

The *Wednesday*

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

The Obsession with Tragedy

The Greeks seem to have set the agenda for most of philosophy's topics, most particularly in the definition and enactment of tragedy. The Greeks were great tragedians and tragedy played a major role in their poetry, aesthetics, philosophy and way of life. Aristotle's definition of tragedy, its structure and its value, has dominated aesthetics and philosophy ever since. However, the deeper meaning of tragedy was rarely touched upon until Nietzsche's remarkable book *The Birth of Tragedy*. One finds in Nietzsche a theory not necessarily of tragedy as an art form, but of the place of tragedy in life, and its tragic wisdom that has been counterposed to the optimism of theoretical knowledge. This led to the science and technology we now know, and which has become known as 'instrumental reason'. The point I wish to make is that most studies of tragedy deal with the art form and not with the place of tragedy in knowledge and life.

Walter Benjamin's book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* attempted to shift the focus from Greek tragedy as defined and described by Aristotle to the reality of daily life and to ask about the possibility of writing a new form of tragedy (or mourning play) as the German writers of the 17th century did. Those writers were ignored or belittled by many critics because they were considered to be trying to write tragedies in the Greek sense but failing to do so. But Benjamin managed to show that they were writing a new form of tragedy that reflected and addressed its time and the condition of a world emerging from a medieval worldview to modern times.

Benjamin was writing in a post-Nietzschean world where the significance of a work of art is not judged by its intrinsic merits alone but by the contribution it makes to a way of life. But Nietzsche was still looking at the Greeks and idealising their theatre

and music. His optimism in recreating the same for modern Europe in the music of Wagner ended in disappointment. Perhaps this is part of the motivation for the talk about the *Death of Tragedy* as championed by George Steiner. Steiner endeavoured to show that it is impossible to recreate the Greek form of tragedy. But such a claim was disputed by scholars, chief amongst them Walter Kaufmann in his book *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Kaufmann showed that writing and performing modern tragedies is still possible, especially with World Wars and other calamities.

There has been a renewed interest in understanding tragedy in such work as Terry Eagleton's *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* and more recently Simon Critchley's *Tragedy, The Greeks and Us*. There will also be a conference on 'Tragedy and Philosophy' in the new academic Year at Goldsmith College. See also the editorial in issue 114 of *The Wednesday*: 'Modernity and Tragedy' on our website: www.thewednesdayoxford.com.

Tragedy is not limited to an art form but is all around us. The news carries every day different sorts of tragedies, not least the present pandemic. It shows how vulnerable we are to misfortune or catastrophe on a personal and national scale, whether it has been predicted or not. The human condition as such seems to be one of vulnerability, and we have to be strong enough to face up to it. Of course, science and politics are meant to save us from tragedies but we can't avoid them. Judging by history, even with the best intentions things tend to go wrong and we should be ready psychologically and intellectually to cope with this. Tragedy as an art form is just a reminder of such a possibility and prepares us to face up to it.

The Editor

Causation and Intentional Action

Philosophical thought about mental versus physical causes has historically led to an unexplained metaphysical dichotomy between the mental world and the physical world. I argue that on examining more closely the concepts of causation and intentional action this dichotomy becomes a fairly simple distinction rather than an ontological puzzle.

CHRIS SEDDON

Part 1*

Implied parameters in normal language

Normal language is normally adequate for normal use, but our normal grammar is not always a straightforward representation of the conceptual structures which underlie the way we actually use normal language. This is quite natural, because normal language has evolved for practical purposes and has not been designed for conceptual analysis, but it means that the most helpful philosophical analysis may differ from the most conventional grammatical analysis.

One relevant feature of normal language in this context is the use of implicit parameters. For example "Put that there" is clearly a short way of saying "You put that there", so in this case "You" is an implicit parameter, the meaning of which is determined from the context. At another time I might also argue that the latter is in turn a short way of saying "I order you to put that there".

In other words, I might argue that "I" is also an implicit parameter in "Put that there".

