

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Nature and life have secrets yielding to those
With patience to unravel their wondrous lore,
Hidden beneath the strata of the rock
Or flung in outer space or left with knock
Intuition taps upon a poet's door —
Laden with marvel to each one who knows.

So, let the scientist discover ways
In atoms or nebulae where our thoughts may go,
And let technicians build that the human race
May rest from labors like proud Hercules;
And let the scholars gather knowledge — for these too
Express our love for life for its truth and grace.

Here in these halls of learning, we now pause
To dedicate ourselves — to what?
To liberty bred of enlightenment;
To duty that we labor without stint
Till the henchmen of the dark be put to rout
And ignorance be banished with all lives.

Refuge of tyrants, whether in Church or State
None need unquestioning, accept authority,
For the youths shall learn to discriminate
Between the light and dark and shades of gray,
And none shall force them, "This is so," the way
Leading to Buchenwald and Cavalry.

Train them to keep faith with their mind,
Hence, with themselves, for only these can be
True free-men. Man dependent make the slaves
Who grovel from the cradle to the grave,
The hewers of a mighty destiny
Must first stand free — all else is false or blind.

If there be martyrs — as there must be —
Let them be martyrs in the urge to find
The remedies to draggled poverty,
Martyrs to art, to music, poverty,
And to all that may be used to feed men or bind
Men's wounds and glorify humanity.

Thus, on this planet men may fulfill a trust:
To live in fullness, as the flowers do
That bloom and ask not for eternity,
A life freed from cramped fear and vanity
But which may yet be dazzling in its hue
And wafting perfume before it droops to dust.

—Ricardo Demetillo