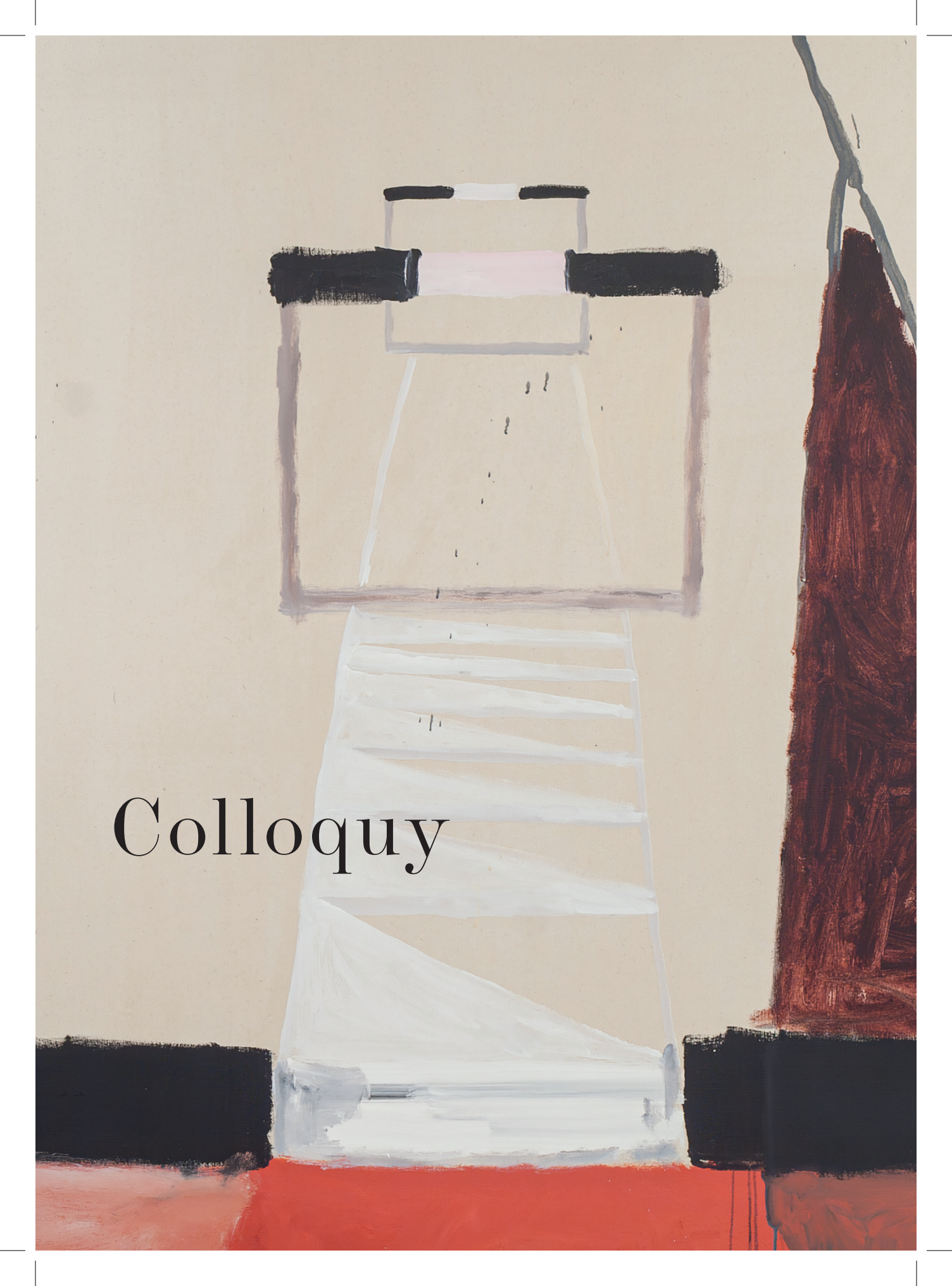


An abstract painting on a light beige background. The composition features several geometric and organic forms. At the top, there is a small rectangle with a black and white horizontal bar. Below it is a larger rectangle with a pink and black horizontal bar. A series of white, diagonal, brush-stroke-like lines extend downwards from the center. On the right side, there is a vertical, textured, reddish-brown shape. At the bottom, there are black and red horizontal bands. The word "Colloquy" is written in a black serif font on the left side, overlapping the white diagonal lines.

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Letter from the Editors

This edition of *Colloquy* is dedicated to Ms. Langston for her dedication to the Graduate Institute.

We would like to thank: the Graduate Student Council for the funds to make this edition of *Colloquy* possible; Kashya Boretsky and Ms. Langston for their continued belief in our publication as an indispensable extension of the G.I. community; Ms. Kraus for her lofty vision and wise counsel as our editorial advisor; and all those who submitted.

We welcome the new associate dean Mr. Boyle, and *Colloquy's* new Editor-in-Chief Stephen Borsum, and wish them well.

Farewell,

Abdullah Wadood and Jesse Clagett
Editors, Spring 2023

The editors regret misprinting Ms. Moore's **The Romantics** in the Fall 2022 issue. We apologize to Ms. Moore for the error.

The Romantics

Melissa Moore

Ten-thousand daffodils along the margin of a bay
would in my time have all ceased to decay,
and Daisies become a worthier flower to adorn
an epitaph desiring that we mourn;
for if my Words have any worth at all
then perchance they would outlast us all.
But times being as they are, I think I'll write
only for myself, and no distant reader's delight.

No modern master Taylor could possibly hope to weave
prettier patterns of discarded themes,
nor any serious painter withstand not being privy
to such a place as Kubla Khan decreed.
It was a painted poem, upon a painted canvas
that first set in motion things outlandish
and though it was quite beautiful and refined,
in the end it took a lifetime to wash away the brine.

Though the crystal chill overcomes the burly winter birch
—coats with downy flake limbs where songbirds perch—
though all this world should be condemned to fire and to ice,
I doubt that either Burns or Frost suffice.
Beware, young friends: Tam O Shanter's good mare's
advice, a red red rose with thorns, ensnares,
for she is long gone, and yet here you stand
for all the world a much luckier man.

The past is filled with beauty — this truth no one will deny —
and the future appears stark before the nostalgic eye,
but words do not belong to those who say them best
and life spent lost in memory is life best laid to rest.
Though in this race the many may surpass me
and though their words through many ages may outlast me,
I'd rather turn my words to wind during the run
than become Swift only to be called Donne.

Song for My Son

Kelly Custer

Pushing your bassinet
Over the colors of autumn,
To the hum of the river
And the rattling shrieks
Of passing trains,
Our song is Peripatetic.

There,

In your wide-eyed babbling
And gentle coo,
Speaks a word
Swaddled within a word
That commands my soul;
For in it, your own calls out to me.

Always,

We return to the sitting room
Where you stare up at the ceiling,
Sorting light and shadow,
Forgetting and recollecting,
And I descend into your infancy,
Knowing that what remains of my life
Is devoted to that music of guiding you
Up that dimly lit road of manhood.

It too will pass,

That as a man,
You will descend to my bed of old age,
Watching me sorting light and shadow
On the screen of memory,
Forgetting and recollecting.
And you will know the music to make
To guide me to that eternal light
In which the song of father and son
Abides.

Love Lesson #2

Louis Petrich

I don't.

Hold me against you? No.

How could I? --

grateful sooner

this way to show off true

than bend that way like men

likewise to you --

they try . . .

and dare turns my head,

too --

this cureless weathercock!

If suff'ring things conjunctively

means less of me, more shining you

should burn like sun

(whom some do brave while others block)

you *could* ask me

(of skin not feared)

to ply the screen directly to my heart,

which lonely lunged unribbed

and sucked for life your airs --

so fool-proof cast I'd fake

blood rarefy, head duck

eyes pool in hiding shades

submitting bidden black

to steep in past my shame.

If only good

first light could clear

my head looked up

and satisfied --

horizon lush on fire to burning heights

would staff gypped hands with *here I am!*—

no pitied anxious down-turned swipes

where you've tumbled
men to stand 'em,
where men tender
women 'till churned.

How *darling* quips me--
no things but words
abuse me—O,
you owe me red
pledged avid lips
that will so press
to plumb part dumb
partaken *yes*—

apps nosing come,
eclipse lips' quest--

pent pleas but singe,
to suture wounds--
amor fati--
egged edging doom.

Blood errs feet first.
Throat thirsting moans
rude proof of writ
unauthored: moon's.
Shook spear's clapped love
spoons picklock tongue
long lied true spoked
round wicked depths.

On Seeing

On Seeing My Own Face Disappear

Jeffrey Boatwright

There is an extraordinary moment in Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*; he's struck with the recent grief of losing his mother. He sits alone looking through photographs. The photographs, at first, seem to fail him. He says as he begins to look, "I recognized her differentially, not essentially. Photography thereby compelled me to perform a painful labor; straining toward the essence of her identity, I was struggling among images partially true, and therefore totally false. To say, confronted with a certain, 'That's almost the way she was!'" There is one photo, however, - a photo Barthes is too dignified to reproduce in his book - in which this pain almost falls away. He writes, "There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp, gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the face I had loved. And I found it". Barthes is luckier than many of us.

I can make no claim to having such an experience as Barthes'. Photographs have almost exclusively revealed nothing to me, and left me with a feeling of disgust. However, I recently, much to my own shock, had significant interaction with a certain photograph. It's more accurate to say "I remember" a specific photograph that has become significant. I don't have the photograph in front of me, nor do I possess it in any way. I couldn't even say where the photo is at this point in time, or in whose possession. However, thinking about this photograph - last seen now more than a year ago - I've been able to begin to disentangle the trouble this photograph has been causing me.

To give the basic "content" of the photograph (a word I use with distaste), it's a photo of my father, grandfather, and grandmother at my parent's wedding. My father is in the middle, in a kind of tux, or at least a coat with a tail. This coat tail extending from his back to somewhere around his knees makes my father look oddly short: short legs, small torso, large head. My family may be on the shorter side, but this photo makes my father look proportioned in a way he never has been. My grandfather - now gone over twenty years at the moment of writing - stands to my father's right, the left side of the photograph. He

stands a bit taller than my father, by no great measure, however, and a bit rounder. A curious gap in my memory of this photograph is my grandfather's facial hair. I can easily remember (a word chosen quite deliberately) him both clean shaven and with a small greyish beard. Here my memory seems to be at play, showing me my grandfather as I most immediately recognize him, clean shaven, rather than as he most certainly would have been that day, bearded. My grandmother stands to the left of my father, even with the help of her shoes she remains the shortest of the three. She has a smile on her face that's as honest as you'll ever see. A day she always wanted to see was happening. There's enough joy on her face to make anyone jealous.

There's another curious facet of this photo that remains mysterious to me. The photo seems to be taken by someone other than a professional wedding photographer. The three of them stand off-center, and their gazes seem to be not quite directed at the lens of this camera. It's almost as if they were caught between two photos being taken simultaneously. They're standing in such a way that seems all the more strange as I think about this photo. The three of them are standing in a line, but at an angle from the camera lens. My grandmother closest to the lens, my grandfather being the furthest away, and my father caught in between. My grandfather is almost fading into the background, nearly at the risk of becoming lost. His grasp of my father's shoulder being the only thing keeping him visible, keeping him there, which is now, to say, in my memory. There's a sense of fight in his stance and grasp. He's fighting to remain an object of sight, someone to remember. This stands out to me as a distinct quality of the man, and this photo, but I cannot say that I have seen him "essentially" as Barthes says, still only "differentially."

The shock I experienced from this photograph has nothing to do with the joy on my grandmother's face or the fight in my grandfather's stance, however. It was as I was simply glancing over the photograph, perhaps wondering if I'd ever seen it before, the photo being taken a few years before I was born, when I saw something unexpected, perhaps even unwanted. When Barthes was looking through those old photos of his mother, he suddenly came across this photo from her childhood and was struck in an instant with a realization: "there she is!" He saw her, his mother's face as he knew it, as he remembered

it; he recognized it “essentially.” What I saw could be thought to be an opposite, or, at least, something different in kind. As I scanned this photograph from my parents’ wedding, I was struck (likewise in a mere instant) by what I recognized on my father’s face: “there I am!” I could see my own face. After the shock of this recognition, I looked at my grandfather’s face, and there I was again. There was the same face aging, fading, repeating until finally and totally lost to the background.

I’m now older than my father was when this photo was taken, only by a few years. I seem to have acquired his face, its shape, both its roundness at places and its edges at others. And now when I look at my father, currently ill beyond repair, I see my grandfather’s aging face. Just as I have taken up my father’s face, he has taken his father’s face. What I recognized as the essence of the faces in the photo, the essence of my own face, was its transience. Once this wedding photo was taken their faces were no longer as they appear in the photo, and now, as I think of my own face, seen in my father’s, it is different than I have the ability to see. We slip away too fast.

Just as I’m, roughly, the age my father was when this photo was taken, he is roughly the age my grandfather was when he died. This fact had lain dormant in my mind until I was reading the final volume of Proust, *Time Regained*, and read the sentence: “Yet death appears to be obedient to certain laws. Often for the instance one gets the impression that children of parents who have died very old or very young are almost compelled to disappear at the same age”. I read this passage sitting in my father’s room, which now contains a hospital bed, tables full of charts, medical equipment, and timetables of medications. Now I understood the shock of the photograph. I was seeing the disappearance of my own face.

What’s not contained in the photograph are my own memories of seeing my grandfather, face sunken, breath labored, in a hospital bed in his own home. These are contained in no photographs; there are no photo albums on anyone’s shelf full of the endless associations tied to an image. And yet, this is what is meant to see this photo of these two men, this single face, essentially. The photograph cannot capture the essential and rapid transience of my grandfather’s face. If Proust is right, and I will not be one to argue, this means my face moves just as rapidly, is

just as transient.

My grandfather has faded; my father rapidly fading. Just the same I, too, am fading. My timely – or untimely – inheritance will come to me when I, too, take on the faded face of my grandfather. Then there will only be the “Afterwards” of Thomas Hardy:

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,/ Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,/ Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,/ ‘He was one who had an eye for such mysteries’?

The “mysteries” of my own disappearing face are not for others to consider. This photograph from my parents’ wedding has made it a mystery for me, and me alone. The photograph projected the future losses; the memory holds on to what it can. But is this not the problem of seeing a photograph? What first was the account of a grandfather’s demise, was next a father’s, and now a projection of mine, a son’s. And it’s this accounting of fading away that Barthes refers to when he says: “every photograph is this catastrophe”. It is a catastrophe because no camera can ever capture the rapid transience of a human face. It’s as if the camera must turn away, and leave such a mystery, such an essential reality, to the memory and the gaze of the moving eye.

An Apology

Leith Daghistani

I

I called you Guns until the accident. Until I watched you being carried away in a stretcher by the other Sailors, I only ever called you by your job title: Gunner's Mate.

Once sensible and orderly, the misshapen remnants of your right hand appeared to be sloppily glued together with congealing blood. I caught sight of the deep red weeping through the bandages before you turned to conceal it from me. I wondered what secret was revealed to you from within the dark hollow of your crushed bones.

As my captain told me I should have been with you, that my presence alone would have kept you safe, I wanted to apologize to you - to seek forgiveness - but you were already gone. I imagined that some part of you was left behind, that maybe a drop of blood or piece of flesh would remain in the hull of our dark ship from which I might beg pardon.

But I was alone. The other Sailors went back about their days, while I stood watch; savoring the inescapable equatorial heat that lingered long after the sun had set, sweating under the weight of my body armor, settling my hand on the pistol holstered on my leg, flicking the grooved steel safety catch off on off on off on off on off on.

I remember the diesel fumes and stale cigarette smoke stifling the salt air. I remember the hum of the engines compressing that air, and the greasy exhaust filling my head as the ship swayed gently in the shallow waters. But I do not remember your name.

II

I recognize your face when we are unexpectedly reunited in the silent hallway of an office building where unseaworthy sailors are sent to desks.

We shake hands. I am acutely aware of a narrow gap where your right index finger (your trigger finger) should be applying pressure on my palm. I see that the leftover sheets of your thin pale skin, stretched taut to stitch over your reformed right hand, barely contain the veiled flood of your estuarine veins.

I am ashamed because I am hoping that you

do not think that it is my fault that you do not have a right index finger, even though I think that it is. I am ashamed because I am happy that you did not lose your right hand or your right arm or what is left of your life, but I do not know whether your thoughts match mine or simply mirror them.

I remember the trigger pressure required to fire that pistol. It is normally 12 pounds, but it is only 5 pounds if I take the gun from the holster, disengage the safety, cock the hammer, and then pull the trigger. I am ashamed because I know that I can easily apply only 5 pounds of pressure with my right index finger, but I am left-handed.

I cannot apologize because I do not remember your name and I cannot call you Guns anymore. I say nothing. I do not think that we will meet again.

III

I once read that some ancient languages lacked a word for the color blue, and that Homer's choice to call the sea wine-dark suggests that the world's appearance depends on an observer's vocabulary. I do not know if this is true, and I do not think that Homer would allow Ajax to forgive Odysseus if he could call the sea blue instead of wine-dark.

I know that blood is always red. Blood only appears to be blue in veins, which are colorless, because light refracts through water and skin and blood and flesh at different speeds depending on its wavelength, which is to say depending on its color. The red is naturally hidden from our sight by this optical illusion.

Perhaps I do not remember your name because I never called you by your real name in the first place, or because it does not matter what your name is, or because I do not want to. I do not know why these things remain invisible to me.

I know that the sea really is wine-dark sometimes, in certain places, at certain times, in a certain light.



Euclidean Geometry A Lens to Discern Life's Choices

Charmaine D'Souza

Dedicated to Mr. Percy Mukadam, my first tutor, who incited the joy of learning mathematics with immeasurable incentives by way of his humanity, humor, and home-made kala khatta soda, and to Mr. Steven Crockett, who reignited that joy once again and shows me innumerable ways of seeing life's journey today.

Allowing myself to revisit Euclidean geometry again with fresh eyes has been a lesson in unlearning and relearning. More importantly, it has also been a lesson in viewing life's choices.

Starting at the beginning, with the definitions was a lesson in (re)questioning and better understanding the fundamentals. Do I genuinely know what a point and a line are? Are they abstract concepts, figments of our imagination, or do I see them all around me in daily life? If I can not see them, do they truly exist? What other abstract concepts have I made fundamental truths in my life over the years? What fundamentals have I lost sight of over the years? Reminding myself to be cognizant of these questions often helps me recognize my priorities more clearly.

When we discussed Proposition 1: "To construct an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight-line", one of my classmates spoke about trying to guesstimate the third point of an equilateral triangle rather than construct it with a compass. Coming from a creative background, I found his way of viewing this proposition intriguing. Creative and lateral thinkers see solutions so different from their analytical counterparts. At the same time, I realized for myself personally that while it is exciting to go through these innumerable journeys of curiosity and

discovery, journeys of discovering what-is-not-the-exact-point on the way to finding the exact point, it is important to discern when to choose the off-the-beaten track and when to follow the road well traveled. The off-the-beaten track may genuinely take me on unexplored adventures but I better pave a path forward or remember the path back! The road well traveled may look monotonous and unexciting to me but can I look at it with fresh eyes? At first glance, neither seems right nor wrong, and yet—maybe, just maybe hindsight provides a peculiar way of perceiving past decisions. Intuition a portal into future ones.

Over the course of a few classes, I learned that the art of constructing proofs is like playing with building blocks; each proposition builds on the previous, and yet not everything is related, e.g. Post. 5 is completely different from the first 4 postulates. Once in a while, the value and relevance of some of the propositions got a bit complex for me to understand at first instance. Shifting my focus from micro to macro, imagining the propositions like a Hoberman Sphere, figuring out how they link to each other, and reviewing past sequences of propositions enabled me to better understand "the storyline" and "the plot", as Mr. Crockett called them, of the proposition at hand. While contemplating Euclid's work, I realized that life is a balance of living in the now whilst expanding one's view to observe the past and the future and how the present relates to them. Sometimes we have to take a couple of steps back, sometimes strip everything bare, and go back to the basics, to be able to exist, build and/or leapfrog.

One of my biggest lessons was Prop. 35.



