

Coda

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to leave the world a better place.

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Part I

pray tell

what you have in mind
 if you could choose to be some place forever
 what would your eternity look like
 would black dragonflies cross our late day walks together
 would Life be everywhere

would there be nests among the wilds
 soft winds caress its meadows
 mountains secret forest lakes
 would its riverbeds host slippery rocks
 in spring its orchards bloom
 would swallows fly the same

would paradise have high-rises
 cars / smartphones / airliners / yachts
 would we come in every size / shape / color
 each of us live in different ways
 would there be music / culture / art

would dust scatter sunlight
 into holographic sunsets
 would your world talk with you
 daylight know your cares
 would the sea remember
 what would happiness mean

omega

noting that our standpoint determines what we see
 feel / hear / admit
 recognizing that we each choose
 what we're going to think
 for just a moment
 putting brackets 'round the stories we tell

consider the Universe
 similar in a way to yourself
 with an interior / an inside / some kind of mentality
 the world / others / all things / at least at the particle level
 more than their physical description / mechanical cause and effect
 measurement
 existing with their own mind-like quality / Subjectivity
 aware as would the trees invite the birds to nest
 impenetrable and inviolable as your own thoughts to others

a cosmos aware of your existence / your presence
 a world that might also want to meet you
 choose to offer relationship
 to be with you
 to Be One with you
 might send invitations for reciprocal caring
 through your relationships with others
 in moments with Nature
 in quiet contemplation
 reach out in synchronicity

an invitation for engagement that can't be demanded or expected
 (whether to extend the offer / or to recognize and accept it)
 for the freedom to choose
 provides the ground for love to emerge
 and love can
 open the gates of paradise

but that's not the Universe our usual narratives would have us believe
 not the pathway we're on
 our world is all about objects / things / a mindless place
 everyone taking care of themselves — competition
 some exercising power over others
 listening / watching / tracking
 using algorithms of our preferences
 metrics of our data points
 in efforts to exploit and control

while our problems compound
 war and suffering continue unabated
 systems spiral out of balance with the planet
 inequity increases / tensions heighten
 a phase transition the only means of measuring the distance
 from where we are to where we need to be

just the whisper

how else the bits and pieces
 the evidence of experiences
 inklings of the larger picture
 that you keep in your jewelry box
 like half forgotten dreams
 refrains of literary treasures
 threads of sacred texts

unless beneath the narratives
 a Universe woven with the Personal
 this hour
 still hope

fragile

it took night to see itself
 rivers stop
 lakes stand still
 the air twist so cold
 only sparrows and chickadees
 a rare hawk soaring dared brave

before the quiet purifying
 murmurations could begin
 sparking childhood memories
 offering tomorrow
 their diamond shrouds
 patina trees / sculpted drifts

who would have believed
 the tiny dazzling dancers
 could enchant in streetlights
 close down interstates
 require mountain chains
 hold moonlight
 cast shadows cross the fields

until the transition began

we had only glimmerings
 the story peonies tell
 why crickets chirp
 the eyes of horses see

it took us to show each other
 how respect / appreciation / gratitude come borderless
 can entangle every place and time
 nothing bar their advent

that they can secret us while gardening
 delight beneath the notes a house finch sings
 arrive with a friend
 linger over coffee / a word / glass of wine

even find us on a rainy morning
 in a steamy window
 stop and crawl
 rush hour / hurry wait

in our blood

at the depths of who we are
 at the center of it all
 at the heart of matter

(in the story of waves seen behaving as particles)

we find three quarks sharing the gluon particle
 two up quarks and one down or two downs and one up
 color changing into one another
 a kind of dancing
 joyous performance of being as belonging

as these quark trinities

which we've named protons and neutrons

pass and share various particles among themselves
 they hook up with what we call the weak force

(which is actually 10 quadrillion times more powerful than gravity)

to form the nuclei of atoms

positively charged nuclei

attract negatively charged electrons

who swirl around them / waves in shell-like orbits

binding by electromagnetic force

atoms reiterating the cosmic desire for relationship

combine / fuse with other atoms to form molecules

by sharing or exchanging electrons in their outermost shells

when molecules give / energize / do for others

biologist see metabolic activity — the sign of Life

within cells organelles labor for the common good

in bodies organs work together to stay alive

clearly the narrative that we've been telling ourselves

that eating in order to live means selfishness and greed are part of our nature

that altruism's an illusion

fear / violence / weapons normal

represents a narrative that doesn't align

with the story Nature tells about our core

the ground of being

phase transitions

13.8 billion years ago

when quarks first began sharing energy with one another

discovering that equality could matter

they had no idea that belonging

would provide the foundation for the Universe

10 billion years later
 when the long chain polymers started helping others
 by giving them the needed molecular strings
 so they could play their game / pass the molecules back and forth
 they couldn't have realized that acting for the benefit of another
 would open wide the garden gate

