How to Imagine a One-dimensional Object

start with a three-dimensional object

we will use the simplest of all, a sphere

a beach ball, a baseball, my cousin’s head

the sun is shining, the sand is hot, the water is cool

we are playing with the sphere in the joy of summer

i cast it high, my cousin’s head smiling

and it passes in an arc between us

causing a shadow to fall on a strip of flat sand

because his head is perfectly round

the shadow it casts in the sunlight of high noon

is also perfectly round

but because it is the absence of the light

that showers us with its blessings

it is flat, and of no thickness

it is a nothing, yet is there

visible for all to see

freeze the moment now

my cousin’s head hovers in mid-air

and nothing moves

the sun remains perfectly still

but because you are special

you alone may transcend the rules of the universe

the shadow is interesting

you wave your hand between head and shadow

the shadow changes

it takes on a new shape, although you have not touched

the now still-head in the air above you

now you, wizard that you are

get to perform a piece of great magic

the shadow is of no thickness

not even the thickness of a particle of light

it is made of what is not there

you carefully use your shadow

as not-there as the other

to slide under the edge of the other shadow

and lift the nothing from the sand

holding it in the nothing of the shadow of your hands

you fold it in half

it is of no thickness, so the folded shadow

is also of no thickness

the folded edge is perfectly straight

but when you raise it to the level of your eye

it disappears

it is of only two-dimensions, length and width

without the comfort of depth

you have successfully created

an object of only two dimensions

now, in the throes of curiosity

you half unfold your head-shadow

and observe the edge created

that edge has no depth

being made of something with no depth

and now it also has no width

an edge never has width

the edge you see has

but a single dimension

you have successfully created

an object with only one dimension

if you feel adventurous

turn the shadow

so the edge points directly at your eye

close the other eye

and the shadow will disappear

now the edge disappears

you are seeing a zero-dimensional object

you are the king of the world

now do everyone a favour

and restart time, so my cousin’s head

three-dimensional object that it is

may rejoin his body

and our game of catch may continue