

Track 68: Section 3c, lines 501 to 657

An inconclusive play is Reason's toil.
Each strong idea can use her as its tool;
Accepting every brief she pleads her case.
Open to every thought, she cannot know.

505 The eternal Advocate seated as judge
Armours in logic's invulnerable mail
A thousand combatants for Truth's veiled throne
And sets on a high horse-back of argument
To tilt for ever with a wordy lance

510 In a mock tournament where none can win.
Assaying thought's values with her rigid tests
Balanced she sits on wide and empty air,
Aloof and pure in her impartial poise.

Absolute her judgments seem but none is sure;
515 Time cancels all her verdicts in appeal.
Although like sunbeams to our glow-worm mind
Her knowledge feigns to fall from a clear heaven,
Its rays are a lantern's lustres in the Night;
She throws a glittering robe on Ignorance.

520 But now is lost her ancient sovereign claim
To rule mind's high realm in her absolute right,
Bind thought with logic's forged infallible chain
Or see truth nude in a bright abstract haze.

A master and slave of stark phenomenon,
525 She travels on the roads of erring sight
Or looks upon a set mechanical world
Constructed for her by her instruments.

A bullock yoked in the cart of proven fact,
She drags huge knowledge-bales through Matter's dust

530 To reach utility's immense bazaar.
Apprentice she has grown to her old drudge;
An aided sense is her seeking's arbiter.
This now she uses as the assayer's stone.

As if she knew not facts are husks of truth,
535 The husks she keeps, the kernel throws aside.
An ancient wisdom fades into the past,
The ages' faith becomes an idle tale,
God passes out of the awakened thought,
An old discarded dream needed no more:

540 Only she seeks mechanic Nature's keys.
Interpreting stone-laws inevitable
She digs into Matter's hard concealing soil,
To unearth the processes of all things done.

A loaded huge self-worked machine appears
545 To her eye's eager and admiring stare,
An intricate and meaningless enginery
Of ordered fateful and unfailing Chance:
Ingenious and meticulous and minute,
Its brute unconscious accurate device

550 Unrolls an unerring march, maps a sure road;
It plans without thinking, acts without a will,
A million purposes serves with purpose none

And builds a rational world without a mind.
It has no mover, no maker, no idea:
555 Its vast self-action toils without a cause;
A lifeless Energy irresistibly driven,
Death's head on the body of Necessity,
Engenders life and fathers consciousness,
Then wonders why all was and whence it came.

560 Our thoughts are parts of the immense machine,
Our ponderings but a freak of Matter's law,
The mystic's lore was a fancy or a blind;
Of soul or spirit we have now no need:
Matter is the admirable Reality,
565 The patent unescapable miracle,
The hard truth of things, simple, eternal, sole.

A suicidal rash expenditure
Creating the world by a mystery of self-loss
Has poured its scattered works on empty Space;
570 Late shall the self-disintegrating Force
Contract the immense expansion it has made:
Then ends this mighty and unmeaning toil,
The Void is left bare, vacant as before.

Thus vindicated, crowned, the grand new Thought
575 Explained the world and mastered all its laws,
Touched the dumb roots, woke veiled tremendous powers;
It bound to service the unconscious djinns
That sleep unused in Matter's ignorant trance.
All was precise, rigid, indubitable.

580 But when on Matter's rock of ages based
A whole stood up firm and clear-cut and safe,
All staggered back into a sea of doubt;
This solid scheme melted in endless flux:
She had met the formless Power inventor of forms;
585 Suddenly she stumbled upon things unseen:
A lightning from the undiscovered Truth
Startled her eyes with its perplexing glare
And dug a gulf between the Real and Known
Till all her knowledge seemed an ignorance.

590 Once more the world was made a wonder-web,
A magic's process in a magical space,
An unintelligible miracle's depths
Whose source is lost in the Ineffable.
Once more we face the blank Unknowable.

595 In a crash of values, in a huge doom-crack,
In the sputter and scatter of her breaking work
She lost her clear conserved constructed world.
A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance
In Energy's stupendous tripping whirl:

600 A ceaseless motion in the unbounded Void
Invented forms without a thought or aim:
Necessity and Cause were shapeless ghosts;
Matter was an incident in being's flow,
Law but a clock-work habit of blind force.

605 Ideals, ethics, systems had no base
And soon collapsed or without sanction lived;

All grew a chaos, a heave and clash and strife.
Ideas warring and fierce leaped upon life;
A hard compression held down anarchy
610 And liberty was only a phantom's name:
Creation and destruction waltzed inarmed
On the bosom of a torn and quaking earth;
All reeled into a world of Kali's dance.

Thus tumbled, sinking, sprawling in the Void,
615 Clutching for props, a soil on which to stand,
She only saw a thin atomic Vast,
The rare-point sparse substratum universe
On which floats a solid world's phenomenal face.

Alone a process of events was there
620 And Nature's plastic and protean change
And, strong by death to slay or to create,
The riven invisible atom's omnipotent force.

One chance remained that here might be a power
To liberate man from the old inadequate means
625 And leave him sovereign of the earthly scene.

For Reason then might grasp the original Force
To drive her car upon the roads of Time.

All then might serve the need of the thinking race,
An absolute State found order's absolute,
630 To a standardised perfection cut all things,
In society build a just exact machine.

Then science and reason careless of the soul
Could iron out a tranquil uniform world,
Aeonic seekings glut with outward truths
635 And a single-patterned thinking force on mind,
Inflicting Matter's logic on Spirit's dreams
A reasonable animal make of man
And a symmetrical fabric of his life.

This would be Nature's peak on an obscure globe,
640 The grand result of the long ages' toil,
Earth's evolution crowned, her mission done.

So might it be if the spirit fell asleep;
Man then might rest content and live in peace,
Master of Nature who once her bondsman worked,
645 The world's disorder hardening into Law,—
If Life's dire heart arose not in revolt,
If God within could find no greater plan.

But many-visaged is the cosmic Soul;
A touch can alter the fixed front of Fate.

650 A sudden turn can come, a road appear.
A greater Mind may see a greater Truth,
Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.

Ascending from the soil where creep our days,
655 Earth's consciousness may marry with the Sun,
Our mortal life ride on the spirit's wings,
Our finite thoughts commune with the Infinite.