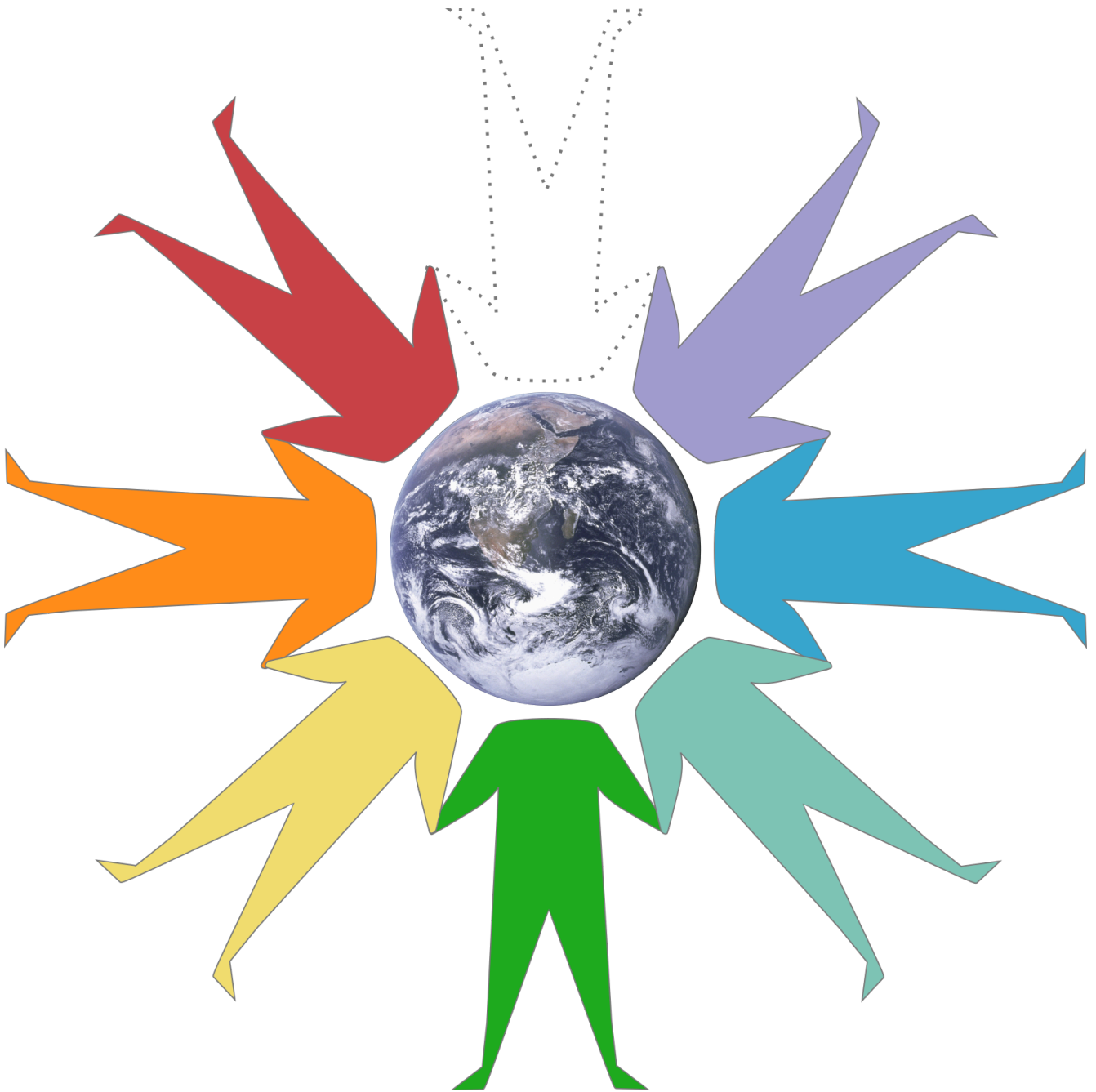


Seven Secular Sermons



1 Adrift in Space and Time

Now this is going to be fun!
It truly does feel great
to realize we all are one.
So we shall meditate.

This meditation's rhyming verse
describes a paradigm
of us inside this universe,
adrift in space and time.

It's nice that we can simply start
by recognizing how
a check of every body part
can help us be here now.

We feel our bellies and our heads
and just become aware
how arms and hands and feet and legs
are feeling everywhere.

Between and through them circulate
our blood-streams to refresh
the oxygen that activates
awareness in our flesh.

And as we slowly breathe we find
that doing so can draw
us into a more present mind
to feel the moment raw.

With every breath we take and leave,
we clear our inner eyes
and fully, lucidly perceive
each second passing by.

Our mindful meditative selves
grow out of living meat
and help our bodies stay in health
by finding what we need.

So let's do that now. Let's explore
and see what's to be found.
Outside our bodies, there is more.
Let's take a look around!

Unless we're blind we're free to see,
unless we're deaf, to hear
and realize we're utterly
surrounded by what's here.

This place surrounding us here now
where we consider this,
is just as present, anyhow,
as our breathing is.

Our breaths connect within the air,
within the atmosphere.
The envelope of sky we share
is also part of here.

We also share what rests beneath:
Our bodies' place of birth
from which came all who now here breathe
as children of the Earth.

Of course there's more than senses show
around us near and far.
The sky above, the Earth below;
there's more to where we are.

To North and South, to West and East,
the world goes on and on,
the planet every plant and beast
and we now breathe upon.

Of all the Earth, we barely know
the surface we begrime,
upon the spinning rock below,
adrift in space and time.

Our calm and meditating minds
can feel this easily.
Imagination goes behind
all things our eyes can see.

To find, as further out we go,
whichever way we face,
to left, to right, above, below,
the solar system. Space.

It's blacker than the night of course
and bigger than the sky
and it is hard to see because
it was not made for eyes.

It effortlessly overwhelms
Imagination. Still
and everywhere around this realm
extends and always will.

Around us all and everyone
we've met or ever can,
extends the system of the Sun
that dwarfs all realms of man.

Out there, all human joy and strife
and knowledge matter not.
Out there, this fragile ball of life
is just a pale blue dot.

And there are other, bigger dots
and countless asteroids.
This Earth is one among a lot
around us in the void.

Yet all of them combined appear
like specks of dust compared
to one enormous blazing sphere,
the center that they share.

A thousand times as ponderous
as all that circles it,
it radiates splendiferous
and indiscriminate.

It weighs three-hundred-thirty-three
times thousand times as much
as Earth, which seems like mere debris,
a tiny circling smudge.

There's hydrogen inside the Sun
that lets it shine so bright
by burning up: Four million tons
per second fuse to light.

This fusion forges helium
and other specks of dust
that constitute the medium
from which grows life like us.

But near the Sun, its gamma rays
and heat do not allow
life smart enough to be amazed
at what is true here now.

And further out, it stays too cold
for molecules to toy
with games of entropy that mold
the life that we enjoy.

While outermost, in blackest night,
drift frozen rocks so far,
to them our splendid sphere of light
looks like another star.

We're lucky Earth is temperate
or life could not have spawned.
This planet would stay desolate
and all of us unborn.

As fully as we do depend
on Earth that we live on,
we also clearly understand
we're children of the Sun.

And yet the Sun, though all must spin
around it, merely is
a rare domain of light within
a yawning black abyss.

In outer space surrounding us
lie distances too great
for us to easily discuss
or even contemplate.