“Proposition 35: Parallelograms which are on the same base and between the same parallels are equal to one another.” Euclid’s instructions to construct and destruct this proposition were a pure delight—taking a complex-looking problem and breaking it down into simple parts, each I believe comprehensible even to an 8-year-old child, or the attendant boy in Plato’s *Meno*. Working through the proposition on my own and then in class together, felt like play—a LEGO box, where it was important to understand which block to add and when, and even more exciting was learning about which block to remove and when. As this proposition builds on a number of key, complex propositions like Prop. 34 and Prop. 29, which in turn build on other prior propositions like Prop. 13, 15, 23, 26, and Post.5, Proposition 35 turned out to be a barometer measuring my learning through the semester and my true understanding of Euclidean geometry.

The biggest value of Proposition 35, for me, was contemplating the difference between things being equal and congruent. Congruence is the perfect matching of something with another thing on all aspects of comparison e.g area, shape, and boundary. Equal(ity), in Prop. 35, on the other hand, is the matching of two things in terms of spatial area. Discerning the value and difference of each is critical—both in mathematics and in life. In Euclidean Geometry, deciding to play with a congruent figure rather than an equal one could lead me down a different solution and vice-versa. Living life through this lens can be invaluable. Discerning when something needs to be congruent with my expectations,

goals, desires, and vision, and when equal is more than enough can be invaluable to me in living a well-lived life.

Seeing the Student in the Bees & Bats of the Academy

Sydney Rowe

The Academy's zoological catalogue provided their authors with an armory of useful metaphors for speaking about what was unspeakable: the student. Socrates uses the bee metaphor as a quip at Meno because, like a bee, Meno is impervious to teaching. It is as though Aristotle is speaking about Meno himself when he remarks that bees 'are incapable of hearing sounds' and 'cannot be taught', yet they are still 'intelligent' (*Metaphysics*, 980b). As the great Academicians squinted at the bees' furry little heads, they were hard pressed to see any evidence of ears; unlike war elephants, whose ears you could see from a mile off as they hung from those beasts who walked through war and terror like grand matriarchs. Plato and Socrates likely bemused themselves at the notion that bees, who are incapable of learning, are somehow perfectly intelligent and so they naturally would have anthropomorphized their students as beeish creatures. Especially those hot-headed aristocratic lads who hazardously swarmed the Academy with a lustrous appetite for eternal greatness.

Bees are all eyes. Their vision is bursting with all varieties of violet and with militant focus they quickly become lured by the beautiful flower of conquest. They create city-like structures which serve as monuments to their imperial greatness. Even Pharaohs, those dark gods, see the divine in bees and salivate at their laborious riches. As Tutankhamun's bound corpse was carried into its tomb, those strange priests orbiting him softly placed a pint of honey by his side. Like Meno, or the pharaohs, bees share in a vacuous journey for the attainment of the vainest riches. It is a morbid undertaking to think, even for a moment, that those who refuse to listen can be so grandly cognizant of their vision that it is amplified to a deafening volume.

The Academy used bats to describe another species of student. The most poetic moment in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* mentions that we must be like bats to be students of philosophy:

For as the eyes of the bats are to the blaze of the day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all. (993b)

To the Academy, bats allude to Socrates' dear

friend Chaerophon who was nicknamed 'the bat' in Aristophanes' *The Birds* (1296). Like a bat, Chaerophon was a most nocturnal creature who, with the dancing Socrates by his side, would get caught up at the agora in late night debate (*Gorgias*, 447b). Aristotle is suggesting that to have a fulfilling journey, and to see what is unseeable, we must be a friend of Socrates, like Chaerophon, and so be sensitive to his virtuosity with a battish hearing.

Aristotle knew that bats' large puppy dog ears, which are perched high on their little noggins, made them great listeners and handsomely compensated for their beady little eyes. It is this sensory imbalance which makes them great students as it allows them to fly as if by hearing. Bats are mindful of how sounds are reflected and refracted, like speech in a room of glum faces, the pressure ripples into all varieties of complicated dimensions. Bats enjoy the abasing irony that a high pitch and vacuous screech will often provide an equal or greater insight to those more puffed up and operatic moments. It is through staccato, not legato, that the incremental addition of aural information creates a symphony of brevity. For the bats, this is not an ear-ringing nightmare, but an ingenious process of echolocation that allows them to quickly gain a sense of space, even in the darkest places, and thus reach the arc of truth.

The problem for the Academy seems that many of their students were bees, and very few were bats, and so the pedagogues who were housed there struggled to shoo them towards any one truth. Both the bees and bats had different perspectives of subject and so inevitably fell into their own destinies irrespective of their education - like day to night. Yet, as I write this, I am becoming tired, and I feel that my senses are getting away from me. I am beginning to wonder if I am more of a bee or a bat. Perhaps I have said too much and ought to pause, even if it is for something as simple as silence, and preserve what I have said in a question: who is more of a sphinx, Alexander the Great or Socrates?

Reaction to Guy Debord

Nick Younes

Guy Debord is very reluctant to define the spectacle. He prefers to describe aspects of it, and this is very different from “definition” as I’m used to the term.

If I define absolute zero in a way acceptable to scientists I can rest assured that my definition aids and abets the scientific project. If I define the Super Bowl in a way that satisfies a foreigner who has never heard of the event, I can rest assured that I have, in some small way, helped to make this person less foreign and more American.

But definitions like these, which expand human capability on the one hand or make the foreign less puzzling on the other, can’t be applied to the spectacle. According to Debord, we are the spectacle’s project and exist for all of our lives in the most intimate possible relation to it. There is no virgin territory into which an expansion of capability might proceed and there is scarcely anything less foreign than the manner in which we have lived all our lives. This is why defining the spectacle is like trying to describe the taste of milk or point out water to a fish.

When Debord makes a close approach to conventional definition I still have the feeling of be-

ing teased. In his fourth aphorism he says the spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people, mediated by images. This makes me think of examples like advertising or fashion photography, the places where I learn which clothes to wear and in what way to wear them. But nearly every aphorism in his book is an allusion to something else—in the case of number four, to Marx saying that Capital is not a thing but instead a social relationship between people that is mediated by things. It’s as though Debord is daring me to imagine an example of Capital that captures its full range of influence over the conditions of my life. But there is only one example like that and it’s the world I live in.

In a much smaller way, I can see the inadequacy of example compared to the thing itself in Toulouse-Lautrec’s work. I see this most strongly when I compare his advertisement for Jane Avril with his painting of the Moulin Rouge. This painting features the same singer fixing her hair in that venue’s mirrored walls. The advertisement is meant to draw people into the Moulin Rouge’s theater, in French it’s *salon de spectacle*. The image is crude. It is an *example* that bluntly summarizes the experience patrons are likely to have there, as they watch the woman with the expressionless face can-can in front of a musician, who grips the neck of his double bass with conspic-



At the Moulin Rouge, 1892–95. Oil on canvas, 123 x 141 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

uously hairy knuckles. A black line representing the loud music or the dancer's thrall to it erupts from the tip of his instrument and encircles her before returning to form the shoulder of the bass.



Jane Avril, 1893. Lithograph in 5 colors on wove paper, 129.1 x 93.5 cm. New York: Metropolitan

The painting of the same place is subtler, yet somehow more garish. Here the theatrical attraction, Jane Avril, is literally in the background while a mixed group of subjects pursue social relations over drinks. Another singer haunts the foreground, also facing away from the audience. Her shining face is alarmingly corpse-like, as though all the greenish light in the room's mirrors, everyone's reflected images, were concentrated on her skin, blasting it like footlights. If the poster for this theater promises the audience a straightforward spectacle, Toulouse-Lautrec's representation of its reality is a thicket of eyelines, none of which are directed at the entertainers. Air filled with live music, meant to lubricate a patron's transition from street self-consciousness to anonymous spectator, is replaced by green haze, dotted with men in lumpy overcoats. The women whose sexuality the poster offers for consumption are unavailable, instead lost to the audience as they face their own concerns.

The woman who sits with her back to us is arguably the focus of Toulouse-Lautrec's visual attention. But she is far too bizarre to serve as an erotic substitute for the disengaged singers. She is modeled from the rear, where all the composure and fretted-over display in her outfit meet in seams. We see how straight she sits, her body is in no danger of finding the comfort in her chair's backrest. Her loose bun of orange hair makes me think of spilled intestines and her fur-lined dress reminds me of deep-sea life. Were it not for one pink ear and two fingers of a black glove hers would be difficult to clock as a human form. The bow in her hair, meant to lengthen her silhouette to compete with men's hats, is shown from its least flattering angle. We see it as a construction, the translucent black tulle that frames the flow-ers on the front of her head is anchored by a metal clip sunk into her hair.

And then there is the blonde singer with the drowned woman's face. She stands just behind the balustrade that cordons off these people from the viewer. In the same way customs officials wear uniforms so you know them as authorities the woman's face marks her as the gatekeeper of this image and the space it depicts.

By now, the balustrade is death and she the spectral guardian of dead customers.

Does Toulouse-Lautrec undermine his own advertisement? Do I combat the spectacle that re-enforces and spreads the present conditions of life when I stare at these images? Is the social relation taking place at this moment, in this room, moving against the spectacle, like a *dérive*, or are we simply allowing these relations to be mediated by yet another image, one that furnishes us with a highbrow alibi?

“The Aim Was Song” Explication

Roth Boaz

The Aim Was Song

Robert Frost

Before man came to blow it right
The wind once blew itself untaught,
And did its loudest day and night
In any rough place where it caught.

Man came to tell it what was wrong:
It hadn't found the place to blow;
It blew too hard—the aim was song.
And listen—how it ought to go!

He took a little in his mouth,
And held it long enough for north
To be converted into south,
And then by measure blew it forth.

By measure. It was word and note,
The wind the wind had meant to be—
A little through the lips and throat.
The aim was song—the wind could see.

Almost by reflex, poets regale the purity and power of Nature. Robert Frost, however, *blows* that notion away. In “The Aim Was Song,” Frost contends that Nature—in the synecdochized figure of the whistling wind—works blithely and produces no purposeful beauty. But when human beings (“Man” in this poem) arrive in the world, they observe, instruct, and eventually surpass Nature with something more powerful: poetry.

The artistry of Frost’s poem is on display from beginning to end. Its four quatrains contain alternating rhyme (ABAB, CDCD, etc) with enjambment occurring frequently in the first stanza, although virtually disappearing the rest of the way (only line ten is enjambed). Equally striking is the poem’s repetition: the title shows up twice, in lines seven and sixteen, and the phrase “by measure” makes two appearances. Finally, the poem’s lines steadily march along to an iambic tetrameter beat with one noteworthy trochaic substitution.

It’s this trochee in line five—“Man came”—that illuminates the connection between the poem’s prosody and its content. Stanza one moves along freely enough: the regular meter and repetitive enjambment mirror Nature unfettered by humanity’s schemes. But with the trochaic “Man came,” the meter—and our relationship with Nature—changes. From this point, the lines are heavily end-stopped: the strong hand of “Man” reshapes—by measure, as it were—the sound of the wind. Rather than Nature’s accidental effects (the wind caught “in any rough place”), human beings take in air, release it, and give birth to music. The movement of the wind, of Nature, is random, and its measureless sounds have no purposeful melody. For human beings, though, the aim was song: by imitating the movement of air we make music, or—taken another way—we make poetry. Poetry can subvert the expectations of the senses, so much so that the wind doesn’t simply hear humanity’s audible artistry, it sees it. And by the end of Frost’s poem, so do we.

PRINGLE GEOMETRY: LOGIC AND IMAGINATION IN LOBACHEVSKI

Jay A. Gold

“It seems wonderful to all who have not yet seen the reason, that there is a thing which cannot be measured even by the smallest unit. But we must end in the contrary and, according to the proverb, the better state, as is the case in these instances too when men learn the cause; for there is nothing which would surprise a geometer so much as if the diagonal turned out to be commensurable.”

The question I will address is, What are the implications of the implausibility of Lobachevski's diagrams for the validity of his geometry? In treating this question, I employ the distinction between logic and imagination. By logic I mean that propositions follow from postulates and previous propositions using established rules of inference. Diagrams, while they may be helpful for understanding, are not necessary for purely logical exposition; Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* presents its proofs without them. By imagination I refer to the use of *images*, the visual artifacts of imagination.

I cannot write about the imagination in Lobachevski without noting that he calls his new geometry *imaginary*. He does not mean by this a geometry that relies on images. Still less does he mean what we typically mean by *imaginary*: he does not present his geometry as any more fictional than Euclidean geometry. Indeed, today Lobachevskian geometry is not called imaginary geometry at all, but rather, hyperbolic geometry.

The unsuspecting reader encountering the diagram for Lobachevski's Theorem 16 is apt to be nonplussed. In Fig. 1, we are presented with a line AG which we are told does not cut line DC, despite the fact that if AG and DC as drawn are extended to the right, they will intersect before reaching the boundary of the page. Furthermore, we are told there are infinitely many such noncutting lines, which is hard for us to *imagine*. If Lobachevski had attempted to remedy this by drawing line AG asymptotic to DC, he would have had to make DC curved, contrary to the stipulation in the statement of the theorem that the lines be straight.

Such implausibility is apt to lead the reader to wonder whether Lobachevski's logic must be fallacious because his images are so implausible. This may be contrasted with an equal and opposite phenomenon that can be encountered when studying Euclid. There are steps in Euclid's proofs that do not appear justified by his postulates and previous propositions, but seem to rely upon the *plausibility* of his diagrams.

To take one example: In three propositions (1, 12, and 22) in Book One of the *Elements*, Euclid assumes that two figures intersect without postulating or proving that they do. For instance, at the very outset of the *Elements*, in constructing the proof of Proposition 1, Euclid describes two circles, BCD and ACE, which he says intersect at point C. The diagram shows this intersection, as it shows a second intersection below the first. A strictly axiomatic proof would have included a postulate or a lemma to the effect that where the sum of the radii of two circles is greater than the distance between the centers of those circles, the two circles must intersect at two points. But Euclid offers no grounds for positing that the two circles intersect at these points. Yet once one sees the diagram of Proposition 1, one cannot imagine an instance in which two circles would not intersect in these circumstances.

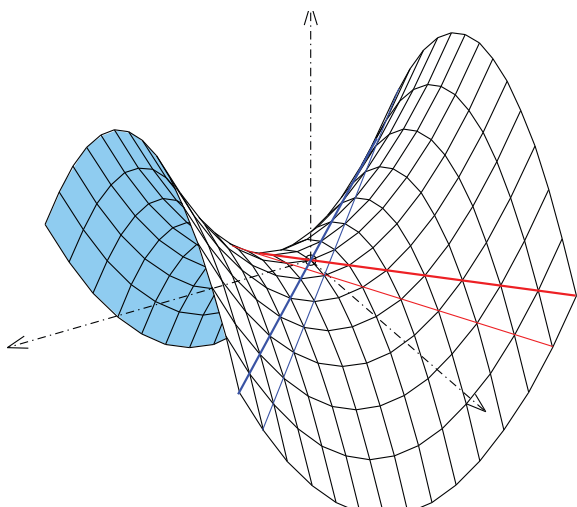
The impulse that leads us to accept Euclidean proofs whose logical basis is incomplete, because of the plausibility of the diagrams, is, I think, the very impulse that leads us to wonder whether Lobachevski's logic must be fallacious because his images are so implausible. It appears that even in mathematics human beings can be swayed by their sensibility, and that this can lead us to overlook the demands of logic.

The plausibility of Euclid's diagrams, and the implausibility of Lobachevski's, may be thought to imply that Euclid is describing the world in which we live, and that Lobachevski, while logical, is not. The diagrams in Euclid, like the *Elements* as a whole, present a geometry that we can recognize; the world of Lobachevski's geometry is in important respects unrecognizable. But I do not think this implication holds up, for two reasons.

First, Euclid's own diagrams are questionable guides to the world. Lines drawn to be parallel in a Euclidean proof, in a book or on a downloaded page or on a whiteboard or on the Ziteboard app look parallel. But these lines actually may be considered segments of longer lines. And unless the most painstaking technology available is used to ensure that those

lines are strictly parallel – and perhaps even then – they will not be. If I draw two straight lines that look parallel, and those lines are extended far enough without bending them, the odds that they will never meet no matter how far extended – the universe is a big place – are infinitesimal. But for purposes of demonstration we take the lines as parallel in order to illustrate the proof. In this sense, using Euclid's diagrams to illustrate his proofs is not so different from taking the lines that are posited as parallel in Lobachevski's diagrams as actually parallel for purposes of proof. That is to say, the obvious skewness of Lobachevski's parallel lines is merely different in degree from the unapparent skewness of Euclid's.

The second reason for not concluding that Euclid is a better guide to the "real" world than Lobachevski is as follows. The diagrams in both are drawn on flat surfaces – paper pages or computer screens. We assume that flat surfaces are the appropriate way to map the world. But as those who make maps of the globe always have known, the attempt to project something that is not flat onto something that is flat unavoidably entails distortions (the Mercator projection being a case in point). So what would happen if we were to draw Lobachevski's diagram on a different kind of surface? What if we were to draw them on the surface of a Pringle?



A Pringle may be seen as a hyperbolic paraboloid (Figure 2), modified for commercial purposes. On its surface, many lines can be drawn that do not cut a given line. Furthermore, the angles of triangles drawn on the surface of a Pringle add up to less than 180° . So if geometric diagrams

were drawn on Pringles, Lobachevskian geometry would look perfectly sensible, while Euclidean geometry might be considered "imaginary."

It may be objected that the universe does not have the shape of a Pringle. My response is that we are not in a position to know the shape of the universe *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is possible that a flat surface distorts objects as much as or even more than a saddle-shaped surface does. I note that the Figure 1 is shown on the flat surface of a page – mapped onto it, one might say – but nobody would confuse the photograph with actual Pringles.

Similarly, it may be a mistake to confuse the "Lobachevskian" figures drawn on two-dimensional pages – even on Lobachevski's own pages – with actual Lobachevskian parallel lines and triangles, which can be presented undistorted only on a different kind of surface.

I conclude that Euclid's diagrams appear more plausible than Lobachevski's only because of the shape of the surfaces upon which those diagrams are drawn. Hence, I say it follows that neither of the two geometries is more real – or more imaginary – than the other.

There is another possibility: both Euclid and Lobachevski may be consistent with the "real" world, albeit at different scales. Lobachevski's Theorem 23 may be read to say that Euclidean geometry approximates Lobachevskian geometry at small scales – that is, as p (the distance of parallelism) $\rightarrow 0$, α (the angle of parallelism) $\rightarrow \pi/2$ – that is to say, 180° , which approximates what the angle of parallelism would be in Euclid. Similarly, the surface of the earth may appear flat when we look only at the small area around us, and we can sense its curvature only when looking at greater distances. The smaller the surface, the closer the curvature approximates flatness. It likewise is accepted that Einstein's general theory of relativity approximates at the scale of our ordinary experience Newton's theory of universal gravitation; the results of the two theories diverge substantially only at far larger scales. In all these instances, the small-scale view carries the imprimatur of common sense, while the view for larger magnitudes, while more general, to some extent at least affronts common sense.

This leads me to a final subject. The point of an axiomatic system is to derive propositions from axioms using standard modes of inference – what at the start of in this paper I called "logic." Consistency

with the axioms is decisive. I believe it follows that if a theorem's logic is sound, when images used to illustrate it appear to violate common sense, it is common sense that must give way. It is a commonplace that scientific experimentation can yield important truths that violate common sense – for example, heliocentric astronomy, or the fact that an apparently solid table is at a microscopic level mostly empty space and subatomic particles, not to mention quantum theory. Mathematics sometimes has that in common with science, as Aristotle pointed out. The difference between mathematics and science in this regard is that mathematical truths, unlike scientific ones, are *a priori*. They are necessary truths. In mathematics we do not determine whether two lines are parallel by extending them to see whether or not they meet, we determine it with postulates and logic. Thus in mathematics, imagination, in the sense I use the word in this paper, must yield to logic where they clash.

The Floating Dream: A novel excerpt of a journey to John Barth's Cambridge

Andrew Ross

Our male and female, husband and wife fit. Our epic story of dreaming, swimming in darkness and our birth-day marriage, a hopeful and positive love for everyone.

Three stars forming various shapes and patterns, two stars. The four stars of the Orion rectangle, Venus and Jupiter rising as the outer two stars, vertical, side and side.

Like the rise of Capella and its star, in a mirror.

