thought is born again**,
What **strange and awful glory that is in it all**,
What **beauty with each budding spring**,
What **poignancy with every fall**,
And **how each coiling round explores new ground**,
And **how each eddy is the previous in newfound form**,
And **how they all increase and gain**,
And **give the Intellect unchartered lanes**.

And I, myself, I **age**,
And **suddenly, I have turned old**;
My **hands all wrinkles, hair all white**,
My **body frail, and clothed in rags**,

I **cry**,
I **cheer**,
I **curse**,

I **praise**,
I **pray** for **clemency**,
I **fall**
And **die** ...

And **then**,
As **if** awakened **from** a **crazy dream**,
I see my **body**, **lying lifeless on** a **windswept beach**
As **if** it **was** just **some** outgrown, discarded **skin**,
Already **decomposing and** disintegrating,
And **while** I **watch**, **astounded by** the **strange display**,
A **wave** arrives and **sweeps** the **parts**,
The **bones**, the **clothes**, what **there** remains,
Out **to** the **sea**,

And as I, **left behind**; confounded,
And, **admittedly**, a bit **concerned**,
Am **standing on** the **sands** in **solitude**,
I **feel** a **call** and **turn** to **look**;
Turn **west**, from **where** a **gale** is **briskly blowing**
And **there** I see a **pitch-black void**;
A **hole** that **has** replaced the **western sky**
Around which **everything** is **eddying**
And **all** the **fabric of** the **world** seems **warped**,
As **if** it **was** but **water in** a **draining pond**.

Nearly hypnotized am I;
Awestruck, **almost crying**,
The **power of** the **spectacle** before me
Is **more** than I can **bear**;
I **will** be **crushed**, I feel,

But **then** I hear the **promise from** my **Master**
Echo **in** my **fearful mind**, the **promise**
And his **kind** advice,
And **so**, recovering my **courage**;
Concentrating;
Gathering my **strength**;
Remembering my **distant goal**;
My **world**, my **love**, the **needed journey**,
I **gaze** into the **black** with **calm defiance**,
And, **with** the **speed** of **lightning**,
As **if** I were a **silver arrow**,
I **shoot** into the **swirling void**,
Perceiving **ripples all around** me,
And **then**, away and **gone**,
I **faint** and **dream** and **feel** a **stream**,
Dream **long**, I **think**,
And **wake** up **here**.

Himself.

Well then,
Now that **past events** have **been recalled**,
And **the occurrences** have **firmly been established**
And accepted,
I **suppose** there **is** no **point** in **questioning**
The **wisdom of** our **action**;
There **can**, undoubtedly, be **no return** to **life** on **Earth**.
I **have** but **one** suggestion;
That **we proceed** to **do** what **we were told**;
That **we begin** the **talked-of journey** **rather soon**;
For **staying here** will **certainly** not **bring** us **any benefits**;

The **view** is **great**, but **cannot help** us **reach** the **goal**,
So **let** us **end** this **idleness**
And **move**.

He.

Just one **moment now**;
Have you **had** a **thorough look**
At **what** we **are**?
I **try** to **judge** where **ember ends**
And **space** **begins**,
Or **rather**, **if I have** a **visibility** or **not**,
And **what** I see fills **me** with **fear**,
For **even though** I **still** feel **every limb** I **owned**
Down **there**,
I **cannot** see a **thing** of **what I am**;
It is as **if** my **body** is **still with** me,
But **in** a **state** of **absolute** transparency;
I **am** reminded of the **stories I** was **told**
By **people** of **ill fate**;
People who had **lost** an **arm** or **leg**,
And **still** felt **aches** where **nothing was**,
As **if** its **phantom** were **still there**.

Wait a **minute**, **though**;
If I **employ** my **concentration** to the **fullest**,
I **think** I **can** discern a **sign** of **my** existence;
A **faintly glowing**, **gas-like** **substance**
Which **roughly** **occupies** the **place** my **body did**,
But I have **nothing** I **can touch** it **with**;
No **hands** with **skin** and **fingers**,
No **feet** with **toes** and **nails**,

And **I suspect** that **what I see** is **not**
Material in nature.

Indeed,
I **feel** as **if I am** suspended **in** a saline sea;
I **have** no sense of **weight** at **all**,
But **still** experience the **subtle flow** of **space** around me,
And **look**,
Now the **substance** is in **change**;
Its colors **fluctuating like** the bioluminescence
In the **ribbons of** a **deep-sea jellyfish**,
Adrift in the intriguing **black** abysses
Of the **earthly** oceans.
I **must** exclaim:
I **did** not **know** that **such** an elegance
Is **an intrinsic part** of **what** we are.

Himself.
If **it** is **not** too **much** to **ask**,
I **would** prefer to **see** some action
Rather quickly,
As **there** is **much** we **must** accomplish
To **reach** our **home** and **be** reborn,
And **as** we **shall** have **lots** of **time**
For **pondering** our **nature** later.
If **you** recall the **reason** **why** you **asked** to **be** released,
And **why** your **wish** was **granted**,
I **think** you **will** agree that **we** should **do** our **best**
To **prove** that **we** are **worthy** of the **freedom**
That was **given**,
And **thus** show **eagerness** and **strength** of **will**

And **not** inactiveness and **hesitation**.

He.

I do, I do,

I was just overpowered by my feelings;

If you show more serenity and I am less emotional,

We should do well,

I am ready to begin

When you are.

Himself.

Then think of her,

And feel the joy,

Of being free.

He.

I think of her,

And of my world,

And feel the joy

Of newfound spring;

Of being free

To leave at last.

Himself.

Farewell to Earth,

Then off we go,

Never to come back again.

He.

Farewell to Earth,

Forgive me, Earth,

I heed the call
Of former joy;
Of former love
That would not leave;
Now off we go,

Himself.
Forever more.

He.
Forever more.

Good bye to all.

(Good bye to all.)

