

KATABASIS

I remember
teaching Aristotle

and slogging through the definitions,
distinctions, technicalities—

inevitable if one
is to honestly teach this stuff.

The students, drowsy and
unimpressed,

daydreaming of their escape
into brighter pastures,

to roam with the animals
Aristotle was coldly anatomizing.

But requirements
forced their patience, so that

they eventually saw it all
precisely come together.

The pieces of the puzzle finally
put in place, its image revealed—

a chalk-drawn picture of the
cosmos on the board.

The hylomorphic beings
all ordered into a

heavenly rotation,
a cosmic dance,

all in service
of pure form,

immaterial
substance,

consciousness
itself,

eternal light
of which each harbors

a mere flickering—
a star seen off from thousands

of miles,
kindled and awakened only

with the curious intellect
that sees gods in all things,

thereby approximating
the supreme thought thinking itself,

noesis
noeseos noesis.

Immortality self-illuminating,
an immortality

resting in each of us, waiting
to be awakened within our mortal shell.

I saw the students
then blow the dust

off the series of distinctions,
witness them newly glow—

eyes wide with glee,
dumbstruck with wonder.

The new light
dazzling in their mind

for one student served as proof,
as perfect demonstration.

I looked into their whirling mind
and blazing heart at that singular moment,

and glimpsed the oft-forgotten
origin of philosophy.

And yet for me—
though I dare not tell

the students, not now at least—
the distinctions still felt

as chiseled ice,
waiting to melt

into a pool atop a hillock,
awaiting its riverine descent,

over shifting rocks
and sandy riverbeds,

along the shores of which
children laugh, playing mindless games.