



Behold how from that point goes branching off
The oblique circle, which conveys the planets,
To satisfy the world that calls upon them;
And if their pathway were not thus inflected,
Much virtue in the heavens would be in vain,
And almost every power below here dead.

—Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, X 13–18,
(translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)