The rising full Moon the last two nights, 3/6 and 3/7, the true "full" Moon the morning of 3/7. For the full Moon of early March and early April—4/6—and the March and April full Moons of the last few years, they surround the spring vernal equinox of March 20.

The last two nights of 3/6 and 3/7 in 2023, the full Moon the "Jupiter" top of triangles perfectly matching the Jupiter and Saturn and Pisces mirror triangle of last year's 2022 winter solstice. Makes us think, the full Moon and planets and stars able to duplicate such complexity.

"It's Easter or something," you said.

"A drink of water."

An image of the two of us, hugging, in a mirror, a cartoon image. I praise you, you hug me, we love the epic story of the Universe, the relationship of male and female.

One and one, we walked through my grandfather's Annapolis, past the brick buildings, church circle, a pub that features live music, cafes, stores, the law office of a childhood friend, new houses and Parisian apartment complex, the library, to a friend's house for NASA's Space instrument.

Driving first to Sandy Point, to test the Space instrument, possibly a joke, created together with Johns Hopkins Applied Physics lab, to decipher and codify the mathematical, physics, purpose relationships of the stars, planets, nebula clouds, and hopefully galaxies.

"Decipher the mathematical and scientific relationships of galaxies," you said.

"Biological."

You took a sip of afternoon coffee. "Everchanging, that's my code."

"Repetition mirror poetry of unknown journey," I said.

"Rain and waves."

We stepped from our Naval Academy jeep and onto the sand beach of Sandy Point Park, afternoon of my guitar songwriter uncle's birthday.

"How old is he?"

"60-something," I said.

We each thought of my grandfather's Babe Ruth baseball, of great significance to my uncle, his songs, his family my cousins. Physics, thermodynamics, water mechanics, especially of human flight, my grandfather's life. The baseball, my grandfather's greatest story.

Our family story. Physics and its aspects, our vocation.

We stood in the sand of Sandy Point Park beach, late afternoon of my uncle's birthday, light rain, wind, strong waves. Sky of grey clouds, various shades of grey, layered clouds, light rain, strong waves, the Chesapeake Bay bridge barely visible in the rain, wind, grey. The beach a crescent of yellow sand, the sky grey clouds, rain, the Bay's waves strong and grey and white, the same grey of the clouds.

Light rain, wind, standing in the beach sand, the grey Chesapeake Bay bridge barely visible within the grey water and clouds, waves against the beach, we left for the eastern shore.

We drove across the Chesapeake Bay, rain, a mist, grey. Grey clouds, grey water, the other side of the Chesapeake Bay barely visible.

We drove to one of our favorite stores, barefoot shoes and nice athletic clothes. An herbal tea at a favorite shop.

Driving on from Queenstown to Easton, route 50, listening to alternative music. We shopped at a

Kroger, pecans, oranges, collard greens, quinoa, farro. We drove on to Cambridge, lights across the wide river in the night.

Think of John Barth novels, *The Floating Opera*, *Giles Goat-Boy*, *Chimera*, *Tidewater Tales*, *Coming Soon !!!: A Narrative*, *Every Third Thought*, lights across the wide river in the night. A literature of exhaustion, story, treasure, postmodern retelling, of character roles.

Tour of the downtown and out to the famous Neck District, names on roads, properties, houses. A reminder of the Annapolis play we watched, a small circular theater, about the making of William Shakespeare's plays into the first collected book, 1623.

Late into the night, organizing with you for our Saturday in Cambridge. The library with John Barth historical marker and map, his apartment near Long Wharf, where he wrote *The Floating Opera*, where his jazz band played.

Smoke and look at the night sky of stars and Moon and clouds.

The next morning, after my uncle's birthday, an herbal tea at the local coffeeshop and restaurant. We drank and talked and wrote, and we walked to the library.

The Cambridge library and John Barth's historical marker out front, with a map of sites from his life and novels. Inside the library, the Shore Room and shelves of books related to John Barth's imagination fictions, philosophies, aesthetics, and literary artistic beliefs.

We read and read, husband and wife, libraries and libraries of books, including Naval Academy library and Bar-Ilan University. We read and read, letters and journals, secret writings and speeches never given, and plays, John Barth's unpublished collection. The Cambridge librarian leaned over our Shore Room table and whispered, "his wife's writings."

Now with the secret, write words, tell thoughts and stories, entertain, we walked to the John Barth historical marker map to Dream Wharf and the apartment he lived in—overlooking the Wharf and the docked Floating Theater barge—writing his first novel, National Book Award finalist, *The Floating Opera*. We smoked. We stood at the Dream Wharf, in front of the apartment where John Barth wrote his first novel *The Floating Opera*, the empty dock of The Floating Theater barge, the novel's inspiration, cruise ship in the background similar to the cruise ship of Jean-Luc Godard's 2010 film, *Film Socialisme*. We smoked a joint of organic herbs.

Incredible the Wharf and Choptank River, all the sailboats, houses near the Wharf, John Barth's first novel *The Floating Opera*, Jean-Luc Godard's 2010 film, traveling on a cruise ship.

"The herbs smell good," I said.

"Good taste."

"Soul."

"Constellation design."

"That's the name of the herbs."

"Dream opera film."

[# # #]

We walked from the Wharf, up High Street, past the library and circuit courthouse, visited where John Barth performed with his jazz band, then to the pizza place of 2013 novel *Every Third Thought*, across the street from the Arts Center, for pizza and more writing. Writing for a grad school project at Chesapeake Bay University. Very creative.

Easily amused, happy, pizza and writing, memories, imaginary fictions, we left for the Wallace Trail at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Sky blue of sunset, we walked the wooded trail, tall trees and leaf-covered ground of winter, blue sky through dark branches, until too dark. We drove for an evening Lotus cannabis joint before Academy Street to the local Cambridge brewery, soon herbal tea shop.

"Something to wonder about," I said.

Seat at the bar next to nice locals, audience or actors or writers or directors or characters of, on, the Floating Theater. Floating the Choptank, the Bay, the Chester, the Severn River of herbs and playing, then

Muir Street, and to the house for final smoke of the night.

In the dark, surrounded by woods, marshland, near Todd Point and Ross Neck Road, bright stars, star patterns, lesser stars visible within the woods, forest and waterland. We smoked herbs, thought of the sideways “V” of Arcturus, Spica, and the three-quarters Moon. The three celestial objects forming the same mirror “V” of Jupiter, Saturn, and Pisces, winter solstice 2022, two years after 2020’s great conjunction.

Late at night, Orion behind the house, beautiful aesthetic smell of burnt herbs, we fell asleep, the early morning of 3/12 and dreamed.

[# # #]

The next morning we packed our Jeep sport utility vehicle, and left for Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge...

Translations

A Translation of Lines 983–988 of Theognis

Quinn Rifkin

Around 1400 lines of verse have come down to us from Greek antiquity bearing Theognis of Megara's name. Together they constitute what is called the Theognidea, which is one of three substantial corpora that we have from the archaic period—the other two being those of Homer and Hesiod.

It almost goes without saying that Theognis is read and studied less than Homer and Hesiod. While we can, with minimal preparation, dive into Odysseus' world and plight as if it were our own, Theognis' poetry comes to sight as quite foreign to our modern sensibilities. He was a writer not of epics but of elegiac verses that dealt with the mores and manners of his time. His foreignness was put by Nietzsche in the following way: Theognis is the mouth piece of Greek aristocracy (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1.5).

Herodotus tells us that Homer and Hesiod gave the Greeks their gods (*Histories*, 2.53). Theognis, on the other hand, shows us what a life might look like under their creations; his great themes are love, friendship, war, and change. If we wish to be students of the Greek mind, we would do well to turn to Theognis. He can,

for example, help us to better understand what Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle were up to in their various writings (Plato: *Meno* 95c–e, *Laws* 630a; Xenophon: *Symp.* 2.4, *Mem.* 1.2.20; Aristotle: *NE.* 1129b, 1179b). So too if we wish to be students of our own time, it should be noted that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams also reflected on Theognis' poetry for guidance concerning perennial questions of political life (Adams to Jefferson, 16 August 1813, 2 September 1813, 15 September 1813; Jefferson to Adams, 28 October 1813).

Besides his didactic importance, Theognis' verses can be strikingly beautiful (yet beauty and moral edification may be inseparable, and were surely inseparable for the Greeks). I have translated one short verse that, I believe, exemplifies his poetic power. In these lines, Theognis conveys an abiding sentiment among the Greeks about the significance of that ephemeral period of life called 'youth.' Jacob Burckhardt, in his seminal study of Greek culture, has expressed this sentiment better than I can: "What it comes to is that youth is the only real time of life for the Greeks, and all the rest a very dubious prolongation."

Lines 983–988:

ἡμεῖς δ' ἐν θαλίῃσι φίλον καταθώμεθα θυμόν,
ὄφρα τι τερπωλῆς ἔργ' ἐρατεινὰ φέρη.
αἶψα γὰρ ὥστε νόημα παρέρχεται ἀγλαὸς ἥβη:
οὐδ' ἵππων ὀρμὴ γίνεται ὠκυτέρη,
αἶτε ἄνακτα φέρουσι δορυσσόον ἐς πόνον ἀνδρῶν
λάβρως πυροφόρῳ τερπόμεναι πεδίῳ.

Let us set down our dear heart in celebrations,
So long as it might still bear some lovely deeds of delight.
For quickly as a thought passes by brilliant youth:
Nor is the first rush of mares more swift,
Who bear their lord, spear-brandishing, straight into the burden of men,
Violently, while they revel in the wheat-bearing plain.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

مِثْلُ نُورِهِ ۚ كَمَشْكُوَةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ

الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ

الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبْرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ

لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ

يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ

نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ ۚ مَنْ يَشَاءُ

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

The “Verse of Light”, Quran 24:35

Abdullah Wadood

By the name of the God, The Most Graceful, The Gracer:

- [1] The God is the light of the heavens and the earth
- [2] A metaphor of His light is like a niche in a lamp
- [3] The lamp is in a glass bottle
- [4] The glass bottle is like a beaming planet lit from a blessed olive tree
- [5] Not Eastern and not Western
- [6] Its light would glow although not touched by fire
- [7] Light on light
- [8] The God guides to His light whom He wills
- [9] And the God strikes metaphors for mankind
- [10] And the God knows every thing the most

When one is about to recite the Qu’ran, he begins with the idiom “Bismillah”, meaning “By the name of God”. The Qu’ran adds two superlatives to the idiom, “Al Rahman” and “Al Raheem”. They are divine names. Notice that both names are derived from the R-H-M consonantal root. The R-H-M root describes mercy or grace. So both names describe God’s mercy in some way. Thus I have rendered “Al Rahman” as “The Most Graceful”. “Al Raheem” is a bit more difficult to translate. It is an amplification or hyperbole (“mugabalah”) of the word “rahem”, meaning one who gives grace. So “Al Raheem” signifies the one who is extraordinarily capable of giving grace, or the one who gives extraordinary grace. It is connected to the Arabic word for womb, “rahemun”. Both words suggest creation and sustenance. Thus the image is of a god that is extraordinarily tender, nurturing, dependable, and motherly. Elsewhere, the Qu’ran describes God as the strongest hand-hold and closer to one than one’s own jugular vein. Moreover, the “Bismillah” is an expression of optimism, insofar as an act of creation is always optimistic. No matter how despairing, pessimistic, or sad a work of art or music is, the fact that the artist could sublimate his or her negative emotions then turn them into something constructive is an expression of hope, that bad can be transmuted into good. Otherwise, there would be no art or music in the first place. The artist would still be in bed.

I will now describe what I think is going on in lines [4] and [5]. The case structure for Classical Arabic (the language the Qu’ran is recorded in) is quite fluid. The word order for line [4] is: tree—blessed—olive. Arabic grammar allows for the words tree—blessed—olive to be a unity, i.e. the phrase can be rendered as “blessed olive tree”, even though one might usually expect the Arabic word order to be tree—olive—blessed. But because of that same fluidity, perhaps olive could be adjoined to the next line, i.e. the olive does not belong to either the East or West. However, that would be too uncommon a rendering. English translations of the Qu’ran have been very keen about trying to replicate the style and the authority of the King James Bible. It’s unfortunate since that tends to unnecessarily obscure the Qu’ran’s poetic looseness. The word “kawkab” I have rendered as “planet” whereas older translations have opted to use “star”. This bothers me since the Qu’ran consistently uses a specific, unambiguous word for star: “najm”. In the chapter about Joseph, the son of Jacob, Joseph describes a dream where his brothers are eleven “kawakib”—planets. In fact, the full Arabic phrase for the planets is “al kawakib al mutahayyira”, i.e. “the bewildered stars”. This is similar to the Greek word “planet” which means “wanderer”. Both phrases refer to the irregular movement of planets if one assumes that the Earth doesn’t move.

When one combines lines [4] and [5] into a single image, I think there may be a description of a planet in retrograde motion. Because of the description of the planet’s beauty, I think it must be Venus.

I feel that many Islamic authorities would be suspicious of my conclusion since the worship of deities associated with Venus was common in Pre-Islamic Arabia. But here we find an image of Venus that is no longer associated with the old goddesses of Arabia, but instead attributed to a single, unified god, who seems to bear both masculine and feminine characteristics, transcending the old gods. Moreover, the Qu'ran is very open about observing nature to make conclusions about the existence of God. In fact, the chapter entitled "Al Rahman" is solely devoted to entice the listener to observe and ponder nature. The Qu'ran is very sure that an honest look at nature would necessarily lead one to believe in God's existence; its broad appeal to natural theology has always fascinated me.

Line [9] was interesting for me to translate. The word in question was "yadribu". In my opinion, the older translations are in error when they translate this word. They translate it to "present" or "set forth". But the root consonants are D-R-B, meaning to strike or to hit. The most difficult use of the word is in Qu'ran 4:34, where the Qu'ran legalizes and commands a husband to hit ("idribihunna") a disobedient wife if nonviolent methods of discipline, like talking to a friendly mediator, don't work. Both medieval and modern exegetes have been embarrassed by this verse: does the soft-hearted god I talked about earlier really command such things? So they qualify the beating so that it should be light, and to avoid leaving bruises, and to avoid striking the face, and to not use an implement wider than a toothbrush or thumb, and so on. It's reported that Muhammad never hit his wives, but he remained silent when his followers hit theirs, so his silence indicates assent. Anyways, the older English translators obscure the violence of line [9] by using words like "present" and "set forth". More honest is to recognize the line's suggestion of God's sheer power, and authority.

Line [10] was difficult for me to translate. Word-by-word, the line goes: And the God by/of every thing All-Knower. I am not wholly satisfied with my translation here, but I tried to balance out the superlative of being the All-Knower with the rest of the sentence's construction.



Jesse Clagett, *Archway in the Alhambra*, photograph

Anna Akhmatova, 1911

Ansley Green

Я живу, как кукушка в часах,
Не завидую птицам в лесах.
Заведут—и кукую.
Знаешь, долю такую
Лишь врагу
Пожелать я могу.

Анна Ахматова, 1911

I live like a cuckoo in a clock,
I do not envy birds in a forest.
They wind me up—and I cuckoo.
You know, I can wish
such a fate
only onto those I hate.

Anna Akhmatova, 1911

This poem is seemingly simple, but the more you read it, the more complex it becomes. This seems similar to the life the writer is trapped in. Inside their small life, their motions are mechanized and synchronized. Their wings are clipped so far down that they cannot even feel envy for those who are free—it is a life that is unfathomable. However, the shift in the second part of the poem shows an awareness and an acute dissatisfaction—that a life of precise order, led by someone other than yourself, is a life only to wish upon your worst enemy.

I chose to keep a rhyme scheme in English in the final lines of the translation to evoke a similar feeling that is found in the Russian. The repetition of an “oo” ending in the final four lines of the Russian imitates a cuckoo sort of sound, that I believe keeping the “fate/hate” rhyme helps to carry forward.

But—what does this poem mean to you?

Francis Bacon's Proem

Walker Rogalsky

INSTAURATIO MAGNA PROEM

FRANCISCUS DE VERULAMIO

Sic Cogitavit;
Talemque Apud Se
rationem instituit, quam Viventibus et
Posteris notam fieri, ipsorum
interesse putavit.

The Great Instaturation Proem

Fancis of Verulam¹
Thus considered²;

And set down such reasoning with himself, which
having become known to the Living and Posterity,
he thought for the interest of them.

*Cum illi pro comperto esset, intellectum humanum sibi
ipsi negotium facessere, neque auxiliis veris (quae in
hominis potestate sunt) uti sobrie et commode;*

Since it had been made clear to him that the human
intellect makes trouble³ for it itself, and does not use
soberly and appropriately true aids (which are in the
ability of a human:)

*Unde multiplex rerum ignoratio et ex ignoracione rerum
detrimenta innumera: omni ope connitendum existima-
vit, si quo modo commercium istud Mentis et Rerum (cui
vix aliquid in terris, aut saltem in terrenis, se ostendit
simile) restitui posset in integrum, aut saltem in melius
deduci.*

Whence there is a manifold ignorance of matters⁴
and innumerable detriments from the ignorance
of matters: he judged it must be attempted with all
resource, whether in some way it was possible that
the very commerce of Mind and Matters be restored
in integrity (to which scarcely anything on earth, or
at least in earthly things, shows itself similar,) or at
least to be the better deduced.

Ut vero errores qui invaluerunt, quique in aeternum in-

*valituri sunt, alii post alios (si mens sibi permittatur)
ipsi se corrigerent, vel ex vi intellectus propria vel ex aux-
iliis atque adminiculis dialecticae, nulla prorsus suberat
spes;*

That truly the errors which have been prominent,
and which will be prominent for eternity, (if the
mind permits itself to) that one by one these very er-
rors should correct themselves, or from the proper
power of the intellect or from the aids and props of
dialectic, there was simply no hope;

*propterea quod notiones rerum primae, quas mens
haustu facili et supino excipit recondit atque accu-
mulat (unde reliqua omnia fluunt), vitiosae sint et
confusae et temere a rebus abstractae; neque mi-
nor sit in secundis et reliquis libido et inconstantia;*

For the reason that the first notions of matters, which
the mind by drinking easily and supinely receives,
puts away and accumulates (from which all the rest
flow,) are vicious and confused and recklessly ab-
stracted from matters; and not less capriciously and
fickly in the following things and the rest.

*ex quo fit, ut universa ista ratio humana, qua utimur
quoad inquisitionem naturae, non bene congesta et ae-
dificata sit, sed tanquam moles aliqua magnifica sine
fundamento.*

From which it comes about that this whole human
reason, which we use for the examination⁵ of nature
is not well compiled and built up, but is just like some
noble mass without foundation.

*Dum enim falsas mentis vires mirantur homines et cel-
ebrant, veras ejusdem [() quae esse possint (si debita ei
adhibeantur auxilia, atque ipsa rebus morigera sit, nec
impotenter rebus insultet) praetereunt et perdunt.*

For while men admire and celebrate the false powers
of the mind, the true [powers] of [the mind] which
are capable of existing (if the proper aids are held out
to it, and it be obedient to the matters, and not im-
potently insult the matters) they pass over and lose.

*Restabat illud unum ut res de integro tentetur melioribus
praesidiis, utque fiat scientiarum et artium atque omnis
humanae doctrinae in universum Instauratio, a debitis
excitata fundamentis.*

There remained this one thing, that the matter be

tried from the beginning⁶ with better assistances, so that a Renewal⁷, excited from proper foundations, may occur of the sciences and arts and every human doctrine generally.

Hoc vero licet aggressu infinitum quiddam videri possit ac supra vires mortales, tamen idem tractatu sanum invenietur ac sobrium, magis quam ea quae adhuc facta sunt. Exitus enim hujus rei est nonnullus.

Although truly this can seem something infinite in the commencement and beyond the mortal powers, nevertheless, in the carrying out, the same thing will be found sound and sober, more than that which has been done up to now. For there is some result⁸ of this matter.

In iis vero quae jam fiunt circa scientias, est vertigo quaedam et agitatio perpetua et circulus.

Truly in those things which now come about the sciences, there is a certain vertigo and perpetual agitation and circularity.

Neque eum fugit quanta in solitudine versetur hoc experimentum, et quam durum et incredibile sit ad faciendam fidem.

And it does not escape him [Bacon] how much in solitude this experiment is mulled over, and how hard and unbelievable it should be to produce trust.

