What does beauty mean, what?
Ask a blind man. He guards the secret
like that guardian in Paradise
who guards the cleaness of souls.
He feels beauty with his skin,
with the nerve-endings of his fingertips
transmitting, as if through the finest wires,
to his sight-deprived brain.

He can appreciate beauty
painted with the colors of night,
when every rustle and tremor
tenses the vessels like strings
on an as-yet-unplayed instrument,
to hear how the quiet, virginal melody
gets born.

Ask a blind man
where the road to beauty is,
and follow him. Become a shadow
and tap the earth along with his cane—
his eyelids and his pupils—
and he’ll bring you there,
himself unaware
that he is already near the goal
and it’s just one more step to reach it.

And you, the seeing person with eyes—
don’t stop him,
and from the very peak of the mountain
let him take his last step,
for as he is falling
he’ll first take that last step up
to his longed-for goal: beauty,
to which he has blundered in the darkness,
holding onto the thread of a moonbeam.

(Translation by B. Zumoff.)