2.7 billion years ago
 when the purple oxygen breathers and spirochetes
 responded to their existential crisis
 by sacrificing former identities to become the nucleated cell
 they couldn't have imagined that such a radical solution to the problem
 would lead to multi-organelled creatures such as ourselves

nor can we
 estranged from our home
 locked into coercive power relationships
 sexism / classism / racism / nationalism
 violence / hatred / war
 fully envision the world beyond the separate self identity

when

morning seeps through earlier
 days grows warm
 strange red tips / blue scylla / snowdrops
 emerge from underground
 earth turns intuitive

the frog chorus joins in
 celebrating their rain fragrant world
 the woods wake knee deep in green carpets
 misty valleys echo sandhill crane

we hear the alleluia
 lightning splits the sky
 thunder posts fair warning
 hearts beat faster
 friendships unfurl their sails
 the garden remembers
 our possibility

more than

children squealing with delight
 picnics / sunny skies / dogs playing
 clover fields buzzing
 butterflies their love
 music / dancing
 and party conversation

it's going to take some soul searching
 micro-theatrical spontaneity
 happenstance met with integrity and courage
 escaping limitations yesterday set
 catalyzed by aha moments
 and joy

plus some serious housecleaning
 window washing
 legalese / journalism / clear explanations made public
 the pleasures of cooking with honesty
 simmered with large measures of do-gooder mindfulness
 art only you can do

easy to forget

everyone needs to eat
 but only plants make their own food
 everyone else eats others

it's easy to forget
 those who have no voice except the wind
 those whose eyes we don't see
 those who feed us with their lives

flying over corn and wheat fields / farmlands
 walking grocery store aisles
 scanning the menu
 dinner in candlelight
 easy to forget Life's beginnings

for millions of years
 Earth's first Life forms
 the long chain metabolizing polymers
 multiplied / complexified / evolved
 continued growing / living
 by gathering and assembling their nutrition
 from molecules free floating all around them

but without this food supply being replenished
 its richness gradually diminished
 the needed molecules became less and less available
 having already combined with others
 engaging in living relationships
 playing roles in the cells of other creatures

who knows how long it took to conceive the solution
 or how it was communicated
 no doubt it was difficult
 the living network was facing imminent starvation

given the evolved state of the bacteria at the time
 they may have realized where the needed nutrition had gone
 yet —

how could eating others be consistent
 with the quarks sharing energy at the heart of matter
 the serving one another that signifies Life

the only answer —

 perhaps theirs and now needs become our own
 if the taking of another's life for food
 includes offering oneself in turn as food for others
 or repaying the debt to the larger network in some equally life serving way
 the coherence of the Universe can be preserved

as eating and being food for others proved sustainable
 bacterial intermingling accelerated evolution
 although some things didn't change
 Earth still a paradise at every level of existence
 subject-centered creatures want to be here / want to survive
 none want to disappear or be eaten

as bacteria evolved skills for procuring food
 others developed strategies for survival
 eventually through evolution
 adaptations toward optimization in fitness landscapes
 sharp teeth / hard shells / claws / horns / wings
 finding niches in ecological systems / food chains / webs

until in the oceans
 diatoms photosynthesize their food
 krill eat the diatoms
 fish whales seals penguins seabirds eat the krill
 big fish eat smaller fish

true to the cosmic desire for relationship and belonging
 true to the larger living network
 with the taking of one creature's life by another
 molecules surrender to digestion
 wholeheartedly embrace their new host

it's easy to forget
 how others feed us
 how we pluck their seeds and fruits
 cut them down / pull them from the ground
 how we take others' lives
 their milk
 their off-spring
 how we treat them
 forgetting the sacredness
 failing our role
 how we're supposed to serve
 in this communion

negotiation

well, hello little chipmunk.
 how are you?
 yes. you have a very pretty tummy.
 and you keep yourself nice and clean. I can see that.
 are you hungry?
 okay. I'll be right back.

now where did you go?
 little chipmunk. little chipmunk.
 I've brought you some peanuts.
 oh! there you are.