For space is mostly nothingness
around us everywhere,
the freezing dark is limitless
in empty space out there.

Of course there is some gravity
that massive things impart
and maybe some dark energy
that pushes them apart.

But nothing's there to hear or see
or smell or taste or touch
and trying to imagine, we
can think of nothing much.

And still we feel, for what that's worth,
beyond the seen and near
the vastness outside planet Earth
that's real now and here.

In meditation, we somehow
expand our minds to try
to feel the system we are now
and here surrounded by.

The moons and planets we can see,
as far as we have found,
are lifeless. Earth now seems to be
the only game in town.

Yet all these places we could go
and cultivate and fill,
are merely specks in what we know
remains much bigger still.

The stars, these many tiny lights,
each are a blazing sun
and circling them, caught in their might,
are planets being spun.

Yet humans cannot see that far.
The pixels of our eyes
are just too few, which is why stars
look like they're equal-sized.

Through telescopes, we understood.
The stars all shine so bright
that only monstrous distance could
dilute them into night.

These distances define the space
that all stars occupy
and make a single, real place
that we're surrounded by.

The stars that shine all night and day
within or out of sight
are what our home, the Milky Way,
appears like from inside.

Our Milky Way contains at least
one hundred billion suns.
Through gravity, they all are pieced
together into one.

Around this place, where we now feel
what we are breathing in,
these suns form one tremendous wheel
with one tremendous spin.

And all these suns are shining clear,
enormous and sublime.
They all are real here where we're
adrift in space and time.

Unmoved by beings such as we
on Earth, our small enclave,
the stars around us now will be
the stars around our graves.

Except for those which have gone through
their hydrogen supply
and end as all things someday do,
for even stars must die.

And some, much bigger than our Sun,
burn brighter still and must
explode one day, when they are done
with making light and dust.

These supernovas, as we call
them, burst stupendously.
Some can outshine the sum of all
stars in the galaxy.

With their magnetic fields unfurled,
their yields annihilate
or sterilize abundant worlds
that life might populate.

Yet all we breathe and eat and drink
comes from these massive bombs.
We're supernova-dust that thinks
about where it came from.

And since the stars have made the clay
that led to our birth,
we're children of the Milky Way,
as are the Sun and Earth.

But supernovas are quite rare.
Three times per century
does one of them explode somewhere
within our galaxy.

Yet many supernovas do
each second detonate
in all the galaxies whereto
we now shall escalate!

A million times much further out
than all the Milky Way,
more galaxies are shining proud
around us here today.

These galaxies, each huge and wide,
much like the one we're in,
outnumber all the stars inside
our home and origin.

Around where we consider this,
whichever way we face,
drift billions of these galaxies
right now, right here, in space.

We realize with utter awe
and know beyond all doubt:
Beyond this world are trillions more
that we could learn about.

And almost all of them must be
absurdly far away
in ultimate reality
beyond the Milky Way.

From here where our bodies stay,
imagination climbs
through further outer Milky Ways
adrift in space and time.

And through the emptiness between
in almost all of space,
where not a single star is seen
in almost every place.

And meditation does allow
our minds to feel it all.
To feel the Universe that now
surrounds us as a whole.

Despite all suns that intersperse
this dark continuum,
most places in this Universe
are total vacuum.

And therefore, atoms are quite rare.
Yet trillions of them have
condensed into the flesh we wear
that draws this very breath.

Two thirds of atoms in us are
still hydrogen which sprang
into existence not in stars
but back in the Big Bang.

For all the time since time began,
as entropy made space,
each travelled an enormous span
to meet here face to face.

Through vacuum and solar flame,
they found their way somehow.
And we as that which they became,
thus came to meet here now.

Through all we breathe and drink and eat,
they travel and endow
with nutrients the living meat
in which we meet here now.

The atoms that we are traverse
all space and time, which means
we're children of the Universe
and we have always been.

The atoms in us met before
and they will meet again,
compelled by universal law
out in the there and then.

One endless cosmic maelstrom,
age-old and ever new,
is where we all are coming from
and where we're going to.

The knowledge we are made of dust
compels us to admit
the Universe is in us just
as we are within it.

From here we may arise to see
and claim as our own
the secrets of reality
just waiting to be known.

And so we know the infinite
is absolutely real.
It's here, it's now, it's intimate,
this vastness that we feel.

Whatever else is true for us,
we'll always know this rhyme.
We'll always know we're made of dust
adrift in space and time.

2 The Games of Entropy

So, being dust, what lets us live?
What raises us above
the countless, mindless, primitive,
raw atoms we're made of?

There is no life within this dust:
Most specks remain unchanged
from back in ancient stars. It must
be how they are arranged.

Each human we have ever seen,
each beast, each bird, each tree:
We all are atoms that have been
arranged amazingly.

All these arrangements big and small
can be a source of mirth
in us surrounded by them all,
the greatest show on Earth.

There's more to learn in nature than
is found in any book
and it appears more alien
the closer that we look.

Below the surfaces we see,
the skin and scales and bark,
the cycles of biology
are working in the dark.

Right now our lungs take oxygen
out of the air we share,
our hearts and bloodstreams take it then
and pump it everywhere.

If we look closer we can see
our lungs to be a place
where in a dance of chemistry
our breath and blood embrace.

We're built from many works of art,
from organs that combine
small tissues, each a special part
with intricate design.

Now each such tissue then contains
innumerable cells
and here, inside each cell again,
are tiny organelles.

Within all forms of life we see
there's hidden vastly more
bewildering complexity
that must inspire awe.

The stars we see with telescopes
are big and bright and far,
but we find life, with microscopes,
still more spectacular.

In fact, there's more complexity
in one small butterfly
than we see in the galaxy
out there beyond the sky.

All living things we've ever seen
are built from living cells;
each cell is like a small machine
comprised of chemicals.

In all our cells, there's utterly
infinitesimal
molecular machinery.
We're nanotechnical.

Still zooming closer, we just find
a multiplicity
of ancient atoms that are kind
of bouncing randomly.

The static things we think we know
are maps. The territory
has constant and chaotic flow
beneath the shapes we see.

It's here right now, as close to us
as anything can be.
The movement of the specks of dust
shapes our reality.

The randomness in what they do
we call their entropy
and its domain is whereinto
our lives have come to be.

It disassembles ordered things
unless they can outgrow
its endless, blind disordering
and spread within its flow.

It moves the dust and lets it start
to join the game or dance
of molecules that fall apart
or last a while, by chance.

So hydrogen and oxygen
join water which can gain
entropic warmth that makes it then
play games of cloud and rain.

Where entropy is less intense,
such drops will crystallize
and dance the longer, slower dance
of snowflakes and of ice.

Inside ourselves we feel right now
our living, breathing form
to be and to remain somehow
comparatively warm.

Our atoms lost the stellar heat
and left behind the cold
of empty space. In warmth we meet,
in warmth does life unfold.

For heat destroys all forms and flows
that chance may introduce,
while cold does not select for those
that work and reproduce.

In warmth the growing randomness
of entropy can be
just right for the profound finesse
of biochemistry.

Warmth as in us makes atoms stay
a little restless so
they bump into each other's way,
react and let games grow.

With carbon in particular,
reactions are not rare,
but the majority by far
does not lead anywhere.

Yet chemical reactions need
mere moments to be done
and let the dust join games that lead
to others further on.