Implied parameters in causal language

In causal language, our normal grammar suggests a relationship between two parameters, namely the *cause* and the *effect*. It can therefore seem that the concept of a causal relationship has just two parameters, however I would argue that in this way the structure of our normal causal grammar obscures a more useful analysis. Although we talk as if a causal relationship were just a relationship between a specific cause and a specific effect, when we use such statements and especially when we try to justify or refute them, it becomes clear that we are also describing a correlation between a class of events of which the cause is just one specific instance, and a class of events which similarly typifies the effect. In other words, I am suggesting that in addition to the normally explicit parameters of the *specific cause* and the *specific event*, there



Language in the time of pandemic

Breaking a glass window



are additional implicit parameters in specific causal statements, namely the *general cause*, the *general effect*, and a *relevant correlation* - at another time it may be useful to analyse more closely the type of correlation, for example in terms of implicit spatio-temporal parameters, but for the purposes of this discussion the type of correlation is not specified in this working definition.

That a *specific cause* is a **cause** of a *specific effect* in terms of a *relevant correlation*, a *general cause* and a *general effect* means that:

- any instance of the *specific cause* is an instance of the *general cause*, and
- any instance of the *specific effect* is an instance of the *general effect*, and
- the *relevant correlation* holds between all instances of the *general cause* and the *general effect*

The following examples may illustrate this definition, bearing in mind that the *relevant correlation*, *general cause* and *general effect* are normally implicit rather than explicit, but are nevertheless required to make sense of the causal statement.

I start with a causal statement that we might well believe:

"The window broke because John threw a stone at it."

- *specific cause*: John threw a stone at the window
- *specific effect*: The window broke
- *general cause*: A relatively hard object travels with sufficient force towards a relatively fragile object
- *general effect*: The relatively fragile object breaks

- *relevant correlation*: Whenever the first event happens and nothing significant intervenes then the second event will soon happen

If, in the context, these are indeed the implied parameters of the causal claim above, then it rests on the three conditions identified in the definition above:

- John throwing a stone at the window is an instance of a relatively hard object travelling with sufficient force towards a relatively fragile object, and
- The window breaking is an instance of the relatively fragile object breaking, and
- Whenever a relatively hard object travels with sufficient force towards a relatively fragile object and nothing significant intervenes then the relatively fragile object will soon break

Inferences from a credible general rule to a specific observed instance are characteristic of a general type of explanation - the credible general rule is said to *explain* the specific observed instance - and causal statements are explanations in this sense. Positing a causal link between two specific observed instances is to suggest a generalisation which can be applied to other instances. Without this generalisation there would be no point to causal statements, because the point of a causal statement is to make a claim about many other events of which the specific event is just a relevant instance.

Causation is (relevant) correlation

There are competing theories as to the type of correlation which justifies a causal statement. The rule-of-thumb that correlation does not imply causation is really an imprecise way of pointing out that the correlation has to be relevant - in other words, that the context of the causal statement



The boat drifted in the water

determines the implied parameters.

It is instructive to consider an example of a causal statement that we would normally consider false:

"At night trees near the shore blow boats away by waving their branches."

- *specific cause*: Trees near the shore wave their branches at night
- *specific effect*: Boats are blown away from the shore
- *general cause*: A relatively large object moves in a certain way in a certain direction
- *general effect*: Relatively small things are blown in that direction
- *relevant correlation*: Whenever the first event happens and nothing significant intervenes then the second event will soon happen

If, in the context, these are indeed the implied parameters of the causal claim above, then it rests on the three conditions identified in the definition above:

- The trees waving their branches at night is an instance of a relatively large object moving in a certain way in a certain direction
- The boats being blown away from the shore is an instance of relatively small things being blown in that direction
- Whenever a relatively large object moves in a certain way in a certain direction and nothing significant intervenes then relatively small things will soon be blown in that direction

One could disprove the causal claim by noting

or even creating a situation in which the *relevant correlation* did not hold between the *specific cause* and the *specific event* - for example, by moving the branches with ropes on a windless night and noting that the boats were not blown away from the shore. Alternatively, one could create or simply imagine a situation in which the *relevant correlation* did not hold between instances of the *general cause* and the *general effect* - for example, with models of trees and boats.