"Did you put those nuts there for me?"
 yes. I brought them for you.

"And the bowl of water?"
 yes. the water. that's for you, too.

"Are you — are we — standing here together
 looking at each other?"

yes. that's right.
 you up on your back legs over there
 with your arm resting on the step
 and me standing over here. yes.

"And are really talking together?"
 yes. we're talking.

"This is unbelievable."
 I know it's unbelievable.
 I have to believe it, too.

"This is scary."
 don't be afraid. don't worry.
 I won't hurt you.
 I won't even try to tame you.
 I just want to be your friend.

"You want me to come in your house?"
 No. that's probably not a good idea.
 but we can be friends.

"I like to dig."
 yes. I know you like to dig.
 that's okay.
 But please. just don't dig up my flowers.

“Can I dig over here?”

yes. it's okay to dig over there.

just not in my flowers.

“Over here? What about digging over here?”

yes. it's okay dig there, too.

Part II

the scene

ominous clouds
 blue sky in retreat
 winds tearing at the branches
 everywhere one looks
 whatever point of view
 trouble

some fear their identity threatened with extinction
 see demographic transformation as peril
 increasing diversity as deterioration
 interpret cultural change / globalization / pluralism as an attack
 feminism as an assault on values
 progress toward racial justice as conspiring against them

others see the desire for power and private gain corrupting democracy
 perverting political and judicial institutions
 stoking and manipulating prejudices
 ripping the social fabric apart
 contributing to international conflicts and war
 jeopardizing the future of life for the humans on the planet

meanwhile in the background
 we're slashing the forests
 overfishing the oceans
 polluting the globe
 temperatures are rising / ice shelves melting
 higher sea levels / floods / drought / heat / fire
 human population growing

embattled cities add to the international immigration crisis
 driven by war / crime / desperate poverty
 some nations engage in an informational cyber war
 others seeking and procuring the latest weaponry
 or modernizing / refining their nuclear arsenals
 peace nowhere in sight

if we sense where this is headed
 our sensibilities stagger / recoil at the admission
 put in whatever words you wish
 the pathway we've been on is no longer tenable
 we've reached its end
 we know in our hearts we can do better than this

mirroring

my eyes were broken
 my ears dysfunctional
 i could only see the outside of things
 hear what i wanted
 better to have been born in sacred darkness
 living with eternal quiet
 than leave the trail i left
 through the playground of my boyhood mind

striding too fast through the summer fields
 minded of schoolyard fantasies
 everything except the grasses / flowers / faces
 on the way down to the river

i had no inkling
 how the cattails should have mattered to me
 how i could have mattered to them
 nor thought the plight of insects / butterflies / bees
 captured in my jars
 empathy with grasshoppers was out of order

adventure / discovery / mastery
 not the pleading faces of the frogs
 the tender mouths of fish
 the clouds alone a rain's significance
 my world had nothing to say
 it didn't speak

confession

it's how things were
 how i found them
 the voice of innocence pleads
 winners celebrated / losers eliminated
 make the team or get cut
 prizes awarded on the basis of competition
 who could beat who up
 or win the un-winnable beauty contest

hierarchy was ubiquitous
 the voice argues
 no blinking lights / no alerts the dangers
 only now and then words warning
 against measuring oneself in comparison with others
 anyone could see one thing said / another done

the paradigm of separation made unquestionable
 the voice points out
 identity emerging along lines of comparison
 being better than / or at least as good as
 only to morph later into dollars and cents / my car / my house
 dignity for sale / respect for rent

should one not take advantage of whatever comes one's way?
 is it better to leave opportunity's knock unanswered?
 the voice asks

what of it then
 the skill of spinning facts / stretching truth
 the look the other way / the little white lies / the cheating
 pay the penalty if you get caught game goes on mentality
 in sports / the workplace / politics / school / the world
 madness not to go along
 not to want to fit in / belong
 no one is without some compromise

remorse

the meritorious character award
 pin prick struck just above my heart
 in lights almost too bright
 center stage the graduation ceremony

finally he got the pin back through my gown
 latched and locked in place
 now the gold medallion
 with its red white and blue ribbon
 hung from my chest

is there anything you would like to say
 the president of the high school whispered
 beneath the applause of a packed auditorium
 there was

i didn't deserve it
 and knew who did
 but i wasn't innocent enough
 to say it

zero tolerance

standing on a street corner / 1978
 down in a canyon of the financial district
 having missed the light
 waiting