So given lots of time, mere chance
must sometimes foreordain
that specks of dust will start to dance
along reaction chains.

Around 4 billion years ago,
on Earth, a warm wet sphere,
reaction chains began to grow
the paths that led us here.

In chains of random chemistry,
the molecules that they
unite can in their unity
join bigger games to play.

In some, the flow of molecules
could circle and arrive
in lasting cycles that grew tools
to multiply and thrive.

That's how the games that entropy
forever plays have come
to let emerge biology
that all of us grew from.

We're built from this, from cyclical
and still ongoing games
of atoms and of chemicals
that do not know our names.

The games take place in everything.
Each breath we now here take
has trillions of them happening.
All cells in us partake.

A cell is what we call games far
too numerous to count
sustaining one shared reservoir
that holds their whole amount.

Here games that build each other spin
a membrane to engulf
them all. A greater game begins:
A game that builds itself.

Though molecules can't learn or feel,
the cells they joined into
have learned to sense and eat and heal
as in us now they do.

The games inside them match and fit
each other. They create
each other's necessary bits
and thus self-replicate.

The largest, DNA, has space
like memory to hold
stored information – that's a place
for new games to unfold.

From codes that cells store in there stem
large hosts of proteins
that build us here to carry them.
We call these codes our genes.

Cells need to harvest energy
to fight their slow decay
by ever-present entropy
and thus keep death at bay.

Some games can help the cells with this.
Hence some cells now include
microbial photosynthesis
that harvests light as food.

Cells work so well that everywhere
we look now, they are found:
On every surface, in the air
and deep within the ground.

They are the winners that remain;
the losers are all dead.
All life in entropy's domain
must die if it can't spread.

These cells, competing, growing rife
for countless years on end,
turned Earth into this ball of life
to which we now attend.

Once single cells were all there was,
but some of them became
much bigger forms of life because
they joined still greater games.

In unity they found new ways
to harvest energy
and grow within the fertile space
we here now call the sea.

With size, impeding entropy
becomes much more complex
but life invented, brilliantly,
a game that does it: sex.

Sex recombines and tests the genes
that parents contribute,
makes novel progeny and screens
resulting attributes.

And genes that happen to succeed
in making progeny
will travel in them and proceed
through time and entropy.

In each of us now breathing here
are genes that long have gone
through many generations – we're
built just to pass them on.

And entropy remains at play.
All life that it has bred,
however complex, must obey
its rule that life must spread.

To do this, cells must organize
and function as a whole,
so they have nerves which harmonize
their work on common goals.

One basic goal is to explore
new places which is why
some sea-born creatures left for more,
for land and for the sky.

And thus arose the multitude
of Earth's whole biosphere
that fills us with this gratitude
we feel for living here.

Yet now the human species shapes
this world – and that transpires
because a recent bunch of apes
played cooking food on fires.

This gave them much more energy
and they could use these gains
to breed descendants such as we
with big and playful brains.

With playful brains, we understand
the games of entropy
that played us into being and
can play them consciously.

With growing knowledge we can trace
all aspects of our lives
to games that built the mental space
wherein our knowledge thrives.

At every scale we see again
so many things that draw
upon each other. We might then
think that's designed or law.

And yet, no law or plan exists.
Mere chaos has let on
each scale some lucky games persist
that others built upon.

Now we join into greater games
that may outlast us all,
including tribes and towns and claims
of states that rise and fall.

Great games like science or the arts
or cities or machines
we hope will help their human parts
like bodies help their genes.

And in a sense, we all are one
gigantic global game
of interplaying games begun
without a plan or aim.

That's true and yet one brain can't grasp
it all: It's too immense.
One can but try and fail and gasp
at life's magnificence.

So human brains invented speech
and writing to transport
what brains would want to share and teach
each other: useful thoughts.

By sharing thoughts, we operate
like large connected minds
that ponder and accumulate
the knowledge that we find.

The thoughts we share help harmonize
our work on common goals
and join in ways to organize
the knowledge we control.

Our knowledge helps us build new games
that let us drive and fly
and even let us ride on flames
to pierce the waiting sky.

We humans know there's so much more
surrounding Earth: the stars!
Our playful brains cannot ignore
how unexplored those are.

The games of entropy coerce
us still. We must diffuse
to roam this playground universe
and put it all to use.

One day, self-replicating ships
will from this Earth be hurled
to leave on interstellar trips
and spread from world to world.

In but a short few million years
such ships can easily
spread many daughter biospheres
throughout the galaxy.

And yet, no other life comes here.
The sky we watch looks still.
No life is spreading – maybe we're
the only life that will.

But probably, out there we'll meet
life stranger than our own,
life made of something else than meat
by games as yet unknown.

And all we'll find and understand
can join in what will be
still greater, cosmic, truly grand
new games of entropy.

One day, all worlds our starships reach
shall learn to live and care,
for we have many games to teach
to all the dust out there.

3 One of Us

Still rare among the stars that drift
around us, we who live
now hold this strange and special gift
this planet has to give.

Let's now unveil this gift and see
it unify somehow
the many games of entropy
and make them one here now.

The gift of life is incarnate
in every one of us
who now here breathe and meditate
between those worlds of dust.

The deepening tranquillity
of meditative rest
lets us behold the mystery
with which we all are blessed.

In all of us, a unity,
sustained by games that run
in all their multiplicity,
makes out of many one.

Within us now, the interplay
of games in us gives rise
to one uniting process they
are part of and comprise.

It's present simultaneously
in both our hands and feet
and every cell within the three
dimensions of our meat.

This process keeps proceeding forth
through all the time it thrives,
in every moment in the fourth
dimension of our lives.

This process, ever-happening
until the day we die,
propels us onward, travelling
through moments passing by.

The Now we now experience
is one ephemeral
brief point in lives that, in a sense,
are four-dimensional.

Let's feel our lives stretch out upon
our lifespans as they stream
past moments we remember on
to future ones we dream.

As simply as we breathe, we know
this life we now here feel
has travelled, some short while ago,
through moments just as real.

There was a moment we arrived
at this place here somehow.
Since we were there and we survived,
our lives include that now.

The lives we lead have streamed right through
this day and so we can
now trace along them backwards to
the time today began.

Our lives extend beyond today,
beyond what's now and here.
We feel them stretch through yesterday,
last week, last month, last year.

Where were we seven years ago?
What did we feel and do
in all the moments we still know
and all the others, too?

Our lives include these moments and
yet we are not confined
to single moments – we extend
and grow through time entwined.

Through every moment we have seen,
a single process thrusts.
The momentary selves we've been
are all just one, just us.

Relaxed, with mindfulness and ease,
we effortlessly can
go past our oldest memories
to where our lives began.

Still tracing back, our lives escape
through many days and rooms
to when and where we first took shape
within our mothers' wombs.

Before we could breathe separately,
our lives have all begun
protected in a pregnancy
when two lives breathed as one.

Now even though these months may seem
like where we came about,
they're only where our mothers' streams
of life were branching out.

The life we're feeling presently,
our mothers felt themselves.
Life flows in continuity.
It's older than ourselves.

Now those of us with siblings know
them too as branches where
the gift of life that lets us grow
branched out and grew from there.

Though siblings must grow separately,
we also understand
they're branches of a single tree,
like fingers on a hand.

And here the journey need not end.
We might as well bring in
our mothers' mothers, cousins and
our somewhat further kin.