Alternatively, one could accept the causal claim by interpreting it as relying on a less stringent *relevant correlation*, *general cause* and *general effect*. If we live permanently on an island with a constant off-shore breeze every night, the relevant implied parameters might be:

general cause: The trees on this island move in a certain way in a certain direction

general effect: Relatively small things are blown in that direction

relevant correlation: Whenever the first event happens and nothing significant intervenes then the second event will soon happen, at least until something really strange happens to the island

This is a different interpretation of the causal claim, not a different justification for it. If the same explicit claim in different contexts turns out to have different implied parameters, then there are two different claims.

The evidence for or against a causal claim is typically not based on reproducing every possible



The tree and the window

instance of the relevant correlation between the general cause and the general effect, because this is not generally possible. Quite often the evidence relies on a network of other causal claims, each of which may itself be based on yet further causal claims, statistical observations, or gut instinct. Thus in the above example we are more likely to believe a causal claim based on presumed or observed correlations between the relative density of the relatively warm or cold air over the land and sea at night based on the relative rate of cooling:

"At night the wind makes branches wave and blows boats away."

- *specific cause*: The evening wind blows away from the shore
- *specific effect*: Branches wave and boats are blown away
- *general cause*: At night when air over the land cools more slowly than air over the sea the warm air under higher pressure moves in the direction of the cold air under lower pressure
- *general effect*: Relatively small things offering little resistance are blown in that direction
- *relevant correlation*: Whenever the first event happens and nothing significant intervenes then the second event will soon happen

The article on probabilistic causation in the online *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* illustrates that there are a number of different correlations proposed within different contexts. This suggests that there is no one "true" correlation on which all

causal claims depend, but instead we will infer the intended correlation for each causal claim from the use to which it is being put. Similarly, we will infer the implied general cause and general effect. In this sense, causal statements are simply statements of instances of an implied correlation between implied general events. Causation is not simply correlation, but only because the context of a causal statement implies a relevant correlation. This is why cautious scientists tend to claim only specific relevant correlations, rather than make vague causal claims.

This illustrates how the analysis of a concept can identify implicit parameters that are clearly needed to explain the use of the concept in practice. Often the existence of implicit parameters explains why those with expertise in applying a concept in different contexts but who do not perceive the implicit parameters find it hard to reconcile alternative views of the concept. A simplistic logical analysis which fails to take account of implicit parameters can also lead to simplistic interpretations - such as "causation is not correlation" - and hence to an impression that something mysterious is going on - such as "causal powers".

- **(This is the first part of the text of a talk presented to the Wednesday meeting on the 2nd August 2020. The second part, which will be published in the next issue, deals with free will, and mental and physical events.)**

For When A Man Is Dead

For when a man is dead,
the truth of him fades out in time, in space.
A disappearing smoke carries his face,
evaporates his dreams,

but for his lingering heart,
still earthbound here to stay
in aching lives,
within a mournful world,
within a net of time
of water, skies and rain.

Yet heart is lifting
under the throbbing pain,
for time is not enough,
it longs for space
to erase sadness.

6

It furtively unfolds
and climbs up like a rose
with flowers that outgrow
the last traces of absence.



Poems and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Poetry

The British Garrison Church

Beyond the water tower a new sign
reads, Mahatma Gandhi Road.
The church is on the left
among trees that swarm with
small curving green parrots.

For all her stony weight, St. Anne's
looks up. Her doors are not locked,
just closed. Nor are they at repose,
just hands at prayer
reluctant to give way to us.

The cross is napkined, veiled.
Clerestory, choir, ciborium
– the leaven of the barrack run –
still crowd with light. Those racks
were for the guns of the garrison.

Without priest or voice,
our footsteps sound each pier.
This pew, with its few tooled words,
is where we knelt to learn by rote
hoping for improvement.

In the north transept now
there are cook-pots, *charpoys*,
baskets and mats, moved in like ivy
to squat. Nothing is said.
Even the child is holding his breath.

charpoys: light Indian bedsteads

Erica Warburton



William Empson and Poetic Ambiguity

Reports of the Wednesday Meetings Held During August

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting Held on 12th August

Written by RAHIM HASSAN and PAUL COCKBURN

Chris Norris gave us an interesting talk on the work of William Empson, starting with Empson's years at Cambridge studying English where he came under the influence of I.A. Richards. Richards' book *Practical Criticism* reflected his time at Cambridge, which coincided with the rise of science, particularly physics, and the presence of great scientists at Cambridge.