Nihilominus, nec rem nec seipsum deserendum putavit, quin viam quae una humanae menti pervia est tentaret atque iniret.

Nonetheless, he thinks neither the matter nor he himself must be deserted, without having tried and entered the way which is the only one passable for the human mind.

Praestat enim principium dare rei quae exitum habere possit, quam in iis quae exitum nullum habent perpetua contentione et studio implicari.

For it is better to give a principle to the matter which is capable of having a result, than in those things which have no result, to be implicated with perpetual contention and study.

Viae autem contemplativae viis illis activis decantatis fere respondent; ut altera, ab initio ardua et difficilis, desinat in apertum; altera, primo intuitu expedita et proclivis, ducat in avia et praecipitia.

Moreover, the contemplative ways closely correspond to those active, oft-repeated ways; as one, from the start, arduous and difficult, ceases in an opening; another, from first beginning, expeditious and easy, leads into the remote and precipitous.

Quum autem incertus esset quando haec alicui posthac in mentem ventura sint; eo potissimum usus argumento, quod neminem hactenus invenit qui ad similes cogitationes animum applicuerit; decrevit prima quaeque quae perficere licuit in publicum edere.

Moreover, since he was uncertain when these things will come thereafter to mind to anyone else, he especially used the argument, which thus far he found no one who had applied the soul to similar considerations; he decided that the first things whatever which it was permitted to complete, to dispatch into the public.

Neque haec festinatio ambitiosa fuit, sed sollicita; ut si quid illi humanitus accideret, extaret tamen designatio quaedam ac destinatio rei quam animo complexus est; utque extaret simul signum aliquod honestae suae et propensae in generis humani commoda voluntatis.

This was not ambitious haste, but concern; that if anything humane should happen to him⁹, at least a certain outline should stand out and an outline of the matter which he comprehended in soul; that at the same time some sign of his honesty should stand out and of an eager will for useful things for human kind.

Certe aliam quamcunque ambitionem inferiorem duxit re quam prae manibus habuit. Aut enim hoc quod agitur nihil est, aut tantum, ut merito ipso contentum esse debeat nec fructum extra quaerere.

Certainly he regarded any ambition whatever to be more inferior than the thing which he had before [his] hands. For either this which was worked at is nothing, or so much, that he ought to be content with its merit and not seek benefit beyond.

Notes

[1] My goal in translating is to make as literal a translation as possible and to use terms as consistently as possible.

[2] Bacon writes the whole Introduction in third person.

[3] 'Negotium,' is often business and the opposite of 'otium,' leisure.

[4] 'Res,' I will consistently translate as 'matter,' although an alternative is 'thing.'

[5] 'inquisitio,' can be directly translated to inquisition. But this word has connotations now that are may not meant by Bacon, so examination is best.

[6] Integro was used previously as "in integrum" which was translated 'in intergrity' but with 'de intergro' it means more specifically 'from the beginning,' but they are the same word.

[7] Instauratio, the title of the work.

[8] Exitus, opposite of aggressu, used above.

[9] This phrase is probably an idiom for death.

Essays

Stooping for Excellence in Iraqi Higher Education

Louis Petrich

An abridged version of this essay was delivered as an address at a conference on liberal education in Tbilisi, Georgia in June of 2011.

Much of the talk about liberal education, by those of us who wish to promote it at home and abroad, tends to take up its cause with platitudes. A listener who did not know better from experience might think that liberal education itself were as boring as the boosting of it inevitably sounds. But imagine how this booster must sound to people who look out the windows to see revolution spread like brushfires in the desert winds as dictators try to stamp the fires out. Even the most interesting discourses on liberal learning lose their attentive hold on students when the local dogs of war strain their leashes to be let loose. Here at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, we look out windows unobstructed by concrete blast walls, to see lush trees, fields, and the peaceful streets of the state's capitol; we do not bother ourselves about the dust of the chalk that our demonstrations of Euclidean geometry leave behind on classroom floors, while outside leaf-blowers clear paths of nature's autumnal demonstrations. But if we were given to worry whether the College itself might be reduced to dust before the freshmen graduate, maybe blown to bits in seconds, who would attend to demonstrations of Euclid at the board? And what would those demonstrations be demonstrating about the students who did manage to attend to them?

During the 2010-2011 academic year, at the American University of Iraq in the northeastern Kurdish city of Sulaimani, I taught freshmen Iraqis (mostly Kurds, and some Arabs) to read Euclid, Darwin, and Galileo as part of the two-year core curriculum of liberal arts required of all its students. Such a curriculum is unprecedented in Iraq, unless you go back about 1000 years. All of us who taught in the core had to become the defenders and promoters of its ambitious content. Each day that I taught there, another layer of that ancient land's dust had to be wiped away from these authors' books, so that eyes distracted or even blinded by the glare of outside events might be persuaded to read them with inter-

est and care. I could hardly blame one of the Iraqi members of the University's Board of Trustees for storming out of a curriculum meeting, in defense of the core, saying, "Not another word about Socrates!" Even one of my American colleagues, a professor of business management, information technology, and applied mathematics, decided to use his copy of Euclid's Elements as a door stop to his office—a demonstration of what he thought this great book was good for under the torn conditions of that ancient country.

My office door continually opened to admit one or more of my sixty or so students. For they often came to see me in groups of ten to fifteen, to persuade me how to teach them more effectively: We think your questions are too hard. If you want us to succeed you should ask easier questions. This was their way, as I learned, to negotiate human conflicts: let one power present itself frankly to the other power so that the lesser may recognize its weakness and respectfully defer to the greater. Sometimes I could find ways to defer in good conscience to reasonable demands: "I will give you take-home exams from now on, and you may consult the books and work together to answer the questions. If still you fail, there will be opportunities for extra credit." (There were times when we would not have gotten by without extra credit. It functioned like Allah's mercy to sinners. They liked that comparison.) At other times, when their demands were not conscionable, I stood up from my desk to tell them calmly that they should have brought more bodies into my little office—at which point they exited to undertake their duties in reasonable humor. They often would astonish me at having preserved a certain sweetness of temper through the bitterness of their history, which taught them to approach any negotiation with a show of toughness and strength. They were quite impossible to cure of the kind of collaboration that we call "cheating" or "plagiarism," and which they call "friendship" or "using the internet together." They wonderfully possessed a great capacity for honor, accompanied accordingly by an acute sense of wrongs done them, to be redressed, seriously. Any weaknesses of character that they could turn to their advantage, they did, and some of my colleagues on the faculty paid a heavy price for weakness. It was best, as I discovered, to stand while teaching them. One also had to know where to look not to lose heart at the ever-present prospect and evidence of failure. As they looked out the windows in distraction at the tumultuous affairs of their country,

I made my horizon the long-term mission of the university, whose core were the liberal arts. It was there that I tried to project my success. All the while, from the fire and dust of Iraq and the spiritedness of my students, I was getting an education, different from the liberal one I was offering in books, but no less to the purpose. Maybe more.

The streets of Sulaimani witnessed daily demonstrations for months against the entrenched party interests, and occasionally the streets become violent. The two major Kurdish parties ordered their militias to occupy strategic positions around the city to maintain order. A Peshmerga raid on an al-Qa'ida haven near our housing compound killed five terrorists, a goodly reminder to restive people not to overthrow their guardians. (The Peshmerga were once Kurdish mountain fighters who had evolved over the years into the professional military of the autonomous Kurdish region. The word itself conveys "those who stand before death with a knife clenched in their teeth.") The faculty received daily security reports about what to expect and where not to go. Our contingent of bodyguards was doubled when Osama bin Laden was killed. They sat next to us in the vans that took us to and from the university, their AK-47's resting in their laps, like the briefcases and book bags in ours. One of them was trying to learn some English, so I tried to make small talk. He was shy, and kept looking down at his gun. We took different routes to the university for our security. I got to see a lot of the city that way. My students from Baghdad found all this boring by comparison to home. Sulaimani to them was like Peoria to someone from Manhattan. No bombs went off.

One thing remained constant among students wherever they came from. Pressured by parents, relatives, and their own habits of mind to get the good grades and credentials necessary to become engineers, information technologists, or business managers, they demanded to know why they needed to read (for example) Charles Darwin. We are not going to become doctors or biologists, they knowingly declared. Will Darwin be on the exam? "Yes, you are being examined on this author," I replied. What kind of exam? "You may think of it as multiple choice, but you will have to supply the choices and discuss them in an essay." How many questions will we have to answer? "You may choose from among several to answer but one—but do answer it with manifold care." There will not be enough time. "If there was enough

time to make it possible for a species to evolve from fish able to have this conversation, there will be enough time for you to reflect on that process in the exam." I learned how to enjoy the students for asking me such questions. As Pascal says somewhere, the golden objects of learning are not always high and out of reach but rolling around at our feet. It is only necessary to be willing to stoop for them.

Yet all our stooping under questioning, without picking up a satisfactory answer, then having to stoop again, and again, did not please them as sport. Why are you always asking us about things you don't know? How do you expect us to know? We are the students; you are the professor. So teach. (Indeed, the sign on my office door said, "Louis Petrich: Associate Professor in the Core." I shall not stand that entitled again, for we are all "tutors" at St. John's.) They had a point, so I tried to answer the question they kept on asking me: Why are we reading these books? "We read Charles Darwin not to become biologists," I professed one day, after giving much thought to the matter and to its rhetoric, "but to distinguish and appreciate the different paths that life has taken over the course of natural history. For example, there is the life of the social insects in the hive—materially secure, well-ordered, the struggle for existence decided in their favor. The path that we Homo sapiens have taken to regulate the awfulness of life--not to be defeated by it--is a thing we call 'culture.' Unlike the beehive, culture is devoted to knowing the geometry of its spaces and to delighting in the beauty of colors and forms even in the face of danger from all sides. Have you heard how Archimedes is reported to have died? He was so determined to finish the demonstration of one more geometrical theorem as the Roman sword hung over his head at the siege of Syracuse in 212 B.C., that he did not notice when it made its descent: *Quod erat demonstrandum* indeed. His preoccupation with geometry (which by the way, provided him the know-how of an engineer) is not merely an eccentricity. Preoccupations make us human, different from chimpanzees and rats, who learn to solve puzzles and negotiate mazes to earn their bananas and sweets. The choice that you face as students at this university of liberal learning is not between thinking forever like a biologist or an engineer. Your choice is between learning to think freely and bravely for yourselves, or not knowing how to think at all. In either case, the sword is hanging there, and it will fall. Yet for some things, like the

truths of geometry, it has no edge. Think on those things. Does not Holy Scripture say as much? We are all being examined on the multiple choices we make among the higher, lower, or middle paths of life. These paths are available for inspection in literature, philosophy, history, and biological science. What a pity if you fail this examination. How else, than by interrogating these books, will you know the path to take to be judged human?"

I apologize if my professed answer sounds platitudinous. As I said at the beginning, this is hard to avoid, especially since I am a believer in the answer. Yet I must report that my students continued to believe in pressing the question. And so we contested the matter of their educations for a whole year. You would not have read about our contest in the news, but when I hear people talk about the outcome of the war in Iraq, I know that our contest at the American University in Sulaimani is a part of that whole outcome, a pretty good part, I like to think. But judge for yourselves.

Let me tell you about a young, veiled woman named Ziza, who always sat in the front row of my mathematics class. She never said a word but paid strict attention to every demonstration and wrote down whatever I said or wrote on the board. At the end of the semester, I collected the students' math notebooks, in which they were supposed to practice the art of demonstrating and to ponder its difficulties and meanings. Ziza used a ruler, compass, and different colored pencils to draw the diagrams and highlight the steps in the proofs, one after another throughout Book I of Euclid. Her notebook became a thing of manifest craftsmanship. It was, in fact, a kind of work of art, whose making had taken many more hours than I had intended, yet she did not reckon them up for extra credit, as others did with much less reason. As I perused the pages of Ziza's beautiful notebook, I felt happy, yet without quite knowing why I should, for I could not say that she was learning to think mathematically on her own, rather than reproducing with great care and patience the thinking of others. When I turned to the first page to write something appropriate in praise of her hard work and to encourage her to become more questioning in her learning, I saw in the center of the page a dedication, written in English and Kurdish in graciously flowing scripts, and surrounded on the margins by the flourishing of geometrical figures that populate Book I of Euclid. The dedication said simply: To the

Glory of God.

Among the platitudes I was mentioning before, we often hear some version of this one: liberal education is the pursuit of knowledge and beauty for their own sakes, as goods in themselves. That saying was not good enough for Ziza. I did not write anything on that first page of her notebook. I did not write anything at all in her book. I spoke a word of praise when I handed it back, and I added my hope that she would keep it forever.

Many of my male students habitually carried prayer beads that they audibly fingered in class and everywhere else. I learned to ignore the sound, or to regard it as part of the exotic, like the call to prayer that loudly issued each day around noon from a mosque a block away from the university. I learned not to go to the washroom at that time—too many men crowding in to clean their hands before prayer. I wondered if the pursuit of knowledge and beauty is also a general calling to be followed by those who hear it and recognize the need to keep something in themselves clean for the purpose of approaching the true.

One of my male students, Bouwar, a Kurdish nationalist, always dressed in traditional attire (the shrwal), an elegant, trim robe with a scarf-like belt around the waist, noble and assertive. He lacked only a scimitar to complete the image of the tribal leader and mountain warrior. (Weapons, by the way, were not allowed past the two entrances through the concrete blast walls that surrounded the American University of Iraq. The signs proclaimed it, and the Peshmerga were stationed there to strictly enforce the ban.) Bouwar liked to interrupt my professing of the things we now know about nature to ask sharp, impatient questions that felt to me hostile to modern science, particularly to Darwin. What's the evidence for that? How do they know that? Is that a fact or just a theory? Do you believe that, Professor? Are there Moslem scientists who believe that? He also fingered the prayer beads as he questioned me. To my imagination, Bouwar could have been a superbly groomed Spartan, and I an infidel Athenian.

Bouwar wrote an essay for his history professor that he gave to me as well, since I had argued that Darwin's great achievement was to turn biology into a kind of history. The title of his essay was: "The Great Deceivers." I instantly imagined that the essay contained an attack on Darwin and other theorists of modern science. By the third or fourth

sentence I realized that much I had imagined about this young man was wrong. His thesis was that the prophets were all deceivers, Mohammed being the greatest deceiver of the lot. I was stupefied and in awe, since these are the kind of thoughts, which uttered, get you quickly killed in that part of the world (and in other parts, too, if less quickly). As I read the essay, I realized where his pointed questions in class were coming from and tending. He was covertly digging for solid evidence to use against the authority of the prophets. With some concern for his future well-being, I gave him and the class Galileo's "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina" on how to read Holy Scripture alongside scientific discoveries, so that the oneness of truth manifested in nature and revelation might be maintained by a man of reason and faith.

The little courage that calmly accepts uncertainty about how one will earn a living after studying the liberal arts ought to be all the courage one needs to follow that calling for four years of university study. How did I dare to ask more of my Moslem brothers and sisters?

A letter that I shall keep among my remembrances of my year in Iraq was written to me by a young man named Bakir, an Arab from Baghdad, which a long time ago was the center of learning and wisdom in the West. But seven years before I taught him, Bakir's father and uncle were murdered in Baghdad by a squad of Shiah during their attacks on the Sunni, and from their home the remainder of his family had to flee for their lives to Damascus. (I wonder where they live today now that Syria has taken its turn as a country from which to flee.) I should mention that the students at the American University of Iraq all had stories to tell of death, torture, exile, imprisonment, or the fear of these things, stories that have been told before, so typically they did not tell them again, unless one were new enough to ask. Bakir wanted to return to Baghdad some day to help make it great again. That was why he intended to study politics at the American University in Sulaimani, where he could also write for the school newspaper, join the debate club, and give expression to his conspicuous thymos. He could not understand why he, Bakir, the future Sunni politician, should be forced to study modern life science, at the center of which he found a godless theory. This angered him. I asked the class to consider the motto above the oracle at Delphi: Know Thyself. Where does this self of ours come from? How shall we come to know it?

What is its name? Is it bred into the genes of the only surviving species of the genus *Homo*, which some scientists speculate may have exterminated the Neanderthals and other related species long ago? Is that the story of who we are and why we are prone to anger and violence? Bakir began to listen to the arguments of life science when he saw the political connections, and so one day late in the semester he wrote me the following letter:

As long as you are our professor and are lecturing us for the purpose of a superior education, I would like to have a public debate with you at the university: you are with Darwin's theory and I am against his theory. Then both professor and student will have the opportunity to convince the audience about what we both believe. I don't want—like many students—to have a contradiction within myself. So if you publicly refute me and convince me, I will believe in this theory. I think you can understand my situation when I believe in something and one day an American professor at school comes to me and tells me that what I believed is wrong. Darwin shocked the world by his theory, and I was shocked to hear you say to me that I am not who I thought I was! And I lived my life with a lie. So, imagine my situation currently. What we are going to decide is very essential, Professor. If this is really a university where students are allowed to have challenging personalities, then I am glad to be one of these students. And I challenge you.

His words made me think of a Platonic dialogue and chivalric duel. I declined the format of his proposal, for several obvious reasons, and instead organized a class debate in teams of students on the question of Darwinism.

The things that were said in that debate made an awful mess of Darwin, which disappointed me, though it did not surprise me. But one thing stood out from the mess. Bakir and his colleagues were not going to be persuaded of their origin from animals. They did not so much mind the idea of animals evolving from animals, but not human beings, not them. From this stance they would not budge. In some respects, they were thinking like the pigeon fanciers in Darwin's opening chapter of *The Origin of Species*. These men proudly believed that their fancy, prize-winning pigeons were each a special kind, instead of being varieties of one species. I felt that this was closed-minded of my students, and in that

respect, I had failed as a teacher of the liberal arts. But since then, I have thought more about Bakir's challenge and the stance that he and his colleagues took in that debate. His beloved Baghdad, like Socrates' beloved Athens, had gone down the tubes from much war and tyranny. But his human soul, like that of Socrates, did not have to follow his city as it went down. In that messy debate about Darwin, the students would not allow the recorded or purported events of natural history to deprive them of a distinct kind of soul, prized and elevated as the image of God. To be free of stamping by the events of history—not to be stamped out by time—may we not consider their insistence on that freedom to be the root of liberal learning now begun in Iraq? We must hope so. Or else we must meet the challenge and teach them, as once, long ago, they taught us what it takes not to be stamped out. That challenge is bigger than you or I thought.

Xenophon's Role in Plato's *Philebus*? A Response to Leo Strauss

Sam Hage

When Leo Strauss came to St. John's College toward the end of his life, he chose to lecture, not on Plato, but on Xenophon, whom he—perhaps uniquely among scholars—considered to be the superior Socratic authority. This belief in Xenophon's importance influenced much of the rest of his work.

In another lecture on Plato, not delivered at St. John's, Strauss makes the following offhand comment:¹

Whether Xenophon is not underlying one of the Platonic characters in the dialogues is a long question. I have a certain suspicion, but since I have no means of proving it, I will not state it. I believe that Xenophon occurs somewhere, but I cannot prove it, as an unidentified character in the *Philebus*—I mean, and an important character there.

To my knowledge, no one has ever decoded this riddle; I would like to make my own contribution.

Virtually every Platonic dialogue is named either for its chief speaker or its subject matter. Two bear the name of a famous figure who is thematic for, but not present in, the work. We thus begin each dialogue with one firm foothold, at least, before quickly plunging into its boundless enigmas. In the case of the *Philebus*, however, Plato forces his readers to contend with one puzzle before they have even turned the first page: Why is this long and complicated work named for a character who barely speaks? Indeed, *Philebus* is so irrelevant in the latter two-thirds of the conversation that readers are liable to forget he is even there.

The flipside of the riddle of the *Philebus*' title is the question of the dialogue's true interlocutor, Protarchus. Who is this man, and why does he become the spokesman for hedonism?

Socrates identifies Protarchus as the son of Callias; scholars are quick to point out that Callias III of Alopecce—the famous and depraved aristocrat featured in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon—only had two sons, neither of which could be the Protarchus of the *Philebus*. They thus dismiss the

possibility that this could be the Callias Socrates refers to. But Plato never shies away from mixing historically plausible characters and settings with his fanciful imagination of conversations that could not really have taken place. Perhaps he wishes for us specifically to take note of this literary impossibility and question Protarchus' identity.