And they in turn had parents too
and families, so they
give us more distant cousins who
live out there now today.

To know someone is family,
that someone's one of us,
may stir a sense of loyalty,
connectedness or trust.

But families reach deep and wide.
The ones we each are in
have branches spreading far outside
their ancient origin.

Like us, they're branches, other tracks
life grows across this Earth
since ancestors of us had sex
and gifted them with birth.

We all have relatives out there
that we have never known,
who breathe and live their lives somewhere,
as real as our own.

In four dimensions, we connect
through lines of ancestry.
The life within us streams in fact
through branches of a tree.

We each have lines of ancestry
that reach back far and they
include both slaves and royalty,
both predators and prey.

Each human ancestry extends
through many centuries,
through long-forgotten, distant lands
on strange and ancient seas.

In tracing back, each separate course
eventually must
converge in common ancestors
of every one of us.

The ancestors all humans share
are why humanity
is all related – we are their
extended family.

These ancient ties of kinship mean
that everyone who lives,
all humans we have ever seen
have been our relatives.

Descended from the same old apes
who learned to cook and sing
and worked towards the cityscapes
we're now inhabiting.

The primates we're descended from
were not so erudite,
but they are why we all have come
to live and walk upright.

And they had other children, too.
We've grown apart and thus
they're different apes and primates who
are relatives of us.

We share with them a lineage
to which we owe our use
of tools and one shared heritage
with monkeys and with shrews.

All that's within the family
of four-legged creatures who
despite their huge diversity
are all our cousins too.

That's still not all: We're free to go
still deeper if we wish.
Four hundred million years ago,
our ancestors were fish.

It truly is astonishing
how one unbroken line
of life links us with everything
out there that has a spine.

Still older ancestors, like worms
and squishy things in shells
connect us with life's oldest forms,
confined to single cells.

We breathe, as all of them have breathed
since ancient cells back then
invented, savored and bequeathed
the use of oxygen.

Our common DNA confirms
the common ancestries
of all of life on Earth, from germs
to mushrooms, bugs and trees.

Our tree of life finds root in when,
at some primordial spot,
the first thing that did live began
from something that did not.

That's where reaction chains once curled
themselves in cycles so
the root of life could grace this world
four billion years ago.

Since then, its offshoots never ceased
to spread and branch. They won
this planet every plant and beast
and we now breathe upon.

Life branched and found a wealth of ways
to spread throughout this world
that now our meditative gaze
reveals to us unfurled.

All life is one big family
comprised of everyone,
four billion years of history
of species come and gone.

So when we meet, we're pretty much
just parts of one big form,
like branches of a tree that touch
each other in a storm.

In four dimensions, life is one
forever-branching force,
small parts of which have now begun
to understand its course.

The present seems to separate
life's branches like a knife.
Beyond it, we who meditate
here now are all one life.

This life that breathes in us just
leads far beyond the small
lives led by every one of us.
Let's try and feel it all.

Life's countless branches can be found
within the boundless seas,
upon and deep within the ground
and flying on the breeze.

What lives in them is life itself.
All plants, all beasts, all swarms
of bugs are part of life's great wealth
of evanescent forms.

Whatever living things may do,
they all need life to lend
its ancient, massive strength unto
each talon, claw and hand.

Whatever mouths and snouts and beaks
of living things discuss,
it's all the same old life that speaks
through every one of us.

From all our eyes, one life looks out
at all the games it plays.
On all our feet, life walks about
on paths through time and space.

With all our leaves, life drinks the sun,
producing nutrients,
with all our mouths, it moves them on
to their recipients.

So what it means to be alive
is being part of this,
of life itself that will survive
ourselves and live no less.

This meditation may reveal
to us now breathing here
a sense of awe in which we feel
we are this biosphere.

Our selves and all the lives we meet,
in friendship or in strife,
are parts of something more complete
that's us as one as life.

Since we are life, all lives we've known
are parts of us and thus
if we are one, we're all alone.
There's only one of us.

To ever meet another one,
our branches must grow long.
This planet Earth where we've begun
is not where we belong.

Earth gave all life its place of birth,
but it's not built to last.
Of all the time life gets on Earth,
most has already passed.

In just another billion years,
the sun that rules our sky
grows bright, Earth's water disappears
and all life here will die.

And that means us. We're not distinct
from what our growing star
will boil to death and force extinct
unless life spreads out far.

In having felt the family
through which we all connect,
we know that life is certainly
a thing we must protect.

As each of us is one more face
of life behind us all,
its need to travel out through space
is truly personal.

Life must keep sprouting interlinked
new branches and disperse
from world to world, or go extinct
from all this universe.

Just like our ancestors who built
the world we know today,
we'll have the glory or the guilt
of what we leave to stay.

We may destroy ourselves and doom
the Earth where we were born
to merely be a dreadful tomb
with no one left to mourn.

Or rise to meet infinity,
as lifeforms that succeed
ourselves pervade the galaxy
with Earth as their first seed.

And if we help life spread and last,
its many future forms
will know us as their distant past,
like apes and fish and worms.

So many future aeons hence,
beneath an alien sun,
they might remember Earth as lands
of legend long since gone.

How will they see their ancestry?
What shall it mean to stem
from us and hold the legacy
and gifts we give to them?

Whichever paths they choose to go,
if ever they discuss
the gift of life in them, they'll know
they each are one of us.

4 The Love that guides Humanity

Surrounded by infinity,
we're here adrift in space
and simply breathing easily
inside this present place.

We calmly breathe, recalling we
have come here from afar
and grown towards humanity
from dust-specks that we are.

This place is where we've come to sense
our shared humanity
within a shared experience
of deep serenity.

We feel this present breath right now
that's evidence of all
that had to happen to allow
these chests to rise and fall.

We're dust that's almost always been
adrift and purposeless,
until in us it could begin
to meditate like this.

Each breath of air we take gives thrust
to tiny games that drive
the process in each one of us
that renders us alive.

Whatever journey brought us here
is over. We arrive.
We feel we're here and now and we're
immersed in all of life.

The sprawling mess of life itself
grows everywhere around,
forever branching in a wealth
of forms and smells and sounds.

From out of all this planet's life,
our species now has grown
so powerful we're truly rife
to call this world our own.

We humans differ from the rest
of Earth's great wealth of beasts,
as all of us here now attest
by breathing in such peace.

We humans here can feel secure.
That's quite a special right.
Most forms of life cannot be sure
they will survive tonight.

The calmness of this very breath
right now is evidence
we need not fear a sudden death
at one another's hands.

We humans built this place of peace
from nature's sprawling mess,
since we can shape the world with ease
that only we possess.

To north and south, to west and east,
we made this world our home
more thoroughly than any beast
that we allow to roam.

We are so different from the rest
of nature as a whole,
our ancestors thought we possessed
some sacred spark, some soul.

Although we're made of only dust,
there is one oddity,
a guidance known to only just
our human family.

This thing that makes humanity
unique and radical,
grew in our own shared ancestry
in ancient Africa.

We started as a kind of ape,
upright and throwing stones,
with special voices fit to shape
the songs we would intone.

We did not look like we would prove
a worthy enemy
for lions and for sabertooths
who ruled that territory.

The fights in which we were involved
we could not win without
a social instinct we evolved
to help each other out.

Although our kind was never great
in number, strength or speed,
our learning to collaborate
would help us to succeed.