Beside physics, there was the influence of psychology, anthropology, and philosophy (logical positivism). Since poetry is not logical nor empirical, Richards held the view that poetry is a matter of feeling. The linguistic turn in philosophy also had its effect on analysing poetry. This led to the 'Analytic' school of criticism at Cambridge which was opposed by the 'appreciative' criticism of Oxford.

Empson's criticism was strongly analytic and it was disapproved of by the Oxford 'appreciative' reading of poetry.

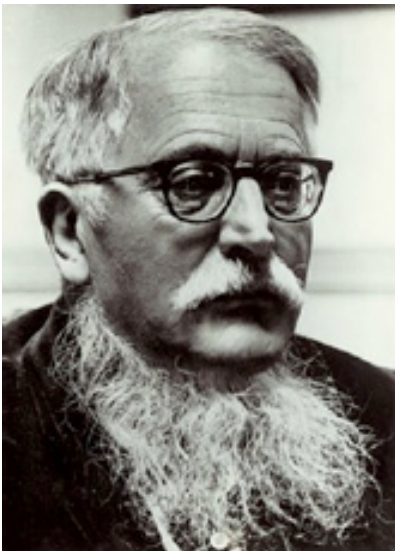
complexity on a logical scale. They indicate a deepening of meaning.

Empson then published *Some Versions of Pastoral* in 1935. Chris described it as the 'most elusive and in many ways extraordinary of Empson's books'. Its motto was 'putting the complex into the simple'. Empson discussed here the pastoral theme in poetry since Shakespeare, but he also discussed the social dimension of literature and the political debates occurring in the 30s. This was considered as a new development since the *Seven Types*.

Decades later *The Structure of Complex Words* was published (1961). Chris described it as 'Empson's masterpiece in many ways'. It has opening chapters of logico-semantic theorizing, then various chapters of 'applied' literary-linguistic analysis. 'Statements in words' was the central claim of the book. Empson was a rationalist-humanist.

Empson is a highly original literary theorist. Chris Norris summed up the contribution of Empson in his final remarks: 'Empson's work is important for just those reasons – that it holds out bracingly against some of the more cramping theoretical orthodoxies of our time, especially anti-intentionalism (cf. Barthes' "Death of the Author" and Foucault's "What Is an Author?") and makes a strong claim – in *Complex Words* – for the role of logical as well as rhetorical analysis in the understanding of literary language. Above all, he was the most brilliantly perceptive and intelligent critical mind of his (perhaps of any) literary generation.'

It was commented during the discussion that poetry is not just for the intellect, but it also involves the imagination and both apply to reading a poem. Chris replied that Empson rejected Richard's claim that poetry is not propositional. For him, poetry has a propositional content. Poetry has to go beyond confused feelings.



William Empson

Empson wrote *Seven Types of Ambiguity* in 1930. It represented Empson's open-mindedness to all disciplines (science, psychology etc.). Empson took the view that poetry should be open to everyone, a kind of democracy. But why should ambiguity be given such a prominence? And why seven? Empson came to the value of ambiguity from his close reading of the poetry of Donne, George Herbert, Hopkins, Eliot and others. The *Seven Types* reflect the different levels of

On The Nature of Tragedy

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting Held on 19th August

Edward Greenwood presented to the group an interesting paper on the nature of tragedy with reference to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. 'In tragedy,' according to him 'harm or death must come about through a complex 'labyrinth of linkages' which seem to have been woven by some kind of necessity implicit in the action unfolding.' We tend to judge the characters in a tragic situation and apportion blame. The Greeks invented tragedy and they show us how to empathize with a character such as Oedipus, who apparently through no fault of his own kills his own father and marries his mother. In *Antigone* two goods clash: love of the family and the laws of the state. Tragedy can somehow have a cathartic effect, as the emotions are cleansed and understanding is enlarged. While the Greeks perfected the dramatic form of tragedy, in modern times tragedy has developed through the realistic novel. Edward made the observation that 'unlike in modern times, the Greeks developed no philosophical view of tragedy, though the plays were concerned with ethical issues...'

