

TOWARD WISDOM

for Copthorne Macdonald's wisdompage.com

I

We are a dangerous experiment
The Universe has curiously wrought
To see if something so innately bent
Can finally and happily be taught
Through perilous trial and error to grow wise,
Which means to go beyond the cruelty
And conflict of our past and realize
Compassionate rapport and harmony.
Like "sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh,"
Our kind has yet to master harmony,
And what might be high drama looks like farce
Or worse—a universal tragedy.
 But still we may succeed and happily mend,
 If we take wisdom as our highest end.

II

How will we know that humans have grown wise?
When *Homo sapiens sapiens* realize
What is implicit in our hopeful name
And can our clear benevolence proclaim.

When humankind at last grows truly kind,
The happy end for which we seem designed,
And all our wicked waywardness is mended,
We'll reach that state for which we are intended.

For what is wisdom but to realize
The double prudence that our name implies?

III

With care, compassion, kind solicitude
Is lasting human happiness pursued;

There is no other way to realize
What sages seek: the art of being wise,

For wisdom's not a cogitative art
As much as it's a habit of your heart,

And there's no earthly purpose that's above
Your tendering and garnering of love.

THE VIRTUES OF THE WISE

If you'd be wise, then you would realize
Those virtues that a prudent person owns:
Compassion that secures our human ties,
Humility that modulates our tones,

The peacefulness of equanimity,
Wonder, joy, humility, insight,
Sound judgment, vision, self-sufficiency,
That generosity which breeds delight,

A positive and up-beat attitude,
Discernment to distinguish what is sound,

A disposition to show gratitude,
An oriented sense of where you're bound.

There are yet further virtues to attain,
But these should do to keep you safe and sane.

—Alan Nordstrom