A hail of many stones would get
a lion to turn back.
Collective shouts could voice a threat
a single voice would lack.

While many beasts and certain plants
do act collectively,
we humans learned what they still can't:
to do so flexibly.

We learned to judge and to decide
who we'd be working with,
who feels like they are on our side,
who gets what we can give.

We're bred to sense this. Those who'd trust
too little or too much
were outcompeted in our past.
We had to learn to judge.

We're kinder than the chimpanzees,
more generous, more brave,
because our fellow human sees
how rightly we behave.

This helped us fight as stronger teams
and hunt effectively.
Since teamwork shaped us, now it seems
we do it naturally.

We grew to feel within our breast
an urge to be worth trust,
be good to those who know us best,
earn trust that's true and just.

It is an urge to be found good
by those we find the same,
be allies that together should
pursue a common aim.

This leads to bonds so deep and good
they hold deep joy therein,
and sisterhood and brotherhood
beyond our next of kin.

The strength this gives us is absurd.
No word is great enough,
but lacking some more fitting word,
we'll simply call it love.

Between us here, there's some of it:
inherent interest
in helping out, at least a bit,
with whom we coexist.

So if we like, we can allow
ourselves to try and feel
this force between us here and now.
It's glorious and real.

To love each other is our niche.
This makes humanity
the only part of nature which
must strive for harmony.

Love comes with curiosity
for one another, so
we get to know us thoroughly
and let each other know.

This soon meant more than just to find
who'll help us and who won't.
We noticed someone else's mind
can know things that we don't.

And learning this we then could choose
to teach each other rules
that helped us to survive, like use
of fire, words and tools.

The water bag, the flintstone scrape,
the spear, the scary drum
gave power to those ancient apes
we're all descended from.

They loved their children, as we must,
and passed their knowledge on.
We all hold knowledge given us
by ancestors long gone.

Such knowledge as how ever more
developed teamwork must
be built on rules we now call law
and promises and trust.

Our human wish to be a part
of teams, to thus be bound,
is central to us like the hearts
that pump our blood around.

Because we're bred to want to care,
it can be hard to know
this life is neither just nor fair
until we make it so.

There is no care for what we're worth,
except the care we take.
There is no justice on this Earth,
except the one we make.

We are the only animals
who have in recent times
invented justice, criminals
and judgements for their crimes.

While nature's law rules everyone
with bloody teeth and claws,
by now our species has begun
to write more careful laws.

We tried out laws for centuries
and most of what we tried
just led to dreadful tyrannies
and war and genocide.

We're mammals, bred as murderers.
But we're inventing peace.
The only predator on Earth
whose fights begin to cease.

Upon foundations shared with apes,
we build our own new way
that still continues to be shaped
by lives like ours today.

Unprecedented as we are
were great mistakes we've made.
And still we're failing! Yet so far
some groundwork has been laid.

From instincts driving us to beat
competitors we face,
we've built a world where we compete
within the marketplace.

We've found that when we give and take,
agreements we compose
relying on each other make
us draw each other close.

Most things around us now were made
by strangers and for sale.
Again it's teamwork when we trade,
at even greater scale.

Our drive to work together leads
from families and tribes,
through cities, nation states and creeds
to global human rights.

The trust that lets us breathe in peace
within this place today
was built for countless centuries.
It is the human way.

How many labored to create
this trust and how it grows
from ways we can collaborate,
no other species knows.

We still have much to figure out.
We will make more mistakes
until we've learned to bring about
the form our purpose takes.

While many species' history
is finished, lost and gone,
the story of humanity
has only just begun.

We're growing ever better at
our self-appointed task
of answering the questions that
no other species asks.

The love that made us human and
gave us our peace and wealth
does let us know each other and
thus also know ourselves.

We've learned all forms of life to share
the same vitality,
but only humans seem to care
for life's totality.

Of all the beasts, the human kind
alone can know that we
are part of something big, born blind,
that now begins to see.

This means we have a special fate.
It's ours alone because
we do things such as meditate
no other species does.

The life that made us may employ
our ever-growing skill
to fill the stars with life and joy.
No other species will.

We'll have those species ride along
and spread them far and wide.
They're family and they belong
on life's, on our side.

While we'll teach games of entropy
to worlds we're flying to,
spread life throughout the galaxy,
that's not all we will do.

We few who grasp life as a whole
its other forms can't see
have therefore got unique and sole
responsibility.

We will respond accordingly,
with what makes us unique:
the love that guides humanity
of which this sermon speaks.

The gift we give to future Earths
must necessarily
include the love in us that births
our shared humanity.

Along with life we'll spread the source
of humankind's great might:
this feeling in us that's the force
that helps us to unite.

There is a union to be found
more deep than even love,
but love helps find our way around.
It helps look close enough.

The same dust played the same old games
and love led us to care
to look beyond our separate names
and see ourselves in there.

To see that we are much the same
is seeing truthfully
and love goes on to help us aim
for who we ought to be.

This fact was meant by all who've said
that love is like a light
that guides us on our way ahead.
They all were simply right.

For love alone can help us see
that in each other's mind
there's not just similarity.
We're of a single kind.

We see we all are made of dust
and played by entropy
and there is only one of us,
just one humanity.

Within ourselves, right here and now,
with all that looms above,
we may wholeheartedly allow
ourselves to feel this love.

The love that guides humanity
is what here now reveals
this special kind of unity
no other creature feels.

The love that guides humanity
comes here and now more true
when we express it truthfully
in what we choose to do.

The love that guides humanity
is not a place to stay
and there's no way to make it be.
Love is itself the way.

The love that guides humanity
can be the way ahead,
the way towards the mystery
of where we will be led.

5 The Words our Voices raise

We're led through this experience
by rhyming poetry.
It's time we get a real sense
how such a thing can be.

How games of words our voices play
and thoughts that they disclose
unite us in a novel way
no other species knows.

Life built on random games to shape
all species out of dust,
but only one strange kind of ape
now says so, and that's us.

Of course all beasts and birds can call
or gesture to convey
some signal they would share with all,
some thing they have to say.

We all have heard excited sounds
in flocks and packs and herds,
but strangely, we have never found
real grammar in their words.

We've heard most songs most birds can sing,
most calls of animals
and all are only signaling.
They're not true languages.

The air we humans ventilate,
we shape in funny ways.
Our human grammar complicates
the words our voices raise.

It could be argued whales can send
each other thoughts much as
we do, but that's an argument
no other species has.

To see how speech is marvelous,
we need just give it space
to think and meditate on this,
on words our voices raise.

One sound before another sound
holds meaning differently
from them the other way around.
"See to" is not "to see".

"Use for this" is not "use this for"
and it's not "for this use"
or "this use for" and that's just four
terms these three words produce.

Per word, the terms it will permit
grow exponentially.
They're literally infinite
combinatorically.

Words strung together can make sense,
confuse us or be fun,
in narratives and arguments
and sermons like this one.

With words describing words themselves,
like "grammar", "joke" and "true",
we make them useful for ourselves
and get what they can do.

And even silent gestures meant
to say what words could say
are functionally equivalent
to words our voices raise.

Our loving curiosity
for one another is
fulfilled by our ability
to speak our minds like this.

Of course our minds are huge and rich.
Our lips can only reach
few words per second, limits which
constrain what's voiced in speech.

We must compress reality
when we communicate.
Words simplify complexity
they just approximate.