Anthony Quinton in one of his papers thought tragedy gives 'an imaginative solution to the most humanly interesting of metaphysical problems'. Edward added that 'tragedy is particularly concerned with the role of suffering and death in human life, and, as such, is an alternative to a religious theodicy.' He looked for alternatives in the work of three philosophers: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

If Hegel is a metaphysical optimist, Schopenhauer is the ultimate metaphysical pessimist. Nietzsche, in his *The Birth Of Tragedy*, has the virtue of rejecting the necessitated optimism of Hegel and the necessitated pessimism of Schopenhauer. For Quinton the tragic vision of life is not compatible with either optimism, Hegel's view, or pessimism, Schopenhauer's view, but it is with Nietzsche's view, which allows for contingency.

The central theme of *Anna Karenina* is family life. The continual concern of the novel is with



Anna Karenina

the theme of moral evaluation and guilt. This runs throughout the book. The main characters in it are concerned with guilt and thoughts of suffering and death. The view of death in the novel was influenced by Schopenhauer who wrote in 'On Death', a chapter in the second volume of *The World As Will And Representation*: 'Death is the real inspiring genius or Musagetes of philosophy and for this reason Socrates defined philosophy as *thanaton melete*, preparation for death. Indeed, without death there would hardly have been any philosophizing.' Before her suicide, Anna concludes that 'we all have been created to suffer, and that we all know this and all try to invent means of deceiving ourselves'. Humanity is condemned to suffering and tragedy. In an atheistic culture this is perhaps unbearable. It is suffering without redemption.

A question was raised during the discussion whether the tragic figure, especially in the modern novel, is universal or culturally relative. Could Anna Karenina be a tragic figure in a religious culture for example? The answer came from Walter Kaufmann's book *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* where he talks about the 'tragic sense' that replaces religion or becomes the religion of the irreligious.

Artificial Intelligence: A Moral Dilemma

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting Held on 26th August

We were pleased to welcome Rob Zinkov to talk to us about the ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI). Rob started by asking who should be held responsible if a piece of AI software malfunctions? Is it the program itself or the producer of the program?

If a 'driverless' car, using AI software, is involved in an accident, who is to blame? The car or the manufacturer? The circumstances could be complicated, and the software involved could try to minimize the damage involved. One view was that we cannot trust driverless cars, even though the software could save lives as it might be more reliable than a human and even be able to 'act' according to moral rules.

Factories now are using software much more to control machines. The issues involved are becoming more complex, involving greater complexity in terms of the concepts of blame, responsibility, and cause and effect. Software once written has no agency, nor do machines. It is the designer and programmer who are responsible for any faults. A key issue is testing which must be carried out before a system or a new version of software goes 'live'. It is difficult to test complex systems thoroughly so that every eventuality is

covered, it is expensive and takes a long time. For decision support software involving 'big' data this is especially so, it is difficult to create and then run tests on the large data sets which are required. Not all risks and outcomes can be covered.

Systems also evolve, they develop over time. AI software could develop by using standard 'off the shelf' modules in ever more complex ways. It is even possible that AI software could adjust itself, self-learn, somehow avoiding problems automatically. With such complexity it is likely there will be mistakes made. One practical suggestion was that the government could establish a compensation fund to help where new developments cause problems which need redress, but which could not have been easily foreseen. One example of this was thalidomide, a drug which when given to pregnant women caused serious birth defects in babies in the 1960s. Maybe there could unfortunately be 'thalidomide' software, software whose long-term harmful effects cannot be predicted.

We drifted into discussing science fiction scenarios, where we push the algorithms even further and AI 'evolution' occurs. Some thinkers are worried about this, as computational power increases and untapped intelligence superior to human intelligence takes off into new (possibly dangerous) dimensions. Can software be creative? Could it have a life of its own? Should we ban intelligent robots?

We moved into deeper philosophical and religious waters. Some believe that human life and our actions are determined, we have no free will. But our legal system is based on justice being done, involving culpability and punishment. You have committed a crime, you have done wrong, you will be detained at her Majesty's pleasure. But is this just based on rules which society says we must obey? In what ways are we different to robots who have been programmed? Or animals? Good questions to think about!



The future is here?