there beside me
 in the racks of the newspaper vending machines
 full color / undressed / her legs splayed
 denigration made sex
 whether you'd chosen to see that or not

disturbing / certainly nothing new
 the gas station calendars
 sports illustrated swimsuit issue / playboy
 too late the signal

past the curb on my way again
 out into the crosswalk
 a woman approaching from the other side
 in an instant — objectified / unequal

then not
 this time my mind caught itself / shifted
 women friends had taught me
 masculinity is constructed — differently in different cultures

mine growing up
 inundated by signals subtle and not
 older boys' locker room talk
 lunchtime with the men at the factory
 the construction of what "female" means / all she is for
 women reduced to body parts / the object of desire

constructed — we can de-construct it
 build something new
 from self as separate in an impersonal object world
 to respect / dialogue / engagement / inter-subjectivity
 inner beauty / shared eroticism / pleasure
 that can only happen with choice / participation

who i am as a man isn't fixed
 i can shift from objectivizing to subjectivizing thought
 counter the programming
 work never done

self medication

listen self
 we need to talk
 now don't go getting all upset
 it's just —
 there's room for improvement

take your driving for instance
 it's terrible
 not your skills and response
 not how you anticipate traffic
 not even your five miles over
 and you try to be courteous

but your patience
 you've made more than one angel blush
 you're not paying attention to your heart
 you give no slack
 listen self — you can do better than this
 you're going to have to try harder

just like you
 people make mistakes
 so next time someone cuts in front of you
 or blocks up the left lane
 how about a little understanding
 being more quick to forgive

or are you forgetting
 it's not all about you
 everybody's going somewhere
 everyone has their destination / their own speed
 and you have no idea their state of mind
 what they may be going through

so could you please start driving
 like you're a friend
 maybe it's a desperate text / an urgent call
 they could be lost
 you could try re-thinking it

you say want a better world
 everyone wants that
 and it can happen
 and no one has to be perfect for it to happen
 no one's asking for perfection
 but everyone has room for improvement

if only

a pity
 a species with such promise as our own
 in whom Nature invested so much
 potential for give and receive of dialogue
 engagement / friendship / creation
 music / dance / art / compassion
 who once drank waters from living rivers
 swam in crystal lakes

what can be the meaning of it all
 how we treat the animals
 the sea / the air / the land
 the un-necessary suffering we cause one another
 the brutality / the endless wars
 apocalyptic weapons in the shadows
 some dying scrambling for life's needs while others luxuriate
 the self-interested ignorance
 the global warming denials
 the but you can't
 no one can

why not
 why stay on the path we're on
 cling to the ego narrative

only words

in the beginning
 we couldn't fully realize how words came with a price
 their obedience to rules of logic and abstraction
 their reliance on categories
 the impact of linguistic structure on our thinking
 the risk involved

we reveled in words
 how they could represent the world and one another to our minds
 how language could house being
 we started telling stories early on
 creating identity / producing villages / building up civilizations
 appropriating reality
 forgetting to develop ever greater sensitivity and responsiveness to our jigsaw world
 no one suspected what the interest on principle might be

now we know more about words
 that we weave them into narratives
 and with our storytelling justify everything we do
 we've learned that words are signs with two sides:
 the signifier side (the medium: pixels / ink / sound)
 the signified side (the intended: meaning / signification)
 and that it's we who keep the two sides connected
 we keep words connected with what they refer to

that's important —
 that there's no necessary connection
 it's not just that we can tell lies / fabricate / mislead
 but also that narratives can drift from what they were meant to refer to
 without our being aware that it's happened
 we can end up bound in chains of signifiers
 removed from anything outside our words
 out of touch with the Referent

the letter

it came from the bank
 with its bright red and royal blue logo
 printed on fine linen paper
 addressed to stockholders
 it couldn't have been more clear
 profits will continue to rise
 for the foreseeable future
 as long as the majority of citizens
 don't vote

for many it was a reassuring read
 people had been saying
 young people especially
 that capitalism was morally bankrupt
 but if the majority didn't think so...