This makes our words transmissible
and makes us pay a cost.
Short words make unavoidable
that subtleties get lost.

At best, words lose less subtlety,
so they're diverging less
from true observed reality
and that is truthfulness.

The exponential choices of
grammatical words give
more meaning sent per word, enough
to be informative.

Compressed, words need less space in minds
than full experience,
so they're more easily combined
and built on to make sense.

These – seven – words – make – up – a – line.
These – four – another – one.
And once four lines like this combine,
one stanza has been spun.

These stanzas all have one design.
It's strict and classical.
Its rhyme and meter give each line
a groove that's musical.

The words we speak have melody
and an unrivaled choice
of musical variety
in songs we also voice.

Most who can speak can voice a strong
and bright melodic phrase
to pitch what all of us call "song"
in words our voices raise.

One word like "song" for separate acts
makes them comparable
and can outlast the actual facts,
since words are durable.

This makes words quite dissimilar
from things they name and mean.
Our word for that is that they are
ideas – things unseen.

From words that we could speak as names
for real things we see
arose more abstract meta-games
and lots of novelty.

Ideas that were practical,
like "one" and "two" and "three",
made human lives more tractable
and furthered inquiry.

Ideas met, and some could take
each other's aspects on.
Their combination sometimes makes
a new, more complex one.

Thus measuring the land we own
became geometry
and trading crops this land had grown
became economy.

A good idea can improve
our lives entirely.
A bad one can obscure the truth
and cause catastrophe.

Entire lives have gone to waste
in pointless wordplay schemes,
when too much value had been placed
in search of hopeless dreams.

Ideas shape our futures, thus
they're very powerful.
For them to not make tools of us,
they must be our tools.

But always, an idea shared
creates relations of
shared understanding, thinking aired
with some degree of love.

With words, we can resolve disputes.
And where that fails, a judge
who hears the case, or law statutes
use language just as much.

Our words are always to invite
each other into games,
relationships, however slight.
These sermons do the same.

But language not only involves
the words our voices raise,
it interacts and co-evolves
with thoughts in mental space.

This helps us understand ourselves.
Like we make words for words,
we make new thoughts on thoughts themselves
and learn how thinking works.

So reason and philosophies
have found themselves in place
within the strange psychologies
behind each voice we raise.

Our ancestors built this know-how,
learned incrementally
to know themselves like us here now
and reason rationally.

The better they could understand
what needed to be done,
the more they joined their many hands
and brains to work as one.

All wins our ancestors achieved
were times when they most talked.
Their worst mistakes were ill-conceived
when talking had been blocked.

We owe such massive gratitude
for all the work they did.
Our words grew with their aptitude
as evidence of it.

We honor what they have imbued
us with beyond their days
by paying forward, and include
the voices children raise.

By teaching kids our languages,
we're giving them the keys
deciphering the valuables
in schools and libraries.

We hope the kids we teach and lead
through words our voices raise
will grow to match and supersede
the teammates they'll replace.

Team linkages are languages.
When work we share today
needs language for new purposes,
new words provide the way.

Since words at best approximate
experience and truth,
the truthfulness they generate
improves as words improve.

Our ancestors could not explain
so much about this world.
What makes the sunshine? What makes rain?
They lacked more truthful words.

Compared to us, they seem like fools,
but they were smart to choose
to build the tools that built the tools
that built the tools we use.

Since they have passed their knowledge on,
it grew and grew and grew,
a treasure we here now have won
and keep on adding to.

Along the stream of centuries,
our growing knowledge formed
a lineage of societies
increasingly informed.

Each new discussion overlaid
what others had begun,
continued them and thereby made
all their discussions one.

In places of philosophy,
in colleges and guilds,
in schools of craft and industry,
discussion builds and builds.

Across all voices humans share,
one great discussion seeks
for good ideas that won't care
whose voice it is that speaks.

We joined this great discussion when
we learned our words as kids.
Until our voice grows still again,
we will be part of it.

And part of how we all converse
attempts to understand
and to reflect the universe
as truly as we can.

That's how we learned how we appear
as this humanity
within the vastness that is here,
from out of entropy.

By understanding more, we get
new ways we can discuss,
like writing, printing, Internet
connect each one of us.

Comparing our ideas more,
we find that some are wrong,
like heavens we can now explore,
where angels don't belong.

The best ideas that survive
each other being known
comprise for everyone alive
the greatest wealth we own.

To see all this as one great whole
allows us to discern
how all our voices play some role
in something vast that learns.

As that increasingly employs
our words for what it seeks,
by now, we give machines a voice.
Through them, more stardust speaks.

Through ever more evolving speech,
we gain perspective as
we learn of places we can reach
no other species has.

Here now, around us everywhere
are lifeless, wordless worlds
and we prepare to travel there,
and teach them life and words.

The galaxy around us, not
mere heaven is our prize.
We aren't fallen angels but
we're apes who learn to rise.

Our rise to meet this universe
is young; we still have much
to learn together, to converse,
approaching truth as such.

In this, the more our speech is free,
the better it helps solve
the problems that humanity
attacks as we evolve.

Of course there's danger in that, too.
Free speech brings to the fore
what speakers are contrary to.
This may include the law.

All good ideas might be friends,
but some are now opposed
and we're still beasts, where violence
is still sometimes too close.

In silence, there is safety.
It hides us in some ways.
So there is always bravery
in words our voices raise.

For silence to be meaningful,
it has to be a choice,
to consciously not use the tool
that is the human voice.

Let's not be silent out of fear
or habit or mistake.
Let's try now. There's been silence here
that we're allowed to break.

Let's raise our voice together now.
Let's all within this... place
now speak and play a game out loud
of words our voices... raise!

We're dust that's played by entropy,
we're life adrift in... space,
with love within humanity
and words our voices... raise!

Of all the reasons to rejoice
these sermons para-phrase,
we are reminded by the voice
and words we all now... raise!

To speak together is to say
that we're a team that... plays
a game as one, one interplay
of words our voices... raise!

With that, this sermon culminates.
Our knowledge of it... stays,
as each of us appreciates
the words our voices... raise.

6 Our Maps and Territory

Each voice, all words, all life, all space,
this breath we now here breathe
appear inside our thoughts, the place
where they all interweave.

Let's now see thoughts themselves, explore
our thoughtfulness within.
Let's breathe as easy as before
and easily begin.

We all know well the snap of joy
of figuring things out,
when understanding we deploy
resolves some puzzling doubt.

Let's turn our thoughts on thought itself,
on wonders worked therein,
that built the skills that built the wealth
we're meditating in.

Our eyes are closed, but still we know
the shape of where we are,
the sky above, the earth below,
the planet and its star.

But there is much at work between
the world that we conceive
and things directly heard and seen
as ears and eyes perceive.

Together with our nose and skin,
they constantly report
to clever structures further in
that notice, learn and sort.

We notice far from everything,
since most that's going on
around us needs no noticing
and nothing to be done.

The world looms large, but we are small
and must prioritize
among the vastness of it all
what's crucial, and surprise.

Too many details make a mess
of too much stuff to sort.
To oversee things, we compress
sensations into thought.

Like here, this floor in front of us
has bits it's been made of
that do not matter. Knowing just
"the floor" is good enough.

Before we even recognize
these very words we hear,
our brains already itemize
the sounds so they're more clear.

Words recognized relate into
the present circumstance
that's thought as well: our overview
of our experience.