Hypothetical Particles

DR. ALAN XUEREB

Hypothetical particles are states of matter that have 'exotic' physical properties that would violate the known laws of physics, such as a particle having a negative mass.

Negative mass would possess some strange properties, such as accelerating in the direction opposite to an applied force. Despite being inconsistent with the expected behaviour of 'normal' matter, negative mass is mathematically consistent and introduces no violation of the principle of the conservation of momentum or energy.

This idea is used in certain speculative theories, such as the construction of artificial wormholes and the Alcubierre drive (which is basically a warp drive). The closest known real representative of such exotic matter is the region of pseudo-negative pressure density produced by the Casimir effect (for example a force observed between two mirrors placed close together in a vacuum, predicted by quantum field theory).



'EXOTIC MATTER'

oil on canvas, (60cmx80cm) 2016

Measure



CHRIS NORRIS

In October 2018 the International Bureau of Weights and Measures voted to remove the last physical standard from the metric system, the International Prototype Kilogram, an egg-sized, platinum-iridium mass known as *Le Grand K*. Like other standards derived from artefacts it generated problems. In recent decades, scientists have . . . found that it was losing mass. (Though, technically, as it was the definition of the kilogram, it couldn't lose weight: the universe could only get heavier.) As of last May, the definition of a kilogram is based on Planck's constant.

James Vincent, 'As Long as the King's Arm?', *The London Review of Books*, March 5th 2020.

1 Let none declare the egg a fraction light!
Let none declare
its mass diminished by
A zeptogram as long as it rests there.

We'd better let the yardstick rule apply.
We'd better let
mass cosmos-wide fall square
With this one sample now the standard's set.

Be sure to cite *its* mass and you'll not err!
Be sure to cite
the egg and you'll have met
The only test for measuring aright.

Don't go awry, let it weigh all things net.
Don't go awry
but have scales here unite
So such anomalies don't multiply.

Yet have due care lest problems you invite.
Yet have due care
lest physics count too high
The cost in paradox it's left to bear.

Let's just forget that stuff we quantify!
Let's just forget
platinum eggs and dare
Go abstract so their shrinkage prove no threat.

That way we might give cosmos its due share.
That way we might
ensure that every debt
To stuff be paid off at a single bite.



Max Planck

True measures lie in ghostly silhouette.
True measures lie
 past all that could requite
That old alchemic dream before we die.

It's matter's snare we spring to reach that
height!
It's matter's snare,
 sprung wide, that bids us fly
Sublunary stuff with altitude to spare.

Else we'll regret not reaching for the sky.
Else we'll regret
 not sampling the pure air
Way up above the furthest wings can get.

Truths hold despite all states of disrepair.
Truths hold despite
 whatever flaws upset
Our best attempts to hold decay-rates tight.

The case shows why abstraction's our best bet.
The case shows why
 Planck's Constant is the kite-
Mark prized when stuff's too gross to reckon by.

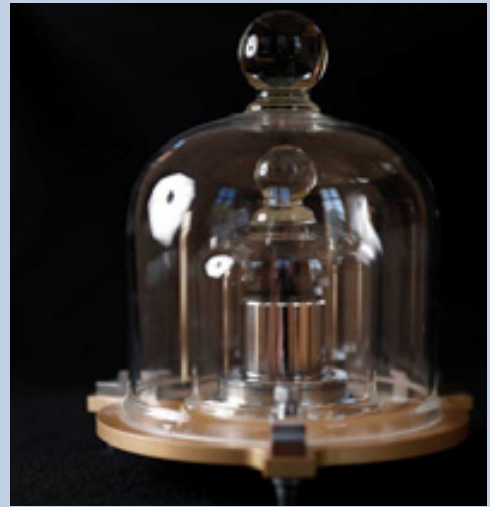
How then compare truth's dawn with that old night?
How then compare
 those matter-based SI
Thought-hobblers with truth's answer to our prayer?

Life clamours, yet what answer's fit to try?
Life clamours, yet
 how feed such meagre fare
To those who daily face extinction's threat?

Ignore their plight, deem it a world elsewhere!
Ignore their plight
 and find them prone to fret
At fancy plans to keep them out of sight.