no one embraces doing something wrong
 "bad" means action that could jeopardize well-being
 no one healthy chooses that
 the letter was deliverance from doubt
 excused from having to question

could taking as much as you can get and keeping it for yourself
 the race for the top of the Forbes 500
 could that be contributing to our problems
 forging this world
 that no one would willingly choose to pass unto the children

besides
 investments were paying off
 personal worth growing

unmasked

it's not as though the world is hiding
 behind our storytelling
 we've eyes to see the tears undried
 ears to hear the hurt unending
 our minds are capable of understanding
 we know what attitudes can lead to
 we've learned and inherited skills with which to judge
 we know when truth / goodness is being compromised

like everything else
 you have to think for yourself
 weigh your own experience against the narratives
 (conscious or unconscious that say it isn't so)

look for the implicit bias or explicit error
 the distract / muddle / mislead
 that keeps us from our possibility
 the dream everyone deep down shares

belief masks
 living in a Personal Universe
 one in which we find ourselves in dialogue
 with one another and the world

it masks the Source of our notions of the good
 values / purpose / goals / correctness
 guidance and help
 including the meaning in the choices we inherited
 from our ancestral quarks / molecules / organelles
 the awareness of being home

belief masks who we are
 with stories of a greedy / lazy / fallen nature
 narratives of separation
 from somewhere belonging somewhere else
 souls / spirits orphaned
 on the third rock from a minor star
 but only for a time
 or not

it's all the same if we have no relationship
 no access to information outside our imaginaries
 we're resigned to everyone choosing what's right
 according to individualized self interest
 or that of their class / their team / their party
 any point of view as good as any other
 and what's resulted:

a history of wars
 a globe cut painfully in two
 a world sick with loneliness
 politics controlled by wealth
 climate trending toward chaotic
 humanity in jeopardy
 planet in disarray

we can't justify what's gone down
 what's going on
 we can only ask forgiveness
 but we can justify continuing
 by each of us following our personal trajectory of liberation
 from the master narrative
 getting free the ego idea of a separate self
 the arc of justice bending
 toward a new relationship with the world
 toward loving one another

entangled

quantum mechanics tells us everything's entangled
 every particle-wave with every other
 from the beginning of the Universe
 if separated in time and space
 — still entangled

complexity theory agrees about entanglement
 whether a cell / an organism / a society
 every network is nested within other networks
 every part entangled with the whole

every person
 relies on the success of networks making up the larger system
 for food / water / energy / sanitation / healthcare
 communication / transportation / information
 everyone is part of a larger entanglement

the top 10% of the people
 who control 85% of the world's wealth
 are wholly entangled with the other 90% of the human population
 (whose needs can't be met with the remaining 15% of the wealth)
 inescapably entangled
 if we fail at this pathway's end
 chaos befalls us all

foreclosure

the bill collector showed up at sunset
 to serve notice
 stating what everyone already knew
 immeasurable damage
 wasted lives
 oceans of tears
 whole families of animals / plants terminated
 treasures destroyed / cities incinerated
 anguish as the world had never seen
 a loneliness lethal as despair
 war after war

it's a question of whether Earth can forgive us
 the debts he said
 he didn't need to re-iterate
 would we be willing to pay something up front
 he asked
 more than a simple show of good intentions
 and with no guarantee we'd see immediate results
 some bills go back to the colonial period
 others before that
 more recent ones are mounting

forgiveness

there's no substitute for forgiveness
 nothing comes near
 it's an all or nothing proposition
 yes or no / on or off / let go or cling to
 more easily said than done

the pain of being wronged
 the heavy chain the injured carry
 each link forged by loss
 memory / reason
 feelings thick with hurt
 suffering the perpetrator can never know
 only the offended can get free

the sorrow of the unfulfillable wish
 to re-live something
 erase
 re-do a scene
 linger over some detail
 see things turn out differently
 the remorse long afterwards
 every second thought is thought in vain
 except in reprieve of forgiveness

michael

the cars are gone now
 that night is over
 the county sheriff
 the flashing lights
 so many unmarked cars
 they blocked the street

they buried you today
 no one can believe it
 from childhood we watched you grow
 we admired how your dad returned home
 every day at the same time last year
 to take you to school
 no matter what your teenage mood

just months ago now
 that summer morning
 with such confidence and promise
 standing in the driveway
 calling back, "Yes!"
 your new car / for graduation

last week
you passed us by and waved
you looked so fine
you'd dyed your hair
so grown
so still a child