In hinting that Xenophon is a character in the *Philebus*, Strauss could have only three possibilities in mind: that Xenophon is one of the mute and nameless boys listening in on this conversation, or that Plato means either *Philebus* or Protarchus to stand in as Xenophon's alter ego. It is the last that I find most promising.

To further substantiate this conjecture, we must look to two other unidentified "characters" in the dialogue, Antisthenes and Aristippus. *Philebus* commentators have remarked that the two major doctrines of the dour and extreme ascetics mentioned at 44b are attributable to these men. To Antisthenes, that pleasure is simply the absence of pain; to Aristippus, that pleasure has no genuine *ousia*. (Aristotle addresses these same two famous views in Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.)

Plato began writing the dialogues upon his return to Athens some years after the death of Socrates. This period, which also saw the founding of the Academy, was a time of competition and controversy over the succession of various Socratic "schools," and major sections of certain dialogues are devoted to the refutation of the doctrines of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. But Plato—undeniably victorious in the eyes of history as Socrates' most important successor—is selective in which characters he features by name, and thus cements in the Western philosophic canon.

Diogenes Laertius, writing perhaps a less biased intellectual history, places Antisthenes and Aristippus in this crowd of prominent and consequential Socratic followers—so important that they merit their own chapters in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Xenophon, too, features these men as frequent interlocutors, among the likes of Critobulus, Hermogenes, and Aristodemus. Plato, by contrast, mentions them almost not at all.

The list of Diogenes Laertius' neighboring chapter subjects is highly telling: Phaedo, Euclides, Crito, Glaucon, Simmias, Cebes. All six have primary speaking (or narrating) roles in major Platonic dialogues; Antisthenes and Aristippus are almost

entirely absent. (Antisthenes is said to be present at Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*, but he does not speak.)

Did Plato excise these two men as characters because of some serious intellectual disagreement? That Xenophon did not similarly exclude them suggests that Plato's disagreement with Antisthenes and Aristippus was also a disagreement with Xenophon himself. The *Philebus*, in associating their teachings with those "terrible" pleasure deniers, provides us a hint as to what he might have found objectionable. Perhaps Xenophon, unlike Plato, was enchanted by the ascetic promise of their anti-hedonistic teachings. This is suggested, to give just one example, by Xenophon's highly favorable depiction of Antisthenes' moral virtue in his *Symposium*, which takes place—where else?—in the house of Callias III.

Perhaps, then, Plato meant for us to imagine Xenophon—in the guise of Protarchus—as the recipient of his most important Socratic refutation of this doctrine, and perhaps this is the meaning of Strauss' cryptic remark.

In light of Plato's habit of portraying Socratic refutations of the ideas of his contemporaries, the drama of the *Philebus* is not surprising. That Plato would find these particular teachings so objectionable as to erase their authors from his record of Socratic philosophy, however, might come as a surprise indeed. The cartoonish portrayal of Plato is as a grim and sinewy ascetic, diligently castigating all those inconvenient needs and desires of the body as deleterious to the genuine good found in the life of the mind. But a careful reading of his dialogues reveals, again and again, the admission that pleasure is simply inextricable from human life. Human beings—divine puppets that we are—cannot help but choose what pleases us over what pains us; the best we can do is train ourselves to be pleased and pained *by the right things*.

No embodied creature can fully renounce pleasure. Those who are tempted by the possibility confront a danger not unlike that of misology, or hatred of argument, against which Socrates warns his companions in the *Phaedo*. In aiming for complete asceticism, they doom themselves to failure, and so risk giving up the hope of moderation altogether. They will thus miss out on what is in truth the greatest pleasure of all—the pleasure afforded by serene contemplation of the highest things.

To make a stronger case for the likelihood of

Xenophon's enthrallment to Antisthenes' and Aristippus' severe and consummate asceticism would require much more examination—for example, of Socrates' conversations about pleasure with Antiphon and Euthydemus in the *Memorabilia*. Even then, the most we could say is that such an enchantment might at least be plausible. Whatever his reasons, Plato, it seems, did his best not to let them enchant another generation of readers.

Notes

[1] My thanks to Quinn Rifkin and Joseph Keegin for discovering, and circulating, this part of the lecture.



Jules Spiese, *The Cave*, 2021, Pencil and Digital



How Might a Machine Intend?

Siobhán Petersen

What would it mean to say that a machine can “think?” There is a sense that machines are able to go through a logical process similar to what we describe as reasoning; this is true in very complex computing systems as well as simple electrical systems. They can reliably generate outputs based on certain inputs, much like a responsive sensory organism.

However, these are purely physical processes, which is typically understood to lack whatever it is we mean when we say “mind.” A home furnace doesn’t “know” it’s being called by a thermostat, nor does an elevator “know” I’ve addressed it when I press the button in the same way that you know when your name is called, or what Paris is, or what ice cream tastes like; the machine is wired in such a way that a current is routed to activate or deactivate the machine based on signals the designer has attuned it to be responsive to.

Yet the question persists, can machines think? Can they understand, or generate their own goals or ideas? Can they be taught to be truly spontaneous, can they learn to feel? Or, will they only ever be capable of that mere formal mechanized “reasoning,” with enough instructions that we can trick ourselves into seeing minds where there are none? Let us first turn to this question.

Can a Machine Understand?

Philosopher John Searle talks about the key difference between minds that form understandings and machines that execute formal, syntactical processes as being the ability to have intentions, which he posits are likely to be uniquely linked to biological life.¹ His thought experiment, the Chinese Room, compares the outputs of a computer that can have a perfectly-convincing natural-language conversation to a monolingual English-speaker operating on Chinese symbols by executing the instructions from a book that contains the right answers to any prompt.

Searle grants that this setup would be capable of passing Alan Turing’s famous Imitation Game², and would create a convincing impression of understanding. If you provide a simple story in Chinese about a person going to a restaurant and enjoying a

meal, then ask if the person paid the bill, the executor with the use of the Chinese book can reply “yes,” despite the fact there’s nothing that logically necessitates those things both be true. This is the kind of information we’d normally consider contextual, and indicative of understanding and intelligence. Under these perfect conditions, Searle asserts that no matter what, the executor still does not know Chinese and thus can never understand anything. All they are capable of is recognizing and manipulating the symbols themselves.

This kind of formal reasoning is different in-kind to whatever action is happening when humans interpret. The executor is never freed from the room to see the outcomes of their work, and so can never learn what the symbols do. Thus, Searle argues, it stands to reason that they can never be said to form an intention³, merely a calculation; whatever incredibly large and nuanced set of inputs they receive, they can only use a syntactic logical process to arrive at the correct output.

Is this actually analogous to machine reasoning? Algorithmic problem-solving bears much in common with this account; the actual concepts that underlie whatever the machine is manipulating symbols in reference to are semantically “empty,” as you can just as easily substitute the units it uses with something nonsensical and the computer will still follow the same logical steps.⁴ A concept need only be a label here. In fact, a computer will always have an incredibly exact, precise definition of any term, with a definite address for that definition it can query for information; but it will only define what it means to the calculating system, so context is not necessary beyond how to operate on it.

Qualitative understandings that humans possess are not structured like this. Marvin Minsky explains this gap as the result of a “basic fact of mind: what something means to me depends to some extent on many other things I know.”⁵ We do not have rigid formal definitions for every term we use when we speak; minds are elastic, and our concepts are ambiguous. A formal reasoner needs those hard definitions and for their operands to be arranged logically, but humans are often logically unclear to outright incorrect while still conveying the proper meaning. The computer’s connection to a question is totally intrinsic to the asking⁶ – it would not have many different ways to understand “mind,” or “know,” for instance – whereas we have no special command over the world

or direct connection to the information we are trying to apprehend. We are left with a much more difficult task: to uptake the question from our environment and the context, and learn from our many inevitable errors. To find any answer, we first have to invent the question for ourselves.

Perhaps, then, the semantic process is special to brains. What if we simulate a brain? Let us assume that a program can render a re-creation of a human brain as it acts in the body, down to the level of neurotransmitting molecules even, that is so high-fidelity that any mistakes in the model are indistinguishable from normal variances. Searle claims that any understanding the computer might have is only a simulation of understanding in the same way that a simulation of a rainstorm is not really a rainstorm; we can only ever replicate its formal elements to make representations. Programming is simply us elaborating an algorithm to jockey around empty symbols, which we the creators can then attach meanings to. The computer will never understand the semantics of whatever it may claim to know, just as the English-speaker will never understand Chinese.

This argument places a lot of weight upon a specific view on meaning of “simulate.” I think Searle is correct to be skeptical of considering the mind as separate from body, what he calls a “residual form of dualism.” There is a deeply-ingrained assumption that mind is both conceptually and factually independent of the body, and we should not be so quick to dismiss that, “actual human mental phenomena might be dependent on actual physical-chemical properties of actual human beings.”⁷ However, the characterization he proposes places mind in a purely material realm, when in fact mind also has to do with information. It is one thing to simulate a physical action, and another to simulate a representational action. We can better understand this by examining the question: what is information?

Information is indeed a material phenomenon, but not itself a material. It would seem it is more like an arrangement of states in materials that can represent something else. When we talk of “1’s and 0’s,” “bits and bytes,” these are abstractions for the state of many tiny switches that encode meanings; yet computer memory is just as physical as a book. However, information is not dependent on the kind of states it relies on to represent; Hamlet is still Hamlet on a Kindle or etched in stone. Further, informa-

tion and representations are materially dependent; if you destroy every copy of every version of a book, the ideas represented in them are truly lost. We know this is equally true of the mind; destroying portions of the brain takes away the ability to perform mental operations, including memory.

On the other hand, representations are themselves unlimited – we can represent something that has not, cannot, or will never exist without pushing the material limitations of the medium the information is stored in. We can describe impossible things, or even things that would just be materially difficult to accomplish physically, with the same ease as describing something totally mundane.

What is a human doing when forming intentions as Searle presumes we can? If we accept this picture of information, it would appear the process looks something like converting Action in the world into Information, then turning that Information into novel Action. The Information in the mind is some arrangement of brain matter, and mental processes like perception and thought alter those arrangements in order to represent.

Simulating this process in a different medium would involve altering the arrangements of the switches in, for instance, a hard drive, but the underlying goal of those rearrangements would be the same; the only difference lies in the arbitrary encoding scheme used. The resultant act of mind is truly virtual, in the sense that it expresses the essential feature – what a mind does in virtue of being a mind – even when lacking the material components that typically enable it. Thus, when we talk about understanding or intending, the critical question we must ask to answer Searle’s challenge is: does a brain think, or does a mind think? If it is a mind that thinks, then we must concede that it is neither fully material nor mystically nonmaterial. There is no reason to believe that a computing machine can’t perform this process.

How Might We Recognize a Machine Intending?

Simulating a brain may be able to accomplish the process of creating a fully-realized mind, complete with intentions and understandings. However, that likely isn’t the most efficient route to a conscious machine – in fact, merely reproducing something that we’re certain can create a mind tells us very little about the essential nature of either thing. Humans

create minds all the time via reproduction, in fact, but we are no closer to answering the question: why does some matter think and other matter does not? If we want to provide an adequate account, we need to be able to answer the Composition Problem – the issue being that non-thinking matter can't simply emerge into consciousness from total unconsciousness; whatever factors enable mind must be explainable in terms of what we know about that lower level of matter. Finding out how a machine can form novel intentions in its own way, as itself rather than due to its resemblance to a human, may be able to teach us something important about ourselves as well.

In discussing the essential nature of a consciousness, we are in a way asking about the concept of the soul. Apart from all experiences, contingencies, and even specific processes, what is that “spark” we're referring to when looking at another conscious being? How might we recognize it if we saw it? The Cartesian ideal of the soul draws a near 1-to-1 relationship between the ability to rationalize and the “spark” that reflects the divine; an immaterial ghost-in-the-machine that links us to the creator and is the site of mentation. Aristotle proposes a more embodied form of soul as the animating force behind all life, and thus all living things possess “psychic powers.”⁸

In this model, plants have an appetitive soul, animals have an irrational soul in addition, and humans have a rational soul on top of these. The ability to move, grow or decay is the most fundamental, and it serves a nutritive function; a living thing's pure striving for the means to go on living. Sensations delineate the irrational souls of animals from plants, but this also can include emotions and other highly-developed perceptions. Aristotle credits both of these “lower” souls with the “originate power”^{9,10} that would constitute an intention; a living body must contain within itself the ability to generate motions, and not merely move when it is acted upon.

Aristotle separates mind and thinking into the rational soul, believing, “it alone is capable of existence in isolation from other psychic powers.”¹¹ This would seem to be accurate of machine thinking. Computers separate purely rational syntactic processes from the need for other sorts of mentation; but we've also established that, thus far, this has prevented it from understanding and intending the concepts rational thought can operate on. If this is somehow the highest form of soul, are we comfort-

able attributing the term to our PC? Or perhaps it is missing something provided by these other sorts of soul?

Let us first consider the idea of an appetitive robot. Picture a machine sent to Mars for a long-term research mission and given the ability to harvest its own solar energy to power itself. Upon landing, it runs the subroutine to set up solar panels, and continuously monitors its own battery level to know when it's time to go recharge. This is a sort of “hunger,” yet it still seems to be missing something. The Aristotelian model specifically places sensations like hunger that create pleasure and pain in the higher irrational soul, so it's not necessary that the robot “feel” it so long as it has an awareness of its nutritive needs. Like any other computer, it embodies the “rational soul,” and now has the capacity to move by itself to “feed” itself as much as any living thing does – expending energy it contains in order to act as a whole – but intuitively, we're still waiting on the “spark.”

Is this because we don't view this as fully “originate?” Where is the novelty in its intentions? Again our intuitions point us to a distinction between merely executing prewritten instructions and intending something, but at the same time, a close examination of the ways humans make their decisions with high-level regularity and in accordance with causal physical laws begins to make that distinction uncomfortably gray. Further, that would open the door to denying that purely-irrational animals acting on instinct possess a soul or consciousness, since these are also in a way predetermined. How might we explain this discrepancy?

At time of writing, the robot (and any other program) is created when a computer programmer undertakes the representing function, supplying their intention and understandings, for the purpose of fulfilling their functions. A piece of accounting software is not being written to generate novel ideas on the nature of numbers, nor being asked to understand the cultural value of the money it records. The designer (and later, the user) provide the program with Information, and in response receive an Action. It's perhaps most accurate to say that the program is itself a representation, at least in some respects, and not capable of creating its own. If its been supplied with an analogy, it is only following; it will never respond with one of its own.

We seem to be closing in on a soul. In order

to call something a conscious mind, perhaps what we're looking for is that process of turning Action into Information into new Action. It is in the Aristotelian irrational soul where this occurs, at the level of sensations and perceptions. As discussed, a purely rational syntactic computation has direct access to the precise meaning of any piece of information. Otherwise, it cannot function. Words like IF, THEN, GOTO or PRINT may leave room for ambiguity to a human, but can only ever mean one thing to a machine – a computation can never be asked to invent a question, because it's never making a qualitative judgment. Conversely, living things that sense and respond to the environment must intuit information, must write and solve its own computational problems, and only then can they execute those instructions.

How Do Machines Perceive?

The miracle of brains are their ability to form perceptions of the world around them with lightning speed, which has traditionally been an obstacle for computer intelligence. They're capable of doing this using neural tissue – hardware that is magnitudes slower than a computer chip – to perform an incredibly complex calculation that simultaneously recognizes the whole of a thing and compare it against every other memory of other perceptions.¹² This is an astounding display of the power of evolutionary dynamics.

Already we are beginning to see machines that make very complex perceptions and judgments, such as LiDAR demonstrations on self-driving cars. They are also supremely expensive, resource-intensive, and difficult to understand even for the humans who develop them. We've managed to make complex behaviors out of complex foundations, but we still lack trust for these systems because of it. Complex systems are inherently more prone to failure because there's simply more things that can go wrong. It's one thing for a CAPTCHA to misidentify a traffic light, but it's another thing entirely if your car does. Within the very specific fields that these systems are designed to operate in, we lend their judgments about as much credence as a precocious seven-year-old at the wheel, and that's likely a wise decision.

One major reason programmers can't easily understand their systems' behavior is because often they did not design them, at least not fully. Fashioned

after the process of Natural Selection, many AI researchers are turning to genetic algorithm design, where random strategies and code are combined with each other, and a pool of randomized "offspring" is created of the most effective ones. Over many generations, powerful algorithms can be developed that a designer could not have foreseen. The machines are learning, in an abstract Darwinist sort of way.

Through this genetic process, it is foreseeable that we could make a machine that can change its own source code of its own volition. Currently, we tend to design systems with a specific purpose in mind, and we consider that purpose foundational to the program's being. In Aristotelian terms, programs verifiably have a telos; considered another way, they do not create the problems they are tasked to solve. However, there is no conceivable reason that a machine could not be given the power to change its own purpose, since that purpose is ultimately a representation that can be combined and recombined on command. It would thus be capable of altering its goals in response to its experiences, changing Action to Information – the mark of intelligence. Intention, then, seems to be a form of learning.

However, if Google let loose such a program on all their data and it managed to self-organize into an intending, understanding and learning being, it'd be just as unlikely to be able to explain how it did it as we would be if we examined its code for the answer. Already we have a hard time explaining how these systems are making basic perceptions. Decoding complex behavior emerging from complex foundations is, as established, inherently difficult. Further, insofar as the machine participates in this enterprise we call mind, it will likely have similar difficulties accounting for itself as we do providing such an account of ourselves. As Charles Peirce put it:

[The] senses... [furnish] something more than plain, unvarnished facts of the outer world, [and no] direct scrutiny could enable us to say what part of that which we seem to see or hear is due to stimulations of the nerve-terminals of our eyes and ears and what part is a quasi-inferential interpolation of our own minds.^{13 14}

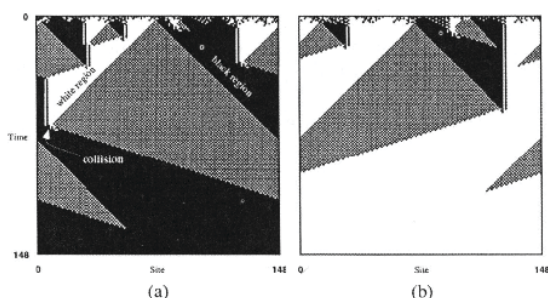
This self-organizing program may be capable of consciousness, but like the brain simulation, it wouldn't tell us anything about consciousness; we've

created matter that thinks, but we still don't know what makes matter think. The issue here is there's no observable gradient from complex systems that make simple judgments to complex systems that have bridged the gap to complex judgments; they're all equally black-boxes to us.

Let us look instead to nature; how do cells, simple organisms with no individual capacity for mind, work together to facilitate complex judgments? The aforementioned miracle of the brain is not only one of evolution; it is a miracle of computing, using the combination of many small processes in-parallel to efficiently ascertain information from the environment.

Ultra-simple computer programs are also capable of these kinds of parallel processes. Melanie Mitchell outlines a use of genetic algorithm design on a one-dimensional cellular automata program that applies a handful of simple rules to determine from one line to the next whether a "cell" will be black or white based on the corresponding neighbors in the previous line.¹⁵ The rules themselves are chosen based on their fitness for answering the question, "are there more black or white squares in the starting conditions?"

After eighteen generations, the ruleset that had been generated would turn all 148 of the cells black or white in answer to this question inside 148 iterations and with 80% accuracy on the hardest cases, when the starting conditions were close to 50/50. Its accuracy increased the larger the discrepancy, much it would for a human "eyeballing" the problem.



What is astounding about this graphic¹⁶ is we are seeing a machine running extremely simple parallel computations to answer a question it has no definitional link to. In other words, we are asking it for a judgment:

The black-white boundary and the checkerboard region can be thought of as sig-

nals indicating ambiguous regions. The creation and interactions of these signals can be interpreted as collective information processing performed by the [cellular automata]... [The] collective computation... is determined by its overall space-time behavior, and is thus almost always impossible to extract from the rule table.¹⁷

It isn't difficult to envision the use of a simple ruleset that can make this kind of judgment. Given a black-and-white photo, a cellular automata structure could analyze each line of pixels and begin deriving information with little computing power. The ruleset was derived through chance in a short time, simply by choosing favorable traits; there's no reason to believe these sorts of structures can't be selected to answer other qualitative questions about images, or other kinds of information sets. There's also no reason the squares could not be colored, greatly expanding its possible uses. Simple computers, working in parallel, are already capable of forming new information about their environments in-time.