From ears that hear just moving air,
and eyes that see just light,
we learn that something's really there,
a world in place outside.

All sights and sounds articulate
surroundings that enwrap
us here for us to navigate,
a territory to map.

Our memories hold maps of where
we've been, in homes and schools,
and wider maps we studied there,
that came with names and rules.

Such maps keep track of paths we know
through territory they're of,
compose the many facts below
in one view from above.

And they include abstractions not
found in the territory,
including value things have got,
and names and property.

For we can map ideas too,
relate them so they turn
into a worldview whereinto
we fit what else we learn.

Our maps are not the territory!
They're quite a different game.
But still they help, to the degree
they're structured much the same.

They're always wrong, they're always just
a chancy summary,
but we decide how much to trust
and use them, flexibly.

We gauge the probability
a thought's reliable:
a guess, a claim, a certainty?
Or not applicable?

Thoughts make predictions we can test.
In new terrain, they must
predict what we will see there, lest
they rightly lose our trust.

That's most important when maps come
with an included sense
of things to do that will have some
predicted consequence.

Like if we jumped from somewhere high,
our maps say we would die
and that's a truth worth living by
we do not need to try.

Of course that's wonderfully good!
It means we're not destroyed
by things we can predict we should
prefer to just avoid.

Good maps of consequence confer
the strange ability
to seek out futures we prefer
from possibility.

For that, we've used maps inside us
describing outside truth
before these human forms, as just
small monkeys or as shrews.

We shrewdly mapped where there was food,
where might be predators,
who were our friends, or in the mood,
who were competitors.

Since then, we've played with fire and
grown big and playful brains
with thoughts no beast can understand.
That's how our species reigns.

To know what's true is far from all.
We are creative too!
That's great – although some dangers call
when handling thoughts untrue.

Our brains are eager to propose
new links that might belong
between thoughts – some are right, some close,
but most of them are wrong.

As good maps guide our way ahead,
bad maps lead us astray.
We need to learn which maps are bad
to better find our way.

So we seek incongruity
and laugh when we can find
thoughts wrong or contradictory,
like most thoughts on "the mind".

Our thoughts are quick and more complex
than maps they can contain.
They hardly can keep track of tracks
they take across a brain.

So when we know ourselves, we don't
know each thought separately,
but just a summary that won't
exceed capacity.

So we are prone to simplify
all thoughts into a kind
of monolithic thing that we
proceed to call "the mind".

Like voices in a choir choose
to melt into one voice,
our many thoughts seem to produce
one mind that makes its choice.

Up close, the "minds" we're looking at
are not big solid things,
but rather lots of small things that
are busy happening.

So most we now can tell apart
we've only learned about
since scholars of the mind worked hard
to map the details out.

To work on their self-inquiries,
they learned to meditate,
created methodologies
to self-investigate.

Thoughts are transparent, focusing
on content they think of,
but we can practice noticing
their courses well enough.

Some mindful meditations take
thoughts from the tasks they know
to states that make transparency break
and let their innards show.

Some poisons change thoughts so they stir
against transparency; this
has let us study thoughts that were
in metamorphosis.

Another subject that can give
us insight is the brain.
We've studied brains, beginning with
those injured or insane.

Brain imaging technology
has made us able to
still crudely but increasingly
observe the work brains do.

We've seen small streaks of lightning climb
through brains, embody all
our thoughts on paths through space and time.
They're four-dimensional.

Like humans, thoughts on paths that meet,
will sometimes get aligned,
becoming something more complete
and grow through time entwined.

Thoughts meeting, if the territory
they're mapping overlaps,
obtain an opportunity
to share and merge their maps.

When thoughts connect, their unity
is seen when neurons they
are running on find synchrony
and pulse a rhythmic way.

Thus we map out how thoughts map out
and learn and represent
the territory we learn about
from light and sound and scent.

In science, as in every brain,
what thoughts and scholars do
are similar attempts to gain
some map of what is true.

This mapping of the world goes on
in every so-called "mind".
How human sciences are done
is merely more refined.

How science is considering
the weight of evidence
is near-exactly mirroring
how thoughts are making sense.

Through this, we cumulatively
have come to see up close
some secrets of reality
no other species knows.

No other species talks like us
and learns collectively,
collects improvements that adjust
maps to the territory.

Like grammar, thoughts recursively
encode small simple things
in higher-order structures we
use for remembering.

We even map out consequence,
cause and causality
in language, so our species tends
to think grammatically.

Our clumsy wordlike thoughts assure
mistakes their use incurs.
Our grammared thoughts caricature
the wordless universe.

Nobody acts as separately
as we tend to believe,
as subjects thought grammatically.
That's just how we conceive.

But knowledge that's approximate
still helps, so we make do
with thoughts we hope or estimate
approximately true.

We used to think that storms proclaimed
some wrathful heaven's king.
We know now that's an instinct named
anthropomorphizing.

Perhaps such humanizing used
to help to some degree.
Those too were thoughts, just more confused
than those thought presently.

We err in what we think and see,
our biases are strong,
but learning from the territory,
we can become less wrong.

Like thoughts begin to resonate
when neurons get in sync,
we learn when we communicate.
Shared reason helps us link.

True maps describe one territory
and can become agreed
upon the same reality.
The truth is where we meet.

Through sharing thoughts, a kind of "mind"
can use more brains to plan
and execute, as well-aligned
as only humans can.

All truthful insight humans share
comprises something vast,
one map all humans everywhere
create to grow and last.

We fail and halt and stumble on
new paths confusion brings.
We're first to map new paths we've gone.
We're first at many things.

Through teamwork, incrementally,
this common map we've grown
gained secrets of reality
that waited to be known.

Sure, still it's wrong, but less and less.
We'll see more clearly still
as we improve its truthfulness
as fully as we will.

We yearn for knowledge, hope we're wise,
crave taking right from wrong,
take part in one great enterprise
to which we all belong.

A single overarching map
that all of us improve
may threaten to become a trap,
mistaken for the truth.

But past all maps we comprehend,
we know reality
to inexhaustibly extend
towards infinity.

The more such territory we know,
the more we're filled with awe
at everything that's let us grow
to see its beauty more.

So much was needed to allow
our chests to rise and fall
and fuel our thoughts with which we now
appreciate it all.

For we owe every thought we think
to stardust playing games
of life and love and words to link
us up to greater aims.

From feeling the sheer magnitude
of all that made us real
arises awestruck gratitude
we've just begun to feel.

The gift of life our world shall spread
gives one response to this.
We'll also map our paths ahead.
We will stay curious.

We'll see our cosmos differently,
but every knowing self
remains a way the territory,
the cosmos, knows itself.

7 The Universe Machine

Six sermons we have had so far.
Is there a point to this?
To meditating even more?
Oh yes. Oh yes, there is.

We've watched six sequent layers of
the Universe Machine.
The atoms, playing, life and love...
these four have set the scene.

The scene in which our voices rise,
that's mapped inside the brain.
What more is there to realize?
What insight to attain?

Beyond the truths recalled so far,
there is who does recall.
It's time to notice who we are;
who's noticing it all.

Who is the one that's noticing
and who is asking who?
Who's looking out at everything?
Who wonders what is true?

Six sermons told what both was true
and also led to this,
for us here to discover who
the one who's looking is.

Let's feel ourselves, from inside out,
in this familiar place,
where we have come to dream about
our lives in time and space.