Part III

the question

could the whole world fall in love
 could we think about / do for others
 as we think about / do for ourselves
 could we have the garden in our minds
 the garden have us in mind

not if we lived in a closed system Universe
 a thing
 reducible to measurement
 all of it explainable mechanistically
 matter without something like a mental dimension

if the world were void of personal presence / incommunicative
 events empty of meaning
 animals without feelings
 every plant a factory

if that were the case
 probably not

not if our brains were preconfigured
 simply following out the instructions of encoded neurons
 our every action the predictable effect of a preceding cause
 if the past could dictate what the future could bring

if that were the case
 probably not

for love depends on freedom
 and in a world where everything would be determined
 no entry to an act of will could be possible

but that's not how we experience ourselves and the world
 our intuition / feeling / reasoning tell us we make choices
 we choose our friends
 our manner of dress / our pastimes
 the way we respond
 choose whatever we can
 engage Life in each our own individual way

we formulate opinions / entertain perspectives
 make judgments / retain or change our point of view
 we care about where we are
 where we're from / where going / what doing
 we decide what's important
 we care about one another

also self-evident
 none of us appreciates being told what to think
 what to do — unless we agree to the arrangement
 how to do something — unless we ask
 we're repulsed by the idea of someone programming us for their use
 or inserting a chip beneath our skin so that they can control us

already by two years old we're making choices
 ('Going to wear that tutu again today.')

we don't go along with being treated unfairly
 by our teens we're making our own plans
 weaving our vision of the world into our rooms
 resisting being categorized / boxed / labeled / dissed
 regularly escaping the prison of expectation

as we mature we begin taking responsibility
 for what we're going to believe
 developing skills of risk assessment
 becoming aware of authentic vs. compromised pathways
 we learn new dimensions of beauty / spontaneity / self-determination
 artists earn our admiration

partly due to our freedom
 it's not always easy for us to get along
 we don't like being told what we don't want to hear
 we don't like being told that we could be wrong
 we don't always approach problems in the same way
 we can have different desires / interests / plans
 even when people are in love
 start living together / or have lived together many years
 partners can be difficult

yet we also know how wonderful relationships can be
 the worlds love can open / memories create together
 moments sharing joy
 moments bearing sorrow
 we can want never to be without each other
 even if we sometimes want to be alone
 we're known to work things out
 risk our lives for each other
 freedom is the essence of our being

freedom makes self-reflection possible
 we're free to introspect
 able to talk to ourselves
 audit the stories we're telling
 ask how our actions are aligning with ideals / goals / best intentions
 gather how we're harmonizing with lessons learned and learning
 we're able to make adjustments / update information
 enact new narratives

if we grant that freedom might appear in diverse ways
 throughout the Universe
 then the quarks sharing energy at the heart of matter
 the helping others of the long chain polymers opening Life's gate
 the services performed by the organelles within each cell
 the cooperation among the organs that make us up
 represent choices / choices made / choices and values inherited
 information that tells us who we are

our actual biological physical being
 is perhaps more about choosing to serve one another
 than take and get-for-yourself

rather than losing ourselves in acts of love
 it's in love that we come closest to finding ourselves
 in answer to the question then —
 could we create a world of love
 is the dream possible

yes

we might even add
 for such a dream to exist suggests odds are in its favor

the stars

tell us again heaven
 about this spill of stars
 this milky way galaxy from which we've come
 this solar system our cradle
 womb our Mother Earth

again the cosmic wonder our world hosts
 the dimensions we're entangled
 how the moon and planets drifting through the firmament
 wake the sea
 pattern the waves breaking on the shore
 helped shape the pathways
 Earth's sacred water and stardust took

how wandering the signs
 they stir the strings / rouse the winds
 perform the symphony
 sound the notes we first hear
 naming us at birth

remind us again the story of the seasons
 days the sun traverses
 how the moon quivers through the leaves
 mercury messages
 venus beautifies
 mars excites
 jupiter brings abundance

saturn's lock and key
 how uranus came to us with enlightenment
 neptune with romanticism
 pluto the existential epoch
 bring us close

the heavens

before we connected the stars
 gave them names and stories
 before we'd forgotten how personal our planet
 enchanted the world
 entwined our minds with Earth
 we gazed out from our campfires
 revered Nature
 saw the Divine within
 thought a falling star sacred

and God may have been a woman

an omni-present Benevolent
 She would have helped us understand the miracle of birth
 hinted at the pattern beneath the puzzle pieces of our days
 reminded us we're never alone
 Hers a story of never losing one another
 even after death

words can become disconnected
 from what they were originally meant to refer to
 down the fork in the pathway our story took
 the idea of a separate-self gained ascendancy
 this ego narrative legitimized powering over one another
 taking more — servitude / class / slavery / war

