

## If Not in Years, Then How

might we set out anew to measure all  
of the almost-everythings  
we've been calling lifetimes?

Or does it really matter?

Do the ones who ponder stars  
or consider trips to Mars –  
and all that space-time of the universe,  
the task of comprehending relativity –  
better know the worth of life  
or suffer somewhat less of strife?

Or does only “social” matter  
and the meaning of some genre  
that's extracted from whatever  
might remind us of forever?

Is it that we comprehend  
or just don't contemplate the end?  
Is there meaning that's the measure  
of our time and idle chatter?

Or is it just the now of loving?  
Maybe that, the mereness of loving,  
those instants in succession  
when we realize affection.

But do meaningfuls accumulate,  
or only opposites of loss take place?

And what might anything become  
Should we choose to name it wisdom?  
How shall we recognize the trace

of what we seek to cultivate?  
Must we toy with all those siren-ate  
promises of futures we deceive  
ourselves completely to believe?

Is it what we really do with  
all existing options, or just  
how we choose to use  
the ones we choose?  
Is it how we feel each moment,  
or is the final one the only one  
to count? Or is no answer to be  
taken seriously?

Should we read again Bill Cullen  
Bryant's suggestion that we wrap ourselves  
in draperies of couch and lie  
down to pleasant dreams?

Is there reason for expecting  
either smile or frown  
when our trophies all at last  
we must lay down?

Is it possible that life, except for genes,  
is truly naught but empty dreams?  
Or is that solely for the  
errant souls that slumber?

Can we live by Longfellow's word  
that the grave does not become the  
goal of the soul, identify some counter  
proposition to that dusty destination?

Should we think of what we'll wish  
for at the point of our demise  
and then strive to make it ours  
for every moment of our lives?

Need we bring ourselves to pain  
so as never to complain  
of anxiety at all?  
Could it possibly be better

not to live a life of too intense  
attachment so that what we'll lose  
will not encourage us to grieve  
and seek prolonging of that eve?

Or is this instead the most profound  
of perversions? And, if such, as well  
a clue, for the mental life of being  
is the future always seeing

it is difficult to bask upon the past.  
Can we realize fulfillment at each moment  
of our living till we abandon the delusion  
that would bare its dread conclusion?

To purposely ignore its functions merely  
near the end, indulging in increasing  
retrospect, though not too strongly  
or too soon. If we succeed in self-deceit,

then life beyond our death  
can lie before us in predictions  
of the lives of those we love. Is bringing  
these together, then, the key,

cultivating retrospection pleasantly,  
the harmony of sociality,  
basking in the happiness of friends  
destined to continue past our ends?

Or is it just to seek the game's best prize  
So skillfully in ways sensed to be timely,  
changing only that which surely seems most wise,  
attenuating all in one ascendant final glory?