What we're witnessing in the image, then, is a basic and clear-cut act of mentation.

No particular simulated cell has a mind, yet in combination they've managed to reverse the flow of computation – turning the state of its world (analogous to our concept of Action) into Information. Once Information has been created by something, the raw materials exist for novel Intentions; although these cellular automata have not been tasked with making decisions based on their judgment, it is now conceivable that many more of these interactions of parallel computation can use those judgments to begin deciding. By explaining the proto-mind of simple computers, we have begun to resolve the Composition Problem.

Who Else Computes?

What we have established is that computation is a basic form of mind; nonintelligent matter can compute, but intelligent matter must be able to create and resolve computations. Computing is not itself sufficient to be a living, thinking being that forms intentions, but it seems it is necessary for those that are. The marker of life, intelligence, or "soul" is the reversal of this flow – making new Information from

Action – but is reliant on the proceeding conversion of that Information back to Action to make that information do anything, and to act in the world.

Humans are certainly computers then, at least in part. Animals, too, are computing. Even appetitive beings who do not have enough complexity to support a neural system are capable of changing Information into Action; from single-cell organisms¹⁸ all the way through plants, life reads and executes DNA instructions to constitute, feed, and reproduce themselves.

This comparison of DNA to computer instructions isn't merely incidental. Seth Lloyd refers to this as one of the earliest Information Revolutions¹⁹, and that is no metaphor. DNA is fundamentally an encoding scheme for information that contains executable instructions for heritable traits, behaviors, morphology, and most importantly the instructions to construct the very machine that will execute those instructions. If human speech and digital computers are made powerful by the ability to make recursive statements²⁰, DNA is powerful for the very same reason.

This is a radical proposition. Saying that DNA is a computation entails that some matter in nature is suitable for computing. Computing is then more fundamental than life itself, and if it is a sort of proto-mentation, then it firmly places the grounds for mind outside of biology. Can we go any further with this? What other matter computes?

The fundamental building blocks of the universe, subatomic particles, are a candidate for carrying information. They are themselves physical (analogous to our previous uses of "matter"), and capable of holding arrangements of states that facilitate interactions. For instance, when electrons, neutrons and protons interact, they form "outputs" that consistently display structures of the basic elements, which in turn interact to form molecules. Every "query" between an oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms results in the same "answer," a bonded state suitable for further calculation.

Given our expanded understanding of Information that subsists in the material and commands Actions, it is difficult to draw a distinction here that forestalls the conclusion that all atoms in nature compute. Further, there are already designs for computers that use the essential qualities of atoms and particles – quantum and molecular computing – that present only engineering challenges, not theoretical ones.

Just that fact on its own entails that all matter is already suitable for computations.

If atoms are a computation, what's the computer? The universe itself, stemming back to the likely-story of the Big Bang, appears to be an unending chain of these computations; is the universe the computer? To our best understanding, to be a machine that executes instructions, it needs the capability to Read, Write and Address: that is, to assess the state of a unit of information, update that state if necessary, and to know where to go next. It's in this last step that we see the importance of time in computing – addressing requires futurity to use the concept of a "next," and it needs the power to move to the next stage of the sequence temporally and with purpose. Time is the engine that drives a computer; this is why the most basic component of the Digi-Comp is the clock plates, and the clock speed of a microprocessor is directly correlated with its power.

Understood physically, time is a thermodynamic phenomenon – the dissipation of concentrated energy is irreversible, and pushes the forward motion of time. Any attempt to re-concentrate energy necessarily creates more disorder in the scale of the universe; burning fuel to charge a battery creates a concentrated locus of energy, but will always lose some to sound, light, and waste heat along the way. This is what's called entropy, and it sets the clock of the physical world to its drumbeat. There are ways to speed it up and slow it down, but as far as we know, there is no way to set it in reverse.

Every subatomic interaction results in more entropy, just as any calculation actually consists of three things: input, output, and time. Non-living and non-computing matter doesn't have much use for time; things that only act when acted upon have no need for futurity, they have no drives. Similarly, a single bit in a digital computer doesn't have use for time either; whether it is in the 1 or 0, On or Off state is of no real consequence to it. If, again, the physical interactions in the world are creating and using information, the physical objects we observe are the data points, but the driver is that which makes use of time itself – i.e., the universe itself. It makes use of Information to generate Actions.

Minds and living things make great use of time, however. Time has an incredible evolutionary advantage baked into it – for beings that deal with information, there is a massive efficiency measure in not needing to know everything all the time.

A heat pump's capabilities are embodied in its wiring, and it is not capable of being reprogrammed without being physically reconstituted by an external force; but given that it's not very complicated, this is not necessarily an issue. A tic-tac-toe game made of switches with a strategy pre-wired in cannot adapt that strategy; it may be advantageous to be able to react in-time, but the game is uncomplicated enough that this doesn't prevent it from functioning reasonably well. Chess, however, can legally consist of 1040 possible states. A pre-wired chess machine need not necessarily account for all of these, as any strategy will reduce the possibility space as it goes on, but that's still a lot of wires.

Computers and intelligences bypass these requirements by instead recognizing patterns and responding according to a set of rules. By not needing to know everything all the time, they're able to focus their energy and resources on making the best decision now. But this also requires some sort of time; minimally, a memory, where patterns that have been encountered can be applied. It needs the capacity to change without changing the fundamental nature of itself; it needs to be a universal machine.

When something is capable of directing those changes itself, it is applying that memory – it is learning – for the purpose of generating a novel Action – it is intending. What else generates novel actions, based on the states of information from the past with the goal of driving to the “next?” What is doing this under its own power, supplying its own intentions? If these are the markers of mind, it is again difficult to forestall the conclusion that the universe itself is capable of it. All the capacities we have discussed that separate computers from other matter apply to it, and all the capacities that separate intelligence from computers also apply. The answer to the Composition Problem casts the raw materials of mind out into the universe, but their completed, complex totality is embodied as a single whole by the universe itself. How might a machine intend? By emulating the world around us.

Notes

- [1] John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Programs*, “VI. The Many Mansions Reply.”
- [2] Alan Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, §1.
- [3] *Intention* here can be understood as a novel, self-generated impulse towards some action. Searle makes no attempt to explore what it is to be capable of “intentional states” and instead stipulates that humans must be capable of them. I supply this definition to account for the “causal powers” he attributes to the mind; a thought is not a simple If X Then Y formulation, and thus is closely linked to understanding the context and broader consequences of any “input,” which then factor into a decision.
- [4] This is similar to valid but unsound arguments in formal logic.
- [5] Marvin Minsky, *Why People Think Machines Can't*.
- [6] In the broader philosophical discussion, it can be said that computing machines have a kind of Direct Reference à la the Logical Positivists, where meaning is contained in the referent and names essentially denote.
- [7] Searle, *ibid*.
- [8] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 413a20.
- [9] *Ibid*, 413b.
- [10] Aristotle's choice of words here is particularly interesting. See Ada Lovelace Note G, “Notes by the Translator” to *Sketch of the Analytical Engine Invented by Charles Babbage*; see also C.S. Peirce's *solvet ambulando*, “Logical Machines,” *American Journal of Psychology* Vol. I, No. 1, pg. 167.
- [11] *Ibid*, 413b25.
- [12] Daniel Hillis, *The Pattern On the Stone*, pg. 114.
- [13] Charles S. Peirce, “Our Senses As Reasoning Machines,” *The New Elements of Mathematics*.
- [14] This idea appears frequently in the literature. See Turing *ibid*, §6(4); Hillis *ibid*, pg. 153; Searle, “I. The Systems Reply,” *ibid*, Ed Fredkin, *On the Soul* (draft version).
- [15] Melanie Mitchell, “Life and Evolution in Computers,” *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*.
- [16] Mitchell, *ibid*, Fig. 8.
- [17] *Ibid*, pg. 378.
- [18] Notably, single-cell organisms are also capable of basic forms of mind; they are able to learn via habituation (lessening reactions to repeated stimuli) and there is early evidence that they are also capable of Pavlovian associational learning. See Samuel J Gershman, *et al.* (2021) “Reconsidering the evidence for learning in single cells,” (<https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.61907>).
- [19] Seth Lloyd, *Information and the Nature of Reality*, “The Computational Universe,” pg. 94 – 95.
- [20] Mitchell, *ibid*, “Self Reproduction in Computers.”

Two Variations on a Theme

Ben Crocker

1. 200 years of Great Classic Hits: On the death and resurrection of musical invention

I delivered my first music class in a poky old classroom in North Turrumurra, on the bushy far-northern fringes of Sydney's upper North Shore. Blue Gums whipped noisily in blow-dryer hot breeze outside, leaves peeling off branches and melting onto flimsy windows. Inside, sweaty, disheveled teenagers peeled themselves off the back of plastic chairs, their eyes melting onto the floor.

I fiddled around with a laptop and pushed play. For the next two minutes I strode stand-offishly across the front of the board, turning around occasionally to sketch out what I heard: Intro; Verse 1; Chorus; Verse 2; Chorus; Solo Break etc...

Someone had told me that when teaching Pop, I should start with Bill Haley. 'Rock Around the Clock' was simple to follow. An easy guide to verse-chorus song writing. At 2 minutes long, analyzing the song would consume little of the precious remaining cognitive powers of a room full of sweaty 16 year olds. Each consecutive segment is a simple repetition of material already heard, and the core melodic cell (think of the emphasized words in the first verse - 'put your glad rags on') was a simple three beat hop through an A major triad. To complete the idea, the triad is repeated with a slight rhythmic variation (and join me hon'):



Bill Haley - Rock Around the Clock (1954) [Verse 1, fragment]

There were more reasons than mere teachability to start with Bill. Rock around the clock is about 70 years old - written a statistical human lifetime ago. Though strictly speaking Bill was a Rock-N-Roller, the runaway commercial success of his hit marked the definitive start of the 'Pop' era. He'd beaten the Beatles to the starting blocks of celebrity culture by the better part of a decade: Haley's song was the very first international 'smash hit', notching up 25 million sales worldwide. With 'Rock around the Clock', musical audiences made their radical break with the listening culture of years past, and cruised effortlessly into the easy epoch of consumer culture.

My Grandfather, born in the mid 1920's, used to delight in the rickety-rockety rhythm of a Halesque jive. Unable to read music, Papa had taught himself to play by ear in wartime Ceylon, later refining his art on a piano donated to his employer, Trinity College, by Louis Mountbatten, Viceroy of India (and mentor to his nephew Prince Philip). He would sit us at the piano as kids, delighting us by improvising with well-humoured grandiosity on the bluesy kind of riffs that he'd heard spinning out of mid-century America.

Papa passed his love of music on to my mother, and after emigrating the family to Australia, saw to it that she went one step better than he was afforded, by learning notation, harmony, and counterpoint as a school-girl in 1960's Australia. In those days, one in every five Australians were educated by Catholic nuns, priests, or brothers. They were stern, but famously effective teachers of classical music: Simone Young, the current Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony, once credited her rigorous early musical education by the Sisters

of Mercy for laying the foundations of her brilliant career.

This high musical literacy - the kind taught by those dedicated nuns - affords one the ability to access art of a radically different quality to that which I taught (well, was forced to teach) upon entering the teaching profession. There's nothing wrong with Bill Haley, of course, but there may still be great value in looking further back in time, to discover a higher musical virtue than Bill and his Comets can bestow upon us. To keep our timeline tidy, I'll go back another 70 years from Haley, to the closest thing late 19th Century music had to a runaway hit.

Anton Bruckner's 7th Symphony was first performed in 1884. It is set in four movements, and runs to approximately 80 minutes in length. It is a magisterial work - masterful in formal construction, with a pervasive sense of mystique. It was a breakout success, earning huge acclaim amongst the Viennese audiences who had hitherto been lukewarm to Bruckner, preferring his contemporary, Johannes Brahms. Bruckner labored over each of his Symphonies, revising them almost fanatically. He was known to toss completed manuscripts into his fire, such was his thirst for sonic perfection. That perfection was not born of narcissism either. On the contrary, his contemporaries - Gustav Mahler chief amongst them - admired him for his humility, simplicity, and (often unnecessary) deference to others.

There was no international record market in Bruckner's day. Not until 1913 would the Berlin Philharmonic record the first complete orchestral work - Beethoven's 5th Symphony - under Arthur Nikish. Still, having won the approval of the city of Vienna, Bruckner's 7th, was for a time - just like Bill Haley's tune - the western world's undisputed smash hit success. The manuscript made its way quickly to America, premiering in Chicago in 1886.

I bring these works side by side to draw the reader's attention to the extraordinary diminishment of relative listening attention demanded of, and by, popular audiences between the late 19th, and mid 20th Centuries. Whilst it is true that comparing a song to a symphony is not comparing apples with apples, we must still see that here, with Bruckner next to Bill, we nonetheless contend with the two great hits of their respective days. This is an important comparison to make, if we want to observe how music reflects our cultural values and intellectual temperament as men of different ages.

To illustrate this, recall that Haley's tune was only 2 minutes long, its core melodic material - the A Major triad - passing in a mere second, and hovering over but one static chord. Below here, by way of contrast, is the opening theme from the opening movement of Bruckner's 7th. This one theme, presented first in the cello, lasts almost as long as Bill Haley's entire song. It has a range of two octaves. It implies a varying spectrum of chords and keys. Listening to it is rather like reading a sentence by Alexander Hamilton: One must deploy considerable focus to hold in contention the tonal subject, as a string of conjunctions spill the ear from subphrase to subphrase, adding to in substance, and coloring in character, the nature of the whole as it gradually unfolds. Bruckner said this vaulting, mystical melody came to him in a dream: he woke in the night, recognised its genius, and furiously wrote it down by candlelight.

By looking at the two melodies on paper, we can start to see that it may not be just the aesthetic - the apprehended quality of the sound, if you like - that is important in making an assessment about this music's innate quality. Rather, it is the formal scale of the melodic design that in the first place provides strong evidence of how a radically more sophisticated listening experience was considered 'mainstream' in the late 19th century, compared to the mid 20th century.

The point I make is thus: A disinterested person could listen to Bill and Bruckner side by side and say that the orchestra sounds more sophisticated, and though he would be right, he would be missing the point - the point being that the music sounds more sophisticated because it is constructed in a vastly more sophisticated

manner. The disinterested person is expressing a truth because he is impressed by Bruckner's thing, but he cannot articulate the generative source of that thing's impression. I have sometimes experienced a variety of this 'correct but not known' musical judgment at the Sydney Opera House concert hall, when, descending from the boxes at intermission, a brooched, bare-shouldered Mrs von Posh n' Swish gushes that the music is 'magnificent, just magnificent my darling'. She is not merely keeping up appearances - she detects an appreciable elevation of quality in what has unfolded. But still I could ask, "yes, Mrs Swish, but why is the music magnificent?

Allegro moderato ♩ = 58

lang gezogen

mf originally legato like the Horn he probably changed it to give more diction

1-2 2 1-10

9 *poco a poco cresc.* 1-12

15 2nd version with legato *dim.*

20

Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 (1884) [Mvt. 1 - Opening (Violoncello)]

On a handful of occasions, I've been able to ask Mrs Swish that very question. Sometimes her response is enlightening, sometimes faintly ridiculous. Usually it is well meaning, but somewhat confusing - a muddle of "oh well yes the violins...and the...oh just the conductor...the way it moves...oh...OH..."

As a fan of both Mrs Swish, and the music we both like to dress up to listen to, I usually endeavor to respond with a version of the following statement: The music we love, the meticulously organized sounds now abstracted into arch-premium cultural product, the crown jewels of Western Civilisation's artistic heritage, created in a blinding spasm of creative fury between the start of the Enlightenment (Bach was born in 1685), and sputtering out somewhere between the two horrific 20th Century wars... that music is magnificent, darling, because of its quality of invention.

Our burden as consumers of music everything today is to live with a poverty of invention. In the 20th and 21st Centuries we have become inured to repetitive sound. Aristotle might say that we have habituated ourselves to our own paucity of sonic virtue. We are no longer disturbed by the exacting sameness of all things, in the way that we are no longer fascinated by the exacting sameness of both factory machines and the squillions of identical widgets they produce. The scheme of a pop song - a scheme which has accompanied our lives for 4 generations now - relies on mechanized, factory-economical repetition to meet its aims. A pop song cannot, by its very nature, be composed, because its structure - with some rare exceptions - provides no prerogative to work through the demands of a truly dynamic artistic picture. The pop writer does not have that artist's palette of infinite variables - variables which become his burden in fashioning material first to coherent

form, and then into transcendent beauty. A pop song, by way of its structural confines, is merely produced: It states, it repeats and it returns, with a minimum of rational effort. This remains true in almost all cases - even when the song's overlaid instrumental or vocal effects are of spectacularly good quality, as in the case of Whitney Houston's sublime ease of delivery, Taylor Swift's remarkable capacity for emotive empathy, or Mariah Carey's thrilling propensity to both delight and discombobulate by way of her vocal acrobatics. There is an invention in pop music, and in the best cases - the Mariahs and Whitneys (but not the Britneys) - it is an admirable and enjoyable one. However this enjoyableness in performance is not remotely comparable to the raw quality of invention one finds in high classical composition from Bach forward.

Returning to Bruckner's melody, we are presented with one aspect of this quality of invention, and that aspect is scale. Bruckner makes high quality musical invention possible because he opens up the imaginative canvas with a melodic exposition of titanic proportions. The 7th Symphony claims greatness for Bruckner as a symphonist in the way that the Sistine chapel claims greatness for Michelangelo as a muralist. There is fine detail in both, but in the first instance, it is the audacity of the idea which humbles us, the observer, before a seeming godly power of creation. Art like this suggests to the human soul that it may be capable of apprehending so much, and so in turn sets on fire our potential to apprehend the world with unlimited awe and wonder.

This is not, however, to say that scale is the only ingredient required in the construction of high quality musical invention. Nor is a preoccupation with scale necessarily required at all. Examples abound of works both petite in scale and rich in authentic artistry: Chopin's piano preludes for example, or Igor Stravinsky's petite 'Dumbarton Oaks'. These works are by their nature confined. They have an intensity of invention, over an expansiveness of invention.

One of the finest examples of this intensity of invention comes in a work which needs no introduction to either the serious or casual listener. Happily, Beethoven's 5th Symphony also provides a lovely congruency to our journey back through music history - It pops up in another (roughly) 70 year hop back in time from Bruckner's 7th. Beethoven's 5th was the breakout hit of 1808. It is a radical work. Aside from it's well documented French revolutionary flavor, and law-breaking harmonic progression, it is also the first symphony to use the trombone, the piccolo, and the contrabassoon (to this day, the loudest, highest, and lowest instruments in the orchestra, respectively).

But these features, wonderful though they are, don't point us to the real locus of Beethoven's genius. To find this, it might be helpful to leave Bruckner behind for a moment and compare Beethoven directly to Bill Haley. If, when we do, we restrict our criticisms to melodic ideas, we will quickly see that we can't indict Bill with quite the same culpability we did when we placed him alongside Bruckner. That is because, stripped to their bare tones, there is scarce appreciable difference between the quality of Bill's and Beethoven's two musical ideas. As if it needed any introduction, here is the foundational musical idea from the first movement of Beethoven's 5th:



Ludwig Van Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 (1808) [Mvt. 1 - motif]

Perhaps the tempo and placement gives the Beethoven a little more inherent drama. Still, there isn't much difference in quality between three short G's and a long E flat (Beethoven), and the three short notes (A - C# - E) played in sequence (Bill). The point being, that when we compare each little tune against the other, at

heart, it is impossible to say which is better.

Here then must arise a question that every listener should ask themselves when trying to make a judgement on the objective quality of any piece of music: How does a composer develop his musical ideas?

Pure musical development is the arbiter of objective compositional quality. If classical music is a kind of church, then the composer's sophistication in development sorts the high priests from the common folk. Beethoven's talent for inventive development is unrivaled. His ability to take the smallest of melodic fragments and build an uncontrived, expressive, and substantially lengthy train of musical development, is the substance of his genius.