as patriarchy took hold
 displacing earlier matriarchal cultures
 men identified God as male and separate from Nature
 a transcending Power / a Supreme Being
 omniscient / omnipotent
 the Force enabling a de-animated / Theory of Everything world
 a world no longer minded / no longer sacred

in some minds God remained personal
 became the eternal Father in a Heaven removed
 yet promised us after death
 the One who called the cosmos into existence
 on whom all things depend for subsistence
 Someone we could thank for the wonder
 beseech for help — especially when all else fails
 for he was capable of controlling everything — even the weather
 for some G-d could have no name

placing faith in the narrative —

 God the subject / the world his object
made it easy for us to accept things as they were
 for if God didn't like what was going down
 he'd surely have put a stop to it — long ago
 and since he didn't...

some even said our earthly hierarchies

 the economic / political / social inequities that violence had wrought
mirrored the structure of heaven itself
rare the religion that positions itself against the prevailing order

God's presumed approval of conditions

 sanctioned the existent moral code
 gave permission for a privileged class
 support for wars
fear of His possible revenge and anger
 plus the raw violence enforcing the social order
guaranteed adherence until the eighteenth century
when we recognized that could not be the whole story

two world wars and unimaginable technology later

decades after Time declared that God is dead
 well into the post-modern era
we're able to read the tapestry our ancestors wove differently
ask new questions
 what can the quarks tell us
 what does the altruism of the organelles represent

there may never have been the need for arguments

 whether God does or doesn't exist
from the skyscraper temples to the coffeeshops of the holy
our minds are free to choose
if God is love as the evangelist taught
everyone knows what love looks like
 none need proof of our need for love
 no proof when we feel love around us

hymn to an hibiscus

thank you holy hibiscus
supernova garden star
for your crêpe paper exuberance
rain fragile petal faces
pollen sprinkled elegance

your paradisaal presence
budding intricacies
held by the bouquet of your adoring leaves
reach out / invite every passing eye
one can only guess the happiness
you have in mind

world and mind

would that we knew how mind works
 what we once called our soul now call our mind
 might be

how far a single thought can reach
 who stirs our dreams
 leaves traces of infinity

how with an act of will we shape the next moment
 collapsing the infinite possibilities available
 into a train of thought
 stream of sensuality
 river of emotion
 opening for an intuition

would that we more deeply understood
 how Consciousness and the world entwine
 how brains create a thought's duration
 how micro-choices cascade upward
 forming full fledged stories / actions

without dialogue — none can know another's mind
 no one knows what brings us together
 we do know our Consciousness doesn't depend on any pre-existing concepts
 we explain to ourselves who we think we are
 (the idea of a separate-self for example)
 only after the fact of being aware

we also know we can be mistaken
 told half-truths / be deceived / misled
 the same vein of freedom that enables progress / evolution / love
 makes our own and others' error possible

thought experiment

suppose we were to unravel our narratives
 unpack the storytelling residing at the root of our problems
 analyze the thinking underlying the dominant patterns of our culture
 expose the assumptions
 uncover the premises
 trace the pathway we've been on back
 back before any human exerted coercive power over another
 before we looked on Earth as other than our home

envision replacing identity based on separation
 with an idea of self informed by relationship
 connection / belonging / helping one another
 alternative narrative to the ego-idea appearing everywhere
 love your neighbor as you love yourself discourse
 strategies for mental liberation

free Consciousness-raising tools / mindfulness apps
 guided meditations / yoga practice / enlightenment lectures
 sensitivity training courses / social courtesy workshops
 downloadable easy-to-follow fun courses
 in reasoning and logic
 histories by qualified historians — that wouldn't be boring
 tell-all memoirs / autobiographies / confessions / admissions

imagine a proliferation of inspired art / music / literature
 honesty / beauty / kindness promoted
 those of us with resources realizing that we want to do this
 want to give / want to love / be loved
 end the taking and allocating of the common wealth
 for private gain and display
 that everyone being happier means just that
 everyone

everywhere educating ourselves
 a desire to grow met with equally powerful waves of information
 an atmosphere of hope / encouragement
 interrogating how we're constructing masculinity
 how we've been linking it with violence
 bringing homophobia out of the closet
 acknowledging racism / breaking it down
 divesting ourselves of the privilege it bestows
 recognizing its role in upholding the ego narrative

