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For Robert Grosseteste

Robert Bringhurst

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The abrasive: light. The particles embedded in the darkness grind the lens. And immaculate light left miraculous rings in the Bishop of Lincoln's retorts and beakers one autumn, when he added alkaline light to black acid, yielding something that seemed only a new allotrope of nothing.

An infinity of nothings is all somethings, said the Bishop. These calculations . . . (Oxford was livelier in his day, and his logic quicker than that currently in fashion.)

Light distils, into interminable decimals. Light condenses into chemicals. Light solidifies into instantaneous darkness—which may sublimate under the interstellar emptiness or the right formulation of words. Light extends, carrying with it matter and form, into the ultimate circumference of its sphere, where matter lacks all potential of further impression, due to its physical condition: utter rarefaction.
Lux: the corporeal, spherical, fully elastic crystal.
Lumen: the emanation, a spiritual body or, if you prefer, a corporeal spirit, beyond which one finds the reflections of light against light, the refractions of light in illumination, and the darkness on the heath this day in Lincoln.

* Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168-1253), magister scholium of the University of Oxford from c.1215 to 1221 and Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 until his death, is the author of a number of works in Latin and in 13th-century English. He began to learn Greek at the age of 60 and made several translations from Aristotle in his later years. His essay De Luce, a treatise on the corporeal nature of light with an aside on transfinite numbers, has attracted the attention of several authors.