

Questioning Poems

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Where Will You Go?

Where will you go when this life ends?
Perhaps you'll try to make amends,
so you can enter heaven's light.
Perhaps your mind, consumed by spite,
will quickly go where life descends.

Perhaps your length of life depends
upon your flesh (per modern trends),
and you will disappear in night.
Where will you go?

Perhaps you have some foreign friends
upon a planet that transcends
all prejudice, and they'll invite
you to be born when times are right
and when their guidance recommends.
Where will you go?

Impermanence

Some mandalas are made of sand.
With patient skill they are designed
and built by monks of steady hand,
of kindly heart and peaceful mind.

The mandalas are then destroyed,
reminding us of how things go
from visible back to the void,
in this, our world of ebb and flow.

Our cities, buildings, streets, and fairs,
relationships and bookshelves vast,
our institutions, posts, and chairs:
This world holds nothing that will last.

Unless our essence travels on,
all that we've learned will soon be gone.

The Agony of Doubt

This poem was written from the imagined point of view of Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864-1936), the author of The Tragic Sense of Life (1912) and The Agony of Christianity (1931).

My tragic sense is amplified
by all the books that I have read.
I feel I'm torn apart inside.

The Spain in which I now reside
has taught me faith, but I am led
to conflict that is amplified.

Will I be lost or still abide?
Will I exist when I am dead?
I feel I'm torn apart inside.

My faith should stem the flowing tide
of doubts within my troubled head,
but all my doubts are amplified.

Philosophy begins to chide:
It says that I have been misled.
I feel I'm torn apart inside.

I have these doubts I cannot hide.
I toss and turn upon my bed.
My tragic sense is amplified.
I feel I'm torn apart inside.

What Is Death?

All the world's a stage
—Shakespeare

When will Director call a cut?
Against our exits we have fought.
Is death an end, a start, or what?

It's like a kick against the gut
when thinking we might be forgot,
when our Director calls a cut.

Though life is falling in a rut,
another scene cannot be bought.
Is death an end, a start, or what?

Though born in mansion or in hut,
though riding rowboat or a yacht,
we can't avoid Director's cut.

We'd keep the action going, but
within a script we have been caught.
Is death an end, a start, or what?

The play will end, the book will shut—
although we'd act an endless plot—
when our Director calls a cut.
Is death an end, a start, or what?

What Is the Basis of Reality?

Democritus said atoms and the void
account for all the things that can exist.
The atoms aren't created or destroyed—
they're countless and eternally persist.
Do only atoms and the void abound?
Do atoms or the atman form the ground?

The atman is the self in Hindu thought.
This self, or soul, is everywhere the same.
Although within illusions it is caught,
the soul's from God and is an endless flame.
Is soul the only living thing around?
Do atoms or the atman form the ground?

If atoms are the basis of all life,
then how did our awareness come to be?
If atoms join and part, in endless strife,
do minds exist without security?
Do atoms organize and then confound?
Do atoms or the atman form the ground?

If atman is the ground of all things real,
then why did it descend into this mess?
If atoms make us act and think and feel,
then we are merely puppets in duress.
In atoms is the atman gagged and bound?
Do atoms or the atman form the ground?

Perhaps we need to learn to overcome
inveterate attraction to this sphere.
Perhaps these atoms serve to make us dumb,
but when we wake, real knowledge will appear.
Will then the blazing light of truth surround?
Do atoms or the atman form the ground?