

Track 75: Canto Thirteen full

At last there came a bare indifferent sky
Where Silence listened to the cosmic Voice,
But answered nothing to a million calls;
The soul's endless question met with no response.

5 An abrupt conclusion ended eager hopes,
A deep cessation in a mighty calm,
A finis-line on the last page of thought
And a margin and a blank of wordless peace.
There paused the climbing hierarchy of worlds.

10 He stood on a wide arc of summit Space
Alone with an enormous Self of Mind
Which held all life in a corner of its vasts.
Omnipotent, immobile and aloof,
In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:

15 It gave no heed to the paeans of victory,
It was indifferent to its own defeats,
It heard the cry of grief and made no sign;
Impartial fell its gaze on evil and good,
It saw destruction come and did not move.

20 An equal Cause of things, a lonely Seer
And Master of its multitude of forms,
It acted not but bore all thoughts and deeds,
The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts
Consenting to the movements of her Force.

25 His mind reflected this vast quietism.
This witness hush is the Thinker's secret base:
Hidden in silent depths the word is formed,
From hidden silences the act is born
Into the voiceful mind, the labouring world;

30 In secrecy wraps the seed the Eternal sows
Silence, the mystic birthplace of the soul.
In God's supreme withdrawn and timeless hush
A seeing Self and potent Energy met;
The Silence knew itself and thought took form:

35 Self-made from the dual power creation rose.
In the still self he lived and it in him;
Its mute immemorable listening depths,
Its vastness and its stillness were his own;
One being with it he grew wide, powerful, free.

40 Apart, unbound, he looked on all things done.
As one who builds his own imagined scenes
And loses not himself in what he sees,
Spectator of a drama self-conceived,
He looked on the world and watched its motive thoughts

45 With the burden of luminous prophecy in their eyes,
Its forces with their feet of wind and fire
Arisen from the dumbness in his soul.
All now he seemed to understand and know;
Desire came not nor any gust of will,

50 The great perturbed inquirer lost his task;
Nothing was asked nor wanted any more.

There he could stay, the Self, the Silence won:
His soul had peace, it knew the cosmic Whole.

Then suddenly a luminous finger fell
55 On all things seen or touched or heard or felt
And showed his mind that nothing could be known;
That must be reached from which all knowledge comes.

The sceptic Ray disrupted all that seems
And smote at the very roots of thought and sense.

60 In a universe of Nescience they have grown,
Aspiring towards a superconscient Sun,
Playing in shine and rain from heavenlier skies
They never can win however high their reach
Or overpass however keen their probe.

65 A doubt corroded even the means to think,
Distrust was thrown upon Mind's instruments;
All that it takes for reality's shining coin,
Proved fact, fixed inference, deduction clear,
Firm theory, assured significance,

70 Appeared as frauds upon Time's credit bank
Or assets valueless in Truth's treasury.

An Ignorance on an uneasy throne
Travestied with a fortuitous sovereignty
A figure of knowledge garbed in dubious words

75 And tinsel thought-forms brightly inadequate.

A labourer in the dark dazzled by half-light,
What it knew was an image in a broken glass,
What it saw was real but its sight untrue.

All the ideas in its vast repertory

80 Were like the mutterings of a transient cloud
That spent itself in sound and left no trace.

A frail house hanging in uncertain air,
The thin ingenious web round which it moves,
Put out awhile on the tree of the universe,

85 And gathered up into itself again,
Was only a trap to catch life's insect food,
Winged thoughts that flutter fragile in brief light
But dead, once captured in fixed forms of mind,
Aims puny but looming large in man's small scale,

90 Flickers of imagination's brilliant gauze
And cobweb-wrapped beliefs alive no more.

The magic hut of built-up certitudes
Made out of glittering dust and bright moonshine
In which it shrines its image of the Real,

95 Collapsed into the Nescience whence it rose.
Only a gleam was there of symbol facts
That shroud the mystery lurking in their glow,
And falsehoods based on hidden realities
By which they live until they fall from Time.

100 Our mind is a house haunted by the slain past,
Ideas soon mummified, ghosts of old truths,
God's spontaneities tied with formal strings
And packed into drawers of reason's trim bureau,
A grave of great lost opportunities,

105 Or an office for misuse of soul and life
And all the waste man makes of heaven's gifts

And all his squanderings of Nature's store,
A stage for the comedy of Ignorance.
The world seemed a long aeonic failure's scene:
110 All sterile grew, no base was left secure.
Assailed by the edge of the convicting beam
The builder Reason lost her confidence
In the successful sleight and turn of thought
That makes the soul the prisoner of a phrase.
115 Its highest wisdom was a brilliant guess,
Its mighty structured science of the worlds
A passing light on being's surfaces.
There was nothing there but a schema drawn by sense,
A substitute for eternal mysteries,
120 A scrawl figure of reality, a plan
And elevation by the architect Word
Imposed upon the semblances of Time.
Existence' self was shadowed by a doubt;
Almost it seemed a lotus-leaf afloat
125 On a nude pool of cosmic Nothingness.
This great spectator and creator Mind
Was only some half-seeing's delegate,
A veil that hung between the soul and Light,
An idol, not the living body of God.
130 Even the still spirit that looks upon its works
Was some pale front of the Unknowable;
A shadow seemed the wide and witness Self,
Its liberation and immobile calm
A void recoil of being from Time-made things,
135 Not the self-vision of Eternity.
Deep peace was there, but not the nameless Force:
Our sweet and mighty Mother was not there
Who gathers to her bosom her children's lives,
Her clasp that takes the world into her arms
140 In the fathomless rapture of the Infinite,
The Bliss that is creation's splendid grain
Or the white passion of God-ecstasy
That laughs in the blaze of the boundless heart of Love.
A greater Spirit than the Self of Mind
145 Must answer to the questioning of his soul.
For here was no firm clue and no sure road;
High-climbing pathways ceased in the unknown;
An artist Sight constructed the Beyond
In contrary patterns and conflicting hues;
150 A part-experience fragmented the Whole.
He looked above, but all was blank and still:
A sapphire firmament of abstract Thought
Escaped into a formless Vacancy.
He looked below, but all was dark and mute.
155 A noise was heard, between, of thought and prayer,
A strife, a labour without end or pause;
A vain and ignorant seeking raised its voice.
A rumour and a movement and a call,
A foaming mass, a cry innumerable
160 Rolled ever upon the ocean surge of Life

Along the coasts of mortal Ignorance.
On its unstable and enormous breast
Beings and forces, forms, ideas like waves
Jostled for figure and supremacy,
165 And rose and sank and rose again in Time;
And at the bottom of the sleepless stir,
A Nothingness parent of the struggling worlds,
A huge creator Death, a mystic Void,
170 For ever sustaining the irrational cry,
For ever excluding the supernal Word,
Motionless, refusing question and response,
Reposed beneath the voices and the march
The dim Inconscient's dumb incertitude.
Two firmaments of darkness and of light
175 Opposed their limits to the spirit's walk;
It moved veiled in from Self's infinity
In a world of beings and momentary events
Where all must die to live and live to die.
Immortal by renewed mortality,
180 It wandered in the spiral of its acts
Or ran around the cycles of its thought,
Yet was no more than its original self
And knew no more than when it first began.
To be was a prison, extinction the escape.

End of Canto Thirteen