

Poli Sci

Yesterday I broke my favorite cup
— cobalt blue with gold letters — a gift
from visiting Antioch scholars-in-the-making,
intelligent young gentlemen and ladies
dressed in the latest undress mode, come
to hear, for college credit, about the border.

In a different time and place I
was a lot like them, at home in my native state
with credentials that didn't have to be seen
to be believed, where reputation didn't
so much go before as draw people there
looking for answers to one it or another

as I but for circumstance would have been drawn
to learn the latest math and physical science,
enrolled in a work-study curriculum
leading to degrees in astrophysics
I'd been trying to get myself ready for
since before puberty and Sputnik

reading up on relativity
light bending around dense bodies
saddle-shaped universes of negative space
endless possibilities of time
defined by mathematical constructions
limited only by imagination:

lines on a blackboard, say, or on a page
describing how things work in the real world
where institutional endowments employ
celestial mechanics to figure out the angles
of attack and repose objects assume
under hypothetical conditions

of so many Gs with such and such a payload
a list, say, of known properties
in relation to one another, fixing
with pure science what if it ain't broke now
is, according to certain theses
having currency in some circles,

if not given serious attention,

bound to become a problem of hemispheric proportions where imaginary lines can't be crossed without showing people holding guns a card encoded in symbols known at checkpoints everywhere

as a reduction of planetary motion to laws expressed through physical constants in a field perturbed by x-forces applied in series to points Y through Z in order to see how long what some call surplus energy can be shunted off

to isolated storage banks before (given total diversity of the species in question, adjacent possibles multiplying themselves exponentially, a phase transition of autocatalytic sets) explosive reactions occur in real time.

In the hour or so we had we spoke in relatively concrete terms of pressures economic and atmospheric, wastes human and industrial, fair versus free in the universal abstract that treats labor as a commodity.