Absolute Pitch

It is genetic, obviously, as not all
Possess it.
Does it require our Western scales to find it out,
Express it?

Do Chinese have it? Do their pentatonic modes
Confuse it?
Does raising standard pitch above four-forty-two
Abuse it?

A puzzling heritage of some ancestral need
Now useless,
The sensitivity endures as might disease:
Deep, traceless,

Until new science spots it. Oboes sound their A,
As nearly
On the pitch as lip and reed and wood permit,
A merely

Brute approximation. In the ear itself,
In what is
Probably the only evidence--and that
Is gratis--

Arguing in favor of platonic forms,
Exactly
Waits the abstract tuning fork, the pure ideal.
Correctly

Tempered intervals, meanwhile, a compromise,
But habit,
Serve. Such music as we need is not the spheres’
In orbit.