The human cry pleads 'quis custodiet?'
The human cry
 pleads 'who'll make good the slight
That's dealt us by the mind's inhuman eye?'

No saying they're flat wrong to pick that fight.
No saying they're
 just seeking grounds to vie
With math-based physics for the provost's chair.



Le Grand K

Poetry

The old duet, Descartes back on the sly!
The old duet,
 with that mind-sundered pair,
Mind/body, switching roles as teacher's pet.

Keep up your flight from views too doctrinaire!
Keep up your flight
 lest further wranglings let
New demons loose with every gigabyte.

2 They fix far more who fix that steady state!
They fix far more
 whose metrics may provide
Our last, best glimpse of what the mystics saw.

The abstract way takes Fibonnaci's side.
The abstract way
 bids us perceive the law
Of ratios settling what we take or pay.

The daily rate might hold large swings in store.
The daily rate
 might swing yet ratios play
Their part in ways he's quick to calculate.

Ratios abide, he taught, though tones decay.
Ratios abide
 in music just as weight
Or price marked up conceal what's bona fide.

He knew the score, kept dodgy traders straight!
He knew the score
 and sought the truth they'd hide
In scales, weights, measuring-rods, and mystic lore.

Who's then to say just where those realms divide?
Who's then to say
 where thoughts begin to soar
Beyond all commerce on the market floor?

Compare by date and see the stuff withdraw!
Compare by date
 and see the ratios stay
Intact while SI units shed their freight.

Time was they tried touchstones and moulds of clay.
Time was they tried
 Christ or some potentate
For size then divvied down or multiplied.



Descartes



Pharaoh

Always some flaw, some failure to equate.
Always some flaw
 in matter to deride
Their system and leave cheats an open door.

Back in the day they'd measure length by stride.
Back in the day
 they'd match strips to *le corps*
Glorieux then find how many strips to lay.

How estimate what errors went before?
How estimate
 those measures gone astray
For want of subtler stuff to calibrate?

Cain's fratricide kicks off the dossier.
Cain's fratricide
 has law of kind dictate
He'll then defy God's weights-and-measures guide.

In times of war fixed scales may arbitrate.
In times of war
 they keep us still supplied
With means to save some minimal rapport.

How then should they, our abstract codes, preside?
How then should they
 not tempt us to ignore
The call of those whose lifeworld they betray?

Best compensate by standing guarantor.
Best compensate
 by striving to defray
Those costs by wiping clean confusion's slate.

Why let the slide re-start once kept at bay?
Why let the slide,
 like swollen Nile in spate,
Sweep Pharaoh's body-lengths out with the tide?

A crumbling shore brings down the best flood-gate!
A crumbling shore
 lays low the fiercest pride
Of empires in one swift estuarial bore.

False measures prey, chaos spreads nation-wide.
False measures prey
 on minds as shock and awe
Bid science yield once more to fortune's sway.

The Wednesday

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

Copyright © Rahim Hassan

Website:

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

Editorial Board

Barbara Vellacott

Paul Cockburn

Chris Seddon

Correspondences & buying The *Wednesday* books:

c/o The Secretary,
12, Yarnells Hill,
Oxford, OX2 9BD

*We have published eight
cumulative volumes of the
weekly issues. To obtain
your copy of anyone of the
cumulative volumes, please
send a signed cheque with your
name and address on the back
£15 for each volume
inside the UK*

*or £18 for readers
outside the UK:*

*Please make your cheque out to
'The Wednesday Magazine'*

or pay online

Account Number:

24042417

Sort Code:

09-01-29

Supervenience



A person cannot just be good, but must be good in virtue of possessing other properties such as courage.

Is there ever perfect sense leading me along the right path?
Or is it a mere splinter of light that glows to what might be valid?
Perhaps it's something picked from a tangle of beliefs;
needs brushing down and poked with questions,
before it's even trusted.

Within the premises I have formed can I rely
on an inner nudge of truth, to guide me along *The Way*?
Or is the *Good* to be reached down from a high shelf,
to avoid wrestling with experience?
Can the world I live in, be separated from Being,
or is my existence nothing more than my own grasp?
Perhaps we all need to do a universal comparing of notes
to find the good behind all possible things.

David BurrIDGE