Beethoven's mastery of invention is so absolute, that when we listen to the first movement of his Symphony, we must fight our own consciousness to remember that we are dealing with a creation born of only the tiniest of musical fragments: There is so much music here! And, its growth is so apparently organic, that one quickly forgets its birth was indeed embryonic. We might hold Beethoven against Bruckner here, and consider the two types of artistry at play: Where Bruckner's claim is to the audacity of the man who sets out his broad canvas in plain view, Beethoven's claim is to the magician's secret toolbox. His is the hidden intricacy of the working unworkable. He is both artist and geometer - opening up rhythmic and harmonic space where none by right exists.

From simple melodic material, Beethoven builds a swirling, unfurling, melodic-harmonic universe, one coherently threaded together at every weaving turn. Assuming one's soul has achieved some kind of sympathetic disposition, then that soul cannot help but be taken - somewhere - by Beethoven. Bill Haley's equally simple, and almost as meritorious melody does not develop in this way. Insofar as it does develop, it merely repeats. This is what a modern pop song does. It confirms, comforts, and conforms to both itself and the prevailing musical zeitgeist. It does not truly expand possibilities. It does not move the soul beyond superficial reckoning with the stated facts. Repetition without true development is reassuring, and can be mightily entertaining, but it does not pose any kind of fundamental challenge to the soul.

Sir Roger Scruton said that listening is the process of internal dancing in sympathy to a particular musical work. I would further say that the act of listening is the soul's conversation with an external idea or group of ideas - ideas not limited by the need to comprehend speech or consciously identify particular epistemological features. This means that listening to music affords the soul a unique conversational freedom.

Alongside this freedom comes a unique vulnerability, given that there is a certain passivity to the soul's act of listening: Once the ear 'lets in' the sound, there is little one can do to consciously resist both the affect and in turn, the effect of a given musical work.

This brings us to the crux of the problem in deciding what we should listen to as human beings susceptible to the stultifyingly mundane aural influences of the world we inhabit. If we have accepted that the soul may be served well by objectively better music and served poorly by objectively worse music, have we now stumbled into making the case (as surely Socrates would delight in!) for the censorship of music in the city? At the least, we can certainly say that we have arrived at a strong justification for the individual to control the artistic inflows to the city of his own soul.

Though we are instinctively chilled by the thought of censorship, we cannot escape the truth that Socrates points us toward. There is an undeniable beneficial effect that musical censorship can secure for the soul, if not for the greater good of the polity itself. This is the conclusion that scientists researching the "Mozart effect" on babies in the womb have arrived at. It is the same conclusion realized by school principals who make substantial early investment in childhood musical education, and seem to find a correlation in lower

that comport with his oeuvre make for an impractical use of both the day's listening time and my own cognitive focus.

St John's College is a fine place to read these authors. The foundation of the 'New Program', which saw St John's return - definitively - to the great books, also coincides with that same interwar period where fidelity to the great forms of musical composition was abandoned - definitively - by the European musical establishment. In the German speaking world, classical music's heartland, these were the years when the steady seriousness of the listening culture was shed, in favor of both the practice of musical experimentation, and more importantly, of the ethic of musical experimentalism. In the halls of Conservatoria the world over, 'Weimar', is a name synonymous with the ethic of 21st Century musical progressivism. Its best attributes include stylistic intermixture and radical re-imagination, and its worst, the wholesale dismemberment of a beautiful inherited tradition.

Stringfellow Barr was President of St John's College during this same time, and with Scott Buchanan, co-founded the school's 'New Program.' In a quote posted on the walls of the building named after him, Barr says that the books contained within the program must be 'read listeningly.'

What a wonderfully musical thing to say!

If there is something missing from the world of music today, I would say that it is found in the mirror image of Barr's statement about our beloved great books. For if we are to faithfully comprehend great music, then we must listen readingly. If we do, then we might guide our listening appetites back from the nadir of modernity's lust for banal, repetitive aural tyranny, to a place where a studied love of great invention rules music once more.

2. Our Music, Our Higher Selves



Beaux-Arts Chicago Federal Building

By the end of the CD era, I had worn out my sole physical copy of the great French conductor Pierre Monteux's 1961 recording of Cesar Franck's Symphony in D minor. The internet mercifully intervened: Monteux's interpretation with the unsurpassed mid-century Chicago Symphony Orchestra now lives on YouTube.

Monteux and the CSO did a great service to the musical world in recording the masterworks of the western canon during his tenure. But as they were recording Franck's symphony at 220 South Michigan Avenue, bulldozers were moving in to the west, right behind Symphony Hall. Chicago's iconic Federal Building was being reduced to a pile of rubble. Like the Franck symphony, the building was a first-class cultural product from the late 19th Century. It represented the Midwest's premier example of the French Beaux-Arts style that had once

characterized much of America's civic architecture.

The irony was stark: Monteux, the great conductor, was beloved by American audiences. But as this great French artist perfected his craft in America's preeminent musical institution on South Michigan, a great French architectural style once the darling of American city planners was being ground into dust by America's preeminent political institution—the federal government—across the street on South Dearborn. In the place of the Beaux-Arts Federal Building rose the Kluczynski and Dirksen Federal Buildings and Courthouses—two of the most menacing objects ever to dominate Chicago's skyline.



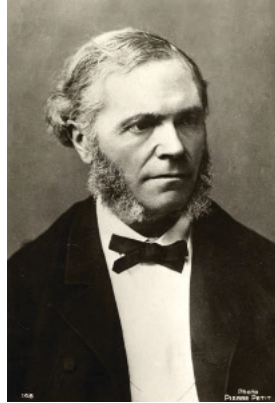
Public square, or the monolith from 2001: A Space Odyssey?

With Pierre Monteux's record still ringing in my ears, in Texas last month, I conducted Franck's Symphony in D Minor for the first time. It is still one of my very favorite works. Since first hearing it seventeen years ago, I have thought about it at least once a week—sometimes for hours, but most often for a few shimmering seconds, long enough for the 3rd movement cello melody to waft lazily through my head, or to be startled by a heroic trumpet call momentarily piercing my horizon. It transfixes me in the same way it did listeners a century ago: in 1899, the Boston Herald noticed that the symphony exerted a "certain weird fascination" on the public.

For half of the 20th century, the American public shared my fascination. The New York Times reported last year that the Franck Symphony in D was the Beatles before there was the Beatles. In that blissful time when art still held primacy over the artist, Franck's forty-five minutes of triumphal orchestral lyricism easily filled stadiums in East Coast capital cities.

So, what happened? Should we despair that the music that fills today's stadiums is of a significantly lower intellectual and spiritual order?

The deep appeal of civilization's greatest music lies in its beauty and elusiveness. Franck's Symphony in D Minor, a stunningly captivating aural picture, shows us how. It sings lustily, mourns sorrowfully, and dances irrepressibly. Its first movement moves between menacing and joyful. The second is sacred and even, at times, medieval. The third movement drives the listener to joyful ecstasy during each and every listening.



Cesar Franck (1822-1890)

Despite my long-held love of the work, I'm at a loss when trying to describe what the piece is truly about. No one can say if it is properly Belgian, French, or German, or if it has indeed become American. Musicologists argue over whether the middle movement is sacred or secular. Composed in 1888, does it agree with the 19th century, or does it paint that long artistic epoch with mocking irreverence?

In music, this elusiveness, the inherent indefinite in not knowing precisely what a piece is, frees us to know what the piece does to us when we hear it. We know that the Franck uplifts us, that it unveils a cast of noble characters and invites us to journey with them. The symphony gives us time and space to learn who these characters are, without ever fully seeing them. We adventure with them through the two outer movements – soaring above the clouds with the trumpets, running faster than humanly possible with the violins, and serenading lovers with the wind instruments. In the middle, there is respite – some time to meditate, and to pray.

These unique kinds of expressive capacities reveal a work's innate musical potential. Great music contains beauty without literal meaning. It presents itself as ineffable; it doesn't tell us explicitly what it is. Rather, it demands that we take the musical journey and work that question out on our own. We listeners must hold ourselves in collaborative sympathy between the work's phrases, entering its argument without ever having its facts dictated to us by the composers. Through this process, we practice our highest reasoning faculties—we sift truth from falsehood, tie off loose ends (thank you Plato), and habituate ourselves toward the higher character the music presents to us (thank you Aristotle). Great music then, is dialectic. It is an exterior harness to the soul's self-conversation and can only reveal its ineffable meaning by way of the rational listener's individual agency.

This can be difficult to grasp, because it is something we take for granted, or at least don't realize is happening when we listen to music. Consider this: a piece of music where the chords remain the same, the beat remains the same, and God-forbid, the voice is auto-tuned to remain the same, is essentially dictated to the listener. Listening to it requires no collaborative effort. There is no conversation happening within the music. And without this conversation, an authentically sympathetic journey is impossible. This remains the case even if the work's emotive nature convinces us we are listening sympathetically to a given song. In this way, the great works of the classical tradition are akin to the great works of classical philosophy. The great composers lead us dialectically. In listening to the great classical works, the composers take us by the hand in the Socratic manner—they interrogate our souls by way of the intellect in a similar way to that of Socrates in Plato's Republic. Through sympathetic interrogation, they encourage, aid, guide, and sometimes even cajole us to the discovery of truth and beauty, but they never dictate its terms to us absolutely.

Platonic Socrates believed that bad music might beget bad people. It is on the topic of music that he provokes one of his first—and perhaps his most memorable—dialectic expositions within *Republic*, when he notes that protecting the souls of the young from corruption will require censoring the city in speech's music.

Countenancing this notion is a tall order for citizens of free and modern societies. Allan Bloom wrote in his introduction to *Republic* that his students at Chicago, Yale and Cornell “tended to be surprised that music above all else should be the theme of [Plato's] censorship when what seemed to them to be the likely candidates were science, politics, and sex.”

So, today faced with an orgy of sonic choices, should we defy Socrates and permit ourselves to listen to “bad” music?

In reality, the decision has already been made. Pop, and the other gradations of “bad” music, whether they be the shoddy imitations of classical-lite compositions, the death cults of deep-metal, or just plain lazy artistry in any genre, are here to stay. That is ok. The world won't be rid of their ilk, but their presence needn't precipitate our moral disintegration either. We should listen to the music our fallen culture has generated. And, if I dare say so, we should even enjoy it.

But we can give Socrates his due by acknowledging his wisdom. Good sense demands limits to our consumption, limits to our tolerance, and limits to how regularly we expose our children to music which we know to dull our faculties of reason, when we ought to be enlarging them. As Socrates showed us, there is risk in exposing the young to art that encourages the destructive tendencies latent within every human soul.

When we engage in the arts in general and music in particular we should be most concerned with the problem that Aristotle draws our attention to in his *Ethics*: the habituation of the soul. We need to habituate ourselves to the beautiful, the uplifting, the heroic and noble, and that's impossible if we're engaging in artistic practice that denigrates these virtues. When we choose to listen to bad music, we are habituating ourselves to life as mere repetitions of bland stereotypes. We are, in essence, telling ourselves that we are as poor as the form we step into as listener—as brief in intellect as the passage of a radio hit.

But when we listen to Beethoven, to Bach, to Brahms, or to my old friend Cesar Franck, we commit ourselves to extolling human virtue, not diminishing it. We are telling ourselves that our powers of reasoning should reach for the broad and expansive form of the great symphonists. We are telling ourselves that our creativity might hustle to keep pace with the inventive genius of a Mozart, not a Madonna, and that our innate tendency toward nobility might owe more to Beethoven than Britney. When we listen well then, we are telling ourselves that we are our higher selves.

Each great art form has its innate strengths and weaknesses, and as time progresses, those strengths and weaknesses allow each great art form a greater or lesser degree of agency in advancing or destroying our common culture. One of music's greatest strengths is its transmissibility. Many great paintings lie behind private walls or in public rooms in far-flung cities. In those cities, thousands of beautiful buildings which spoke of proportion, exposed citizens to geometric truth, and gave visible life to the ratiocination of the architect's genius, rest today as dust beneath the grotesque ego spectacles which replaced them. London is a today a visual sewer, New York a beautiful, but ageing dame betrayed by a hundred years of vain facelifts.

But our greatest music cannot be commercially withheld in the manner of a 17th century canvas, or physically destroyed in the manner of an early 20th Century American Railway Station. Whilst music does not escape the destructive effect of cultural decay, it can regenerate at a comparative minimum cost. As such, it lies dormant as the artistic skeleton key to personal and civilizational renewal in times of ugliness and decay. In music, our higher selves are so accessible, if only we reach out to truly listen.



Aschely V. Cone, *Gabon Landscape I*, 2022-2023. Oil on canvas, 4' x 3'.



Aschely V. Cone, *Gabon Landscape II*, 2022-2023. Oil on canvas, 4' x 3'.



Aschely V. Cone, *Gabon Landscape III*, 2022–2023. Oil on canvas, 4' x 3'.

Interviews

A Portrait of Peter Nesbett

Abdullah Wadood

I wanted to call him “Mr. Nesbett”, but he insisted I called him “Peter.”

Tuesday March 28, 2023. We two sat next to each other at Old Fox; he ordered an Americano in a little mug. “12 ounces,” he told the woman behind the counter. I ordered nothing myself. He asked about the G.I.; I answered awkwardly. We talked about his haircut, which matched the haircut he was photographed wearing back in September when he was appointed the new Director of the Mitchell Museum. Then we talked about Annapolis’s unaffordable real estate. This small town, capital that it is, is just as expensive as D.C. I nodded sympathetically. I felt the need for a transgression, a movement from niceties to business, so I asked Peter about his previous work at the WPA, the Washington Project for the Arts.

“Artists are atomized and marginalized,” he told me. “They live in the shadow of the Smithsonian.”

Peter then told me about one exhibition: the WPA rented out an empty boutique store where an artist placed a single \$8 shirt in the center. The shirt was surrounded by advertisements which the artist carefully manufactured. “You pay for the packaging,” he said.

The purpose of the WPA, Peter said, is to give artists a chance. It’s been more difficult than ever for artists to self-organize, to gather funds, to experiment and express themselves. Everything’s been made worse with money.

Why did you come to St. John’s?

Wow! The whole school has been doing this for a really long time. When I was in school we would start with the primary source and then immediately jump to what everyone else thought of it. That’s not the case here. The challenge for me here is how to develop an exhibition program, it’s a new challenge for me. We have a really sweet space here. It has a modest footprint—I mean, it’s tiny—but it feels grand. The museum is reflective of the school as a whole: the campus

is tiny, but it has a grand ambition in defense of its pedagogical approach.

I had a warm reception here. There’s a real openness in the administration. The administration is looking for new possibilities. It really felt real. There are places where they tell you they’ll be open but really they aren’t. They have an entrenched art department that has their own vision and expect you to follow that vision. But here I’ve felt a real openness. Nora’s advice for me is to not tread lightly.

I want to find ways to make the museum relevant to the college experience, not to imitate the great books. I think people want or expect St. John’s art museum to be filled with Rembrandt, but that’s not satisfying. I don’t want people to come here to see a piece of art and be in awe of it as if it’s a timeless, eternal object. No. The new mission is about the ever-changing student body. So I ask, ‘How can the art program be reflective of the experience of questioning and inquiry?’

There needs to be a reset. It’s gonna be different. Most of the students here don’t remember what the museum was like before; it’s been under construction. The seniors who did get to experience it didn’t like it all that much. There was little student engagement. I want to upend the decorum.

Tell me about the exhibition where Johnnies were able to draw on the walls. I really loved doing that. I felt rejuvenated. Really, I felt like a child.

I’m really glad to hear that. Really, I am. How do I maintain that openness and welcoming quality moving forward? Museums are such unnatural places. In everyday life, you can touch things, interact with things, but not at a museum. Nothing is more freeing than desecrating a sacred place.

When adults came into the exhibition, they were hesitant to draw on the walls themselves. They couldn’t bring themselves to write on the walls.

[When he spoke of these things, it seemed to me his eyes would almost well up in tears and silence overtook us.]

My first job I worked at an auction house. It was one

of Van Gogh's. It was sold for a then record-breaking amount of money. How could a painting be valued like this, with all this money? I turned the opposite direction and head for the hills.

What is Art?

[I asked this question with the slyness of a Socrates. I was really saying, 'Oh you who are so knowledgeable in art, tell me what art is!']

"That's a good question," Peter replied nonchalantly. He thought a bit. He couldn't find an answer. "It has something to do with valuing expression of what we'd consider 'non-art.'"

An artifact in a museum is separated from daily life. It's timeless in a way. It has an alien quality about it. When market value is added to it, even more so. When you go into a museum, there seems to be two reasons you can't touch the artifact. One, because you don't want to ruin it. And two, it's worth a whole lot of money. So the art at a museum is separated from life, it has a sacredness to it. The artifact is almost completely remote and inaccessible. So how do you recognize art in life?"

[I mentioned Robert Pirsig's *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. There's a distinction between rationals and romantics when it comes to recognizing art in life. Romantics appreciate driving a fast car on a coastal road; Rationals appreciate the machinery under the hood.]

"Oh, I read that book in my late teens. I wanted to ride a motorcycle until something terrible happened to someone I knew, which dissuaded me."

People don't see the art in their everyday lives, we agreed based on our reading of *Zen*. Peter settled on this answer: "You ought to be concerned with that which sits on the edge of art and non-art."

Why is 'Art in Life?' so important to you?

We value certain experiences we might otherwise overlook. If art is too separate from our lives, we start to believe art is only the product of skill, only made by Michaelangelos. We become reticent about applying art in our daily lives. Art becomes highly ritual-

ized, it becomes a prescribed thing, like Halloween. Art gives people permission.

Moral transgression makes people uncomfortable. If separated from life, that permission never transfers, the space for transgression never opens. People could not express themselves, for themselves. Art makes people feel courage. It keeps things moving. I remember I had a professor who told me to keep my livelihood and my art separate. Yes, I know it's a little idealistic, but it's true. It's the only way to keep your art honest.

Interview with Peter Kalkavage

The occasion of this interview is the completion of Peter Kalkavage's forthcoming book, *Music and the Idea of the World*, to be published in 2024. The conversation has been edited lightly for clarity.

construction noise

Peter Kalkavage: The music of life is often interrupted in that way.

<laughter>

Colloquy: Yeah, well, the question of tone and noise is one that has been on my mind actually, so maybe we can talk about that. I know that I'm giving a number of prefaces here, but another one before we begin. We've spoken before and if you recall, I don't have any formal musical training, so I might ask you the silly, obvious question to try to get at the heart of something that's technical. I'm an ideal audience - I'm the innocent reader, as you put it in the preface.

Peter Kalkavage: It's always good to have an innocent reader. The book is like the serpent, tempting you to eat the fruit of knowledge

Colloquy: As long as I only have to eat it once

<laughter>

Colloquy: You mention the fruit in chapter 6. I found this a really difficult chapter, the technicalities, and I haven't read *Doctor Faustus*.

Peter Kalkavage: This is the chapter on Thomas Mann and *Doctor Faustus*.

Colloquy: I'm curious, well, I'm coming in a roundabout way here because I'm starting at the far end of the book. You say here, this is in reference to Heinrich Kleist's *A Puppet Theater*, "The essay ends with a paradox: grace will return, along with lost innocence, only after we eat again of the Tree of Knowledge. The paradox may be Mann's way of reminding Germany that after its unspeakable sins, any recovery of health will require a full recognition of its descent into hell. It will need to take another bite of the apple."

Peter Kalkavage: Yes

Colloquy: I'm wondering, and perhaps this isn't the best place to get into this, but when you lay out twelve-tone music in this chapter you say that Schoenberg and Webern conceived of its development as health-giving.

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, a recovery.

Colloquy: A recovery, yes. In Mann's novel, the nature of Faustian bargain is demonic. How is *Doctor Faustus*, for you, operating in reference to twelve-tone music?

Peter Kalkavage: Excellent question, and that's a good place to start. First of all, Mann, for one thing, didn't care about twelve tone music. He didn't like it, but he threw himself into describing it with amazing accuracy. But I think he would say that contrary to what Schoenberg and the others claimed, it was not health restorative but something corrupting. In fact, it was the exercise of a kind of will to power over the tones, an imposition. And maybe even, as I argue, a musical image of totalitarianism. So, yes, Mann did see that as, not necessarily

adding a demonic element to music, but enhancing a demonic element that for Mann is always there.