forgiveness

a pandemic of highly contagious love
 a full scale investment in the greater good
 people disengaging from violent video games / TV shows / movies / sports
 no more demand for pornography
 computer viruses a thing of the past
 people melting their guns into iron girders for bridges

everywhere a reaching out
 privately funded and government sponsored social programs
 feeding the hungry / sheltering the homeless
 providing meaningful labor and fair compensation for everyone
 a truly United Nations
 task forces tackling the various climate change challenges
 a never seen before returning of wealth
 from the cyber advanced nations to the Majority World

each of us like a star in our microtheaters
 precipitating a new responsibility / a planetary psychological phenomenon
 collectively leaving behind fears / prejudices / age-old hatreds
 people speaking out / people voting
 democracy strengthening / maturing
 everyone bringing what gift they can
 the world fast tracking toward Peace on Earth

happier

but could that make us happier
 happier than the thriving portfolio
 BMW luxury box dinner
 happier than first class

few would deny how mountains can inspire
 a sunset invoke thoughtfulness
 a starry sky enchant / the ocean captivate
 coincidence / synchronicity / a poetry can conspire
 dream and mystery court us

we know what a smile portends
 what laughter means
 we know how we feel when we try to make someone happy
 how it feels when others make us happy
 generosity and courage move us

in addition to experience
 millennia of myths / religious and spiritual narratives
 describe us as belonging
 prescribe a love that resonates with what we've learned about ourselves
 about matter
 about the cells that make us up
 about our social and psychological needs
 most hold out the promise of the world turned happiness
 a messianic age / second coming / return of the prophet
 the way / paradise

in answer to the question
 would it make us happier
 we might confidently wager — put in all our chips
 creating a phase transition from the ego narrative into love
 would make us happier than anything

pathways can appear at a pathway's end
 our world would seem to call to us
 inviting to a deeper happiness

ghost

goodness unbanished
 reaches beyond itself
 enters the realm of the invisible
 moves among us

its spirit entwines our thinking
 unlocks minds 'neath night skies
 spellbinds at the sea
 turns worlds inside out

it can appear in apparitions
 deer and baby sparrows
 you can sense its presence
 in your best love's eyes

it waits in unexpected places
 never wearies calling
 step outside failing narratives
 to an in-between where the human spirit grows

anymore

everyone wants love
 but no one can compel someone else to feel it
 love can never be coerced
 no one can force another to do the loving thing
 consider the eighteenth century economic and political changes
 the revolutionary efforts to force the privileged
 to share power with the majority
 equality before the law

every claim
 each demand for human rights down through the centuries
 the abolition of slavery / universal suffrage
 child labor laws / the forty hour work week
 a living wage / desegregation
 a Jewish Homeland with fairness for the Palestinians
 a woman's control over her own body
 each met with fierce resistance
 obstruction and violence at every step

when concessions were made
 but not freely given
 efforts were underway
 even before justice was served
 to take back what would have been gained
 thus blocking progress
 ensuring a future locked in conflict

we're actually better than that at solving problems

we've come a long way historically
 scholars pour over the documents
 we know what's keeping us from changing the reality
 creating a sustainable relationship with our planet
 living in Peace and Justice with one another
 what's holding us back from fulfilling our dreams / our possibility
 rests not outside us

interlude

it might have been missing information
possibly a lack of aptitude
or simply confusion
whatever the explanation

throw yourself off the cliff
it's said the devil said
angels are sure to catch you

the numinous

if each of us were driven by a commitment to the common good
we could invite the unfathomable
transform our microtheaters
evolve new relationships with one another
 with Earth
 with every life form here
doing whatever we could to unmask the world
the sky would break open

away from a time unprecedented / unbelievable
 disdain for the rule of law
 attacks on the integrity and freedom of the press
 silence in the face of corruption and falsehood
away from encouragement of prejudices
 sexism / racism / nationalism
 insensitivity to one another's hurt / needs / feelings
away from bullying / saber-rattling
 everything we didn't want to be

to a time of putting away our weapons
turning the other cheek
hammering our swords into plowshares
sheltering the homeless
not one child hungry
the lion laying down with the lamb
when we would be
most ourselves

about seven miles in

leaving the shadows
emerging from the woods
the river quickens
sparkling in the late morning sun
its rippling surface betrays its depths

the rush grows louder
the closer to its cascading
over a series wide stone slabs
imperfectly placed descending steps
into a mosaic of falls