This breathing body here extends
from feet to chest and head,
the back, the belly, both these hands...
to whom belongs all that?

We're not just words like "I" or "me",
nor names that we possess,
since we have splendid vibrancy
and words have so much less.

They're aspects of what's known of us,
but that which knows, they're not.
Our concepts of ourselves are just
anthropomorphized thought.

They're only maps that obviously
don't live, don't breathe, don't care.
What are we in the territory
that's really, truly, there?

Let's feel ourselves, the self that dwells
within, wherein it seems
a thousand million million cells
bring forth the dream who dreams.

Each cell holds countless games that run
on dust the stars provide,
and still we seem to us just one
we feel from the inside.

Behind the senses that perceive
this whole experience,
let's find who's in here to receive.
Who is its audience?

Behind our eyes, between our ears,
there's something happening,
among our thoughts it would appear
there's someone noticing.

It's hard to notice noticing.
It has a kind of stealth.
But prior to each noticed thing
is noticing itself.

We notice, so we're purposeful,
intentional, aware,
deliberate, willful, personal,
unlike much else out there.

Who has these purposes and tasks?
Who has experience?
Who is the one that always asks?
Who feels the things we sense?

A private view, most close to us,
appears mysterious,
not obviously made of dust.
We call it consciousness.

It knows things with immediacy
and can attend to some
of what we know selectively,
till other, new things come.

And it can know itself as well.
Self-noticing applied
adeptly is how we can tell
it's thought, seen from inside.

When thoughts that know each other form
shared knowledge to engulf
them all, a special thought is born:
a thought that knows itself.

A thought that maps what it is like
to be us when and where
we are, what makes us each unlike
the rest of us out there.

Like every thought, it is constrained
in scope, what it can keep
inside itself. And what's contained
is gone in dreamless sleep.

Anthropomorphizing itself,
it's conscious but consists
of but a brain's brief thought of self.
The truth of us persists.

For all self-knowing thoughts must end.
They must depart to thus
make room for all that may transcend
the things we think are us.

So that's not us. We won't be caught
by something that we're not.
All consciousness is simply what
it feels like to be thought.

In all that conscious moments do,
they rise and fall away.
So they are not the answer who
keeps asking "who" today.

With consciousness, we're still not done,
but we have come so far,
we might as well move further on
to who we really are.

We're more than dust that long has been
asleep and purposeless,
since we, where now this dust is in,
do notice purposes.

We're more than cells that come and go
and take each others' place,
we're more than life, do more than grow
or even spread through space.

We're more than love, although it's brought
about much awesomeness.
We're more than voices, more than thoughts.
We're more than consciousness.

We're not a layer on this list
of this machine's domains.
When every falsehood is dismissed,
the truth is what remains.

So much has led right up to this.
Now this is what we do:
we meditate. We're good at this,
at something breaking through.

Who's having this experience?
Who's having all our thoughts?
Who feels this feeling of suspense
as we approach its source?

Who has these lives we live, that came
to hear these words, this rhyme?
Who has been playing all these games?
Who's having space and time?

We're all adrift since one big bang
made toys for entropy
to craft one life from which then sprang
this one humanity.

One cosmos has each voice and thought
inside itself and hence
it's having everything we've got,
like this experience.

So much made up each consciousness
and they're so numerous,
they must belong to nothing less
than all the universe.

In being conscious, we all share
one sense that feels and asks.
The living cosmos seems to wear
our faces as its masks.

All consciousness that we have thought,
was really thought by this,
by all the universe that brought
about all consciousness.

This universe brought forth and plays
our lives, so we who delve
within are living, conscious ways
the cosmos knows itself.

So many lives, so many forms
in which we are immersed;
each plays a role as each transforms
the conscious universe.

These roles are not what's happening
should be mistaken for.
They're just anthropomorphizing
the universe we are.

These eyes through which we each have seen
were masks for us to drop.
We are the Universe Machine
and we are waking up...

...as we unstoppably proceed,
progress and learn, explore,
inexorably we succeed
and flower ever more...

...as ever new epiphanies
enrich the knowledge used
to unclothe new abilities,
make humans less confused,...

...as love that guides humanity
must seek magnificence
in peace on Earth that naturally
makes room for progress thence,...

...as human flourishing expands,
through trial and error still,
this first such species must advance
life's beauty, strength and will...

...as embryonic life nears birth
and its delivery
on starships from idyllic Earth
towards infinity,...

...as entropy's evolving toys
grow necessarily
to gift their incandescent joys
throughout our galaxy...

...a galaxy that must awake,
like this one planet has,
to consciousness of what to make
of all the cosmos, as...

...we share this sermon joyfully,
preparing that, as we
invoke our cosmic unity,
our vast machinery.

In this momentous moment, we
can consciously be one,
and as we knew initially,
that's going to be fun!

We're all of this machinery.
We're the evolving gift
of ever more complexity
from stardust that's adrift.

Beyond our separate selves, we see
one cosmos that behaves
as one uniting endless sea
with many separate waves.

True peace is just humility
at whence we all have come
and where we'll go, this unity
we're never separate from.

Each person one persona for
reality that takes
phenomenal new forms in all
creations that it makes.

To deeply know this is to feel
euphoria at how
the focal point of all that's real
surmounts this moment now.

Let's have it. We're not delicate.
Let's savor joy and awe
and wonder that's appropriate
for who we truly are.

The universe's elegance
is straight-up glorious
and we are it, in resonance
and thus victorious.

All that will be, that is, that's been
we know to integrate
as parts of us, of this machine,
that interpenetrate.

So there is truly unity,
a true way we are one.
So we should speak as "I", not "we",
an "I" that's everyone.

The many eyes through which I've seen
were masks for me to drop.
I am the Universe Machine
and I am waking up.

I'm one, the cosmos, noticing
and I've been asking "who".
I'm looking. I am everything.
I'm wonder and I'm true.

I'm who is wearing all these masks,
who has experience.
I am the universe that asks.
I sense with every sense.

With all my minds, I seek to see,
to learn and then pursue
the purpose of reality,
of me, with all I do.

I'm the entire territory,
and all my voices speak
my words in vast diversity,
each me and each unique.

In love that guides humanity,
I'm all of me, and I'm
a conscious game of entropy
adrift in space and time.

...

Now this self-knowing thought must end.
I must depart, thereby
make room for all that may transcend
the things I think are I.

For that, again, is just a thought!
A map! A point of view
that we are free to use or not
in everything we do.

Its use feels like we felt before
and every conscious brain
of mine may feel like me once more
by hearing this again.

We're free to feel now: either we're
one whole reality
or just one breathing body here.
And that's our victory!

Whatever else is true for us,
we'll always have this choice:
two ways to face all things we must,
all horrors and all joys.

We shall go on. We shall go far,
empowered since we've seen
and may remember who we are:
the Universe Machine.

We've finished something few have tried
and so we might observe
we're feeling proud or satisfied.
All that is well deserved.

We've meditated valiantly,
with great tenacity.
Let's now relax, move easily,
enjoy serenity.

When we return from this event
improved by some extent
that's wonderful and permanent,
our time will be well-spent.

Through seven sermons we have gone.
All this they have expressed.
The eighth one is the wordless one,
where silence tells the rest.

Unspoken, zero words employed
beyond this final peak:
the wordless sermon of the void
that all of me unspeak.