I try not to take a Thomas Mann stance in the very opening of the chapter so I could present 12 tone music as faithfully as I can. But then once the novel gets going, we see that its claim to health by restoring order is precisely what Mann thinks is connected with, maybe not the source of, but definitely connected with the demonic. Because it's not a divine order, it's not a good order, or a beautiful order like the order in Timaeus. Everything Timaeus sang the praises of, Mann is inverting and making it into something devilish.

Colloquy: *Is it fair to characterize twelve tone music as a human order?*

Peter Kalkavage: I think one can, but it's not the human in search of something like a right, natural order, but rather making music what you want it to do.

Colloquy: *Well, It's interesting to me. I have some curiosity about twelve-tone music, and I guess I have for a long time. It's strange for me, since I'm not educated about music, I haven't really entered into it on the intellectual level of technique and composition. It's more hearing it and trying to understand 'what is happening' and feeling that I want to understand, so I come back and listen to it. I guess on some level, hearing it often, as an organization of sounds, but very strange, mysterious sounds.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, and since you and I are both students of Zuckerkandl, the key – well, I shouldn't say key – the idea is that all the dynamic qualities are gone. They're destroyed. The whole point is not to have them because it's the dynamic qualities, as Zuckerkandl understands them, that establishes a key. That's where a key comes from. It comes from those pointers. And that's exactly what you don't have in twelve-tone. So yes, it seems to me right to characterize as you just did as organized sound, schematic, schematized sound – and so pitches, pitch distances, things of that sort.

Colloquy: *You refer to it as "a total materialization of music". It's a reduction of music to acoustical pitch.*

Peter Kalkavage: I think that's right. But then it has musical possibilities that I'm compelled to acknowledge.

Colloquy: *I'm interested in those possibilities.*

Peter Kalkavage: I've been listening to Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* and it's incredible how he uses twelve tone music to depict, express the most violent passions and events. It's really a stunning work. He uses it to effect. Berg, as people often say, was more successful at communicating a kind of coherence, if you will, meaning, than either Webern or Schoenberg. I think that's fair. The Violin Concerto of Berg I think is quite moving. In some ways a beautiful work. But the beauty is coming from sound patterns and again not from a directionality, not what we would call a melody. It's cerebral. It's the cerebral character of twelve-tone music wedded to the expression of raw passion. That's what Schoenberg wanted. And those two things come together in *Dr. Faustus* with the help of Adorno. Lots of help from Adorno. Mann was able to cast that in terms that are humanly meaningful. Or to put another way, he makes the quest for the abstract humanly important and terrifying. The novelist can do that. It's extraordinary how he contextualizes twelve-tone music to make it yeah humanly important but forbidding and terrifying because of its implicit inhuman character.

Colloquy: *I admit, now I want to read Doctor Faustus.*

Peter Kalkavage: I once did a preceptorial on it some years back, and it attracted the musicians among the students. It went very well. Part of that enterprise was our effort to listen to twelve tone pieces and try to hear what's there, as it were give them a chance, what kind of music is this, what is its goal, what in it if anything is humanly accessible. But it was a struggle. We listened particularly to Webern who was the purest version of twelve-tone music.

Colloquy: *I want to come back to the classroom, given your experience, but before that, you mentioned the cerebral character wedded to the violent passion in twelve-tone music. At one point in Chapter 6, you say that the range of emotional expression is limited. Is that a question of principle of construction or is this personal expression, is this because of Webern, Schoenberg...?*

Peter Kalkavage: It's a good question. I think with the twelve tone row, no matter how ingenious you are, no matter how brilliant, there's only so much you can do with a schematism. And if you want to express light experiences, or genuine human warmth, you're not going to – it's difficult to imagine the Contessa, in the Marriage of Figaro, sadly lamenting her fate with anything twelve-tone, or Don Giovanni and Zerlina singing 'Là ci darem la mano' twelve-tone. It has to be graceful. It has to be light, light as anything, and therefore very seductive. There has to be a sweetness, a lightness, a mock innocence, maybe even a real innocence which is certainly conveyed in the music. I just picked Mozart because he's the most obvious example of ranges of emotion, and he gets a pretty big range. Now, are there certain things that Mozart's language either cannot or does not want to express? Yes, past a certain point if violent expression comes into music, it's no longer music. He writes to his father, 'everything has to be controlled. It has to be genuinely musical no matter what the passions are doing.' He more than fulfilled that. There's a kind of light heartedness, a genuine light heartedness that would be hard to convey. It's very good for the expression of – it's very interesting, in the novel and I think Mann is right, it can express parodies very well. You know you can take a waltz and make it into a twelve-tone waltz, so it's a parody of itself. You can take conventions as Adrian in the novel often does, perfectly conventional things, and make them into caricatures.

Colloquy: *It has a mask-like quality.*

Peter Kalkavage: It has a mask-like quality, yes, when it's not the Schoenbergian raw expression, which Adorno liked. He thought that was the music that was more honest, because it wasn't so to speak inside of a frame inside of the frame of something like the conventions that he and others thought were falling apart. It's a fascinating phenomenon – twelve tone music. I find it endlessly fascinating.

Colloquy: *It seems strange that this music was realized that is somehow more appropriate for melancholy, maybe because twelve-tone does seem so cerebral. I mean, it's not unusual at all to want to listen to certain music when you feel the onset of a mood. There's nothing strange about that.*

Peter Kalkavage: Quite right.

Colloquy: *But that a certain composition of music would somehow narrow into that range particularly.*

Peter Kalkavage: It's very good for statements of nihilism. Tailored made for it. Now, in the Berg Violin Concerto, it's genuine grief, I think, made as musical as twelve-tone music can be. He picks a row, a twelve-tone row, that's very friendly to triads. He manages to get consonances, as it were, smuggled in, because of the row he picks. Every row has different musical possibilities.

Colloquy: *One of the difficulties with twelve-tone, if I recall, because you don't get that tension and release, it levels the consonance and dissonance.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, there are degrees. Degrees of consonances, degrees of dissonance.

Colloquy: *But it's still possible then, as you say, to smuggle it in, that it's still possible to fashion this tension and release within the row.*

Peter Kalkavage: Well, I'm not sure. You can get transitions that are not as jagged, but you're not going to get

the equivalent of tri-tone resolving to a major chord or something like that. If you did, it was because as a twelve-tone composer, you intended to play a joke. That would be shocking. You might shock your audience by actually putting in a tri-tone that has a dynamic character to it that resolves. But you wouldn't want to do that a lot. Once and no more, I think.

Colloquy: *Well, you even say it, that it has the potential to turn these significant features into clichés.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, Thomas Mann had an interesting take on twelve tone music. I have said in general that he didn't care for it, but he had a more specific way of putting it. He said that in twelve-tone music, 'I miss the diminished seventh chord'. He's thinking of the late C minor of Beethoven's piano sonata with its prominent diminished seventh chord and other things especially by Beethoven. It has its expressive power. It's two tri-tones stuck together. Very often they are used for dramatic purposes. In the St. Matthew's Passion, the crowd screams 'Barabbas' they use the diminished seventh chord. And I bring that up because that goes with the idea that there must be a tonal context so that a particular dissonance has a musical meaning. It's not merely dissonance. It's a particular kind of disturbance in the field, to use Zuckerkandl's language. So that's what Mann is thinking of. Mann is thinking of not so much Mozart but the 19th century romanticism and Beethoven pieces of an especially romantic character that have this high drama of the diminished seventh. But it's not going to work unless it's counterposed to consonance. It has to stand out as an effect or the contrast, the effective, pleasing, useful contrast between tension and resolution, dissonance and consonance, for that to work. It can't be all dissonance. Bach's chromaticism is another case in point. You're going to have pieces that are intensely chromatic, but there's a key. So, tones chromaticism is different from no key.

Colloquy: *Going back to something you had said about Mann, that he thought twelve-tone music was a corruption..*

Peter Kalkavage: Oh yes, and thought it had political implications that Schoenberg had no... they had no – they were writing music that put them on the bad side of the Third Reich. It was called musical bolshevism, cultural bolshevism – I forget what the exact term was, so it's not as if they were (can't hear), on the other hand that doesn't mean they weren't unconsciously expressing the spirit of the age.

Colloquy: *I'm interested in this idea that Zuckerkandl suggests and he does it both in Sound and Symbol and The Sense of Music. I think actually we spoke about this in a previous conversation. In The Sense of Music he relates that the development of harmony and polyphony coincide with the development of the concept of space in the Renaissance and Enlightenment. He asks a question in Sound and Symbol that I take as related, "Do we perhaps take time more seriously and know more about it than other periods because we have heard Bach's organ fantasias, Beethoven's symphonies, whereas other periods have not?" That we know more about time now than during a period with Gregorian chant. There's a progression.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes.

Colloquy: *And Schoenberg thought of twelve-tone as a progression. You end your book with a discussion of Poulenc and the return of tonality. Is the return of tonality a return to before twelve-tone, did we have to pass through it?*

Peter Kalkavage: I don't think there's a literal going back to Mozart, but I think you can use tonality as a general musical home in which to do creative and imaginative things. How does Poulenc do it? Very quirky dissonances. As I say in the chapter, the dissonances are embedded in chords that for the most part have a harmonic dynamic function. That function is somewhat muted, and this is part of what I think Poulenc intends. The dissonances he adds to these major or minor chords, it makes them colorful, it makes them interesting, the ear delights in them. There's something intensely pleasant about dissonances well used. It really is, at least it is in Poulenc. I mean it was Poulenc, conducting his choral music, who taught me how intensely pleasant dissonances can be. They just sit there, and they shimmer. Often this is not all for a diabolical pur-

pose. Quite the contrary, you want something to sound miraculous and revelatory in a good sense like the Nativity. And so, he's going to write music that has that scintillation, and you're not going to get scintillation from a major triad, so he adds dissonances. Sometimes he does this to express boundless joy and exuberance. It adds a kind of Dionysian element to joy that you wouldn't get from a straight major triad. It's really astonishing. Poulenc is the one I know best in that tradition. Stravinsky also does things like this. I'm thinking of the *Symphony of Psalms*. Extraordinary work, but Poulenc I know the best because I've conducted him and I've thought about him for many years. He strikes me as an especially good example of what a lot of composers were doing in the wake of twelve-tone music – turning away from it. And I think it's a certain kind of, I wouldn't call it progress as if it had been going there all along, but it was a reaction.

Colloquy: *When I brought this up in our previous conversation, you said, maybe I'll misquote you, but you said something to the effect that they are different worlds, the world of Gregorian chant, the world of Beethoven, the world of serialism.*

Peter Kalkavage: That's what I try to capture in my book. The world is nature, the world is history, the world is a cosmos of tones, and the cosmos of words. Those are terms from *Doctor Faustus*. But there's also the world or cosmos of an individual piece of music. There's the world of Mozart, but there's the world of the Magic Flute, the world of Don Giovanni, they are very different worlds.

Colloquy: *And your book is titled Music and the Idea of the World – actually, I apologize for asking this question – it should be obvious – because I see that you've laid out these various worlds of music and it seems like Zuckerkandl gives you the language to enter into them as a world. You call it a journey, but how is the whole book operating in terms of music and the world?*

Peter Kalkavage: That's an excellent question. I must say, as you know, especially with the little conclusion I added to the Mann chapter, that Zuckerkandl is the great influence on everything I say in the book. Not that I'm always in agreement with him, but I'm looking at everything in terms of what he says. Because I find that sparks fly when I do that. Thoughts come to me that don't otherwise come to me. And so I found that very helpful. It's also helpful to me to think about how the tonality that Zuckerkandl is describing is not present in Renaissance polyphony in *Sicut Cervus*, which is atonal you could say, on the other end. Not because it celebrates dissonance, quite the contrary, but because it doesn't have those urgent, determinately established dynamic qualities – tritones resolving at cadences, a key established, a key change, a key rendered ambiguous. That's not the way they're thinking. You have momentary regions of the center. It's extremely flexible, beautifully so, say in Palestrina or Byrd, and it was enormously helpful to me, always has been, to think about Zuckerkandl's dynamic qualities not being in full play there. It helped me in a positive way, so I could ask myself if that's not there, what is? What is polyphony without what we would call tonal harmony, without the functional chords and all that. Well, what you get is *Sicut Cervus*, what you get is Byrd and Josquin. Those extraordinary composers that you wouldn't say *Sicut Cervus* in A flat major. It would be meaningless. Is it more or less in A flat major? Yes, but it's not as if the chords are intending that to be an explicit structural feature. It has a freedom. It moves in and around A flat comfortably, but it's not as though it's interested in going to other keys or using relative major and minor. It doesn't really do that. So, it's really quite free in its composition, governed by voice leading and the genius of the composer. But it's different, so Zuckerkandl's explanation of tonality isn't helpful when you turn to the renaissance composers and I'm okay with that.

Colloquy: *You have a footnote from Adorno that says twelve tone music is contrapuntal in origin.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, it is a return to counterpoint, that is true. And that's played on greatly in dark ways in Thomas Mann's novel. And that withering thing that Adorno says, I don't know where he got this from by the way, I wish I knew, that Bach was a harmonist – apparently, something in one of Goethe's letters, I don't know. But Adorno picks it up and so does Mann, it becomes a theme, that Bach is not primarily a contrapuntalist,

but a harmonist, which means that he doesn't go back far enough to the origins that have to be recovered. Complete independence of parts, not subordinated to vertical structures, that's how I would understand it, whereas in Bach, the harmony is part of what's gorgeous about it.

Colloquy: *In the preface you mention that this book will focus primarily on the union of words and tones, and that instrumental music requires a different kind of inquiry. How would the inquiry be different if you were approaching instrumental music?*

Peter Kalkavage: That's a great question too. I don't really analyze any instrumental music much in the book. But Schopenhauer would be an excellent example of the supremacy of tones without words, of tones over words. It's the tones, and Nietzsche too, the Dionysian character of Tristan and Isolde is coming from the tones, to which the words are quite subordinate. The words are at the level of the surface world of daylight, but the tones are welling up from the depths, and they take you to the source. The words don't. That element is in the book, but I don't really do anything with that, partly because my experience is mostly with vocal music and choral music. By writing the book I learned a lot more about opera than I did before. Musical dramas have now become a major interest for me. But I didn't have anywhere nearly as strong an interest as I do now that I've gone through the book, so it's changed me. It does make me eager to go to instrumental works and to ask myself: alright, you have this extended inquiry into music and words, that kind of world where the cosmos of tones meets the cosmos of words. What about that cosmos of tone? In what sense is that a world? What pieces would I look at? Maybe Beethoven's late string quartets. Maybe a Mozart symphony. Certainly, a Beethoven symphony. A Bach fugue. These would be examples that I would want. If I were going to write volume two, it would be about the structure of instrumental pieces that I find deeply moving. Ones I love. You write about what you love. Especially Bach's fugues. Maybe the Goldberg Variations. That would be very hard.

Colloquy: *I was listening to some of Glenn Gould's late contrapuntal radio documentaries and it reminded me of something Zuckerkandl says in *The Sense of Music* where multiple voices speaking at once produce a cacophony, but multiple voices singing together, produces harmony.*

Peter Kalkavage: I put it this way in my book: the words are riding on the coattails of the dynamically connected tones. It's the tones that are making, what would otherwise be chaos, order. They're distinct because they have their careers, but the career is not in the word, it is in the tones. That's where the continuity is. It's in Zuckerkandl's tonal dynamic continuity, not in the grammar of the words. Zuckerkandl is right about that. He picks something from Verdi's *Otello* to make his case, an ensemble piece, though one could do equally from Mozart's *Figaro*.

Colloquy: *This was something that I found difficult with Zuckerkandl. There's a distinction between words that point to the world of objects, and tone.*

Peter Kalkavage: I would look at it in a more positive way. In his wonderful essay *Words and Tones in Song* from *Man the Musician*, he talks about how tones bring out a meaning and a connectivity, a connectedness in words, that the words can't do by themselves. This is one of the great questions for me in the book. What can tones do, with words, that words can't do for themselves? I try to come back to that over and over again whether it's the beautiful A minor Soprano Aria from Bach, or it's Tamino's love song from *The Magic Flute*, or Poulenc. What the tones are doing to express correspondences and a depth of meaning - not merely adding feeling, but meaning, something in there to be experienced. Perhaps not in a fully articulate way, but nevertheless an enhancement of meaning.

Colloquy: *I was largely convinced in Chapter 6 the way you presented what happens with twelve-tone, that it becomes material. That it becomes merely sound, in a Zuckerkandl sense, rather than tone. It leads me to wonder whether or not twelve-tone music might capitulate in the face of many of the arguments he puts to the musical experience in the*

early part of *Sound and Symbol*, trying to describe what it is that is meaningful in tones, that allow us to distinguish sense from nonsense in their succession - that it's not association and habit or something by the objective measure of music. I mean, for Zuckerkandl, maybe you could measure twelve-tone music objectively...

Peter Kalkavage: He may actually say something like that. If not, he certainly could. I would agree, so, the registering of pitch. For Zuckerkandl, as you know, tone transcends pitch, and is an immaterial aspect of tones, which are nevertheless external, as you can't say, 'Well of course they have something internal. The internal thing is our psyches.' Zuckerkandl wants to say 'no'. There's really an inwardness in the external world and music plugs into that. Akin, I think, to the Timaeus, not in the same way, but that I think it is in this respect, that it assumes the world is somehow ensouled. That there is an interior, an inner life, and music brings out of things. It gives voice to what would otherwise be inarticulate about the world itself, so it's not just self-expression, but disclosure, discovery, revelation.

Colloquy: *You chose Timaeus to make that example, not Schopenhauer. Zuckerkandl might suggest Schopenhauer, at least, he does quote him when speaking about hearing the core of the world.*

Peter Kalkavage: He does, and that's where I thought I had better put something in the Zuckerkandl chapter about how he differs from Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer is always talking about music as self-discovery. That the modes of will are our modes of will, and we're finding the core of the world as our core as well. For Schopenhauer the external world is an illusion, and for Zuckerkandl it is most definitely not an illusion. He's going to champion real externality of the external world. The world is not merely phenomenal. It's phenomenal but not illusory. So that's one difference. The other difference is the whole setup, for Schopenhauer music is important because it distracts us from our misery by putting us in touch with the generalized passions and soul conditions that drive us crazy. But we're not feeling them, Schopenhauer says. When we're listening to music, we're not feeling these things, we're contemplating them. I think he overdoes that. We are feeling. How could we not be feeling? But it's interesting how far he wants to go in the direction of music as something that takes us away from feeling to aesthetic contemplation. Then Zuckerkandl is going to say that he doesn't go for pessimism in Schopenhauer. Music is celebratory, life affirming, and the world is not an illusion and music is not just me all over again. 41min What Zuckerkandl means by will is the will of the tones. Now does he also mean the will of the world? I think he does, but he doesn't get at the negative connotations, the miserable pressure of the will. You won't find Zuckerkandl talking like that. The will is something positive. This is crude, but Schopenhauer is more the existentialist and Zuckerkandl is more the phenomenologist. That's not too far off the mark, I think.

Colloquy: *I do recall in the beginning of Sound and Symbol, he gives the example of the blind and the deaf, and quotes a Baudelaire poem, Rêve parisien I think, about a soundless world. So, there is a possible world that's actually quite melancholy.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, and he also says Beethoven's misery was not, so much, not hearing music, but not hearing the world. Not having connections with other people. There's something poignant about that. I've been thinking about this for years. It occurs to me, while I'm looking at a tree, I'm hearing the rustling of the leaves, and how important that second experience is to my experience of autumn. Not just the beautiful look of the trees as they change color, but the sound of the rustling, the sound of the wind. Sound, it's what our soul wants. We want to see, but we also want to hear. We are open in that way to the world coming to us. We are not looking at it, it comes to us. Sometimes annoyingly when we're trying to get work done and there's noise. Sometimes we welcome it because we want to hear what the world sounds like. And it's very difficult if you can't hear the sound of your friend's voices, or the sound of the voice of the person you love. There's some sense you are profoundly cut off.

Colloquy: *In Man the Musician he lays out a possible world, the world where we understand the musician as a kind of genius that possesses what others don't have, namely musicality, and if there are no geniuses, then we seem to have*

a real absence of musical values. And that conception of music seems to be a real problem. He says in the preface of The Sense of Music – or I took it this way, that this is why we need to have listeners able to discourse intelligibly about music. This is why, in a sense, why he writes The Sense of Music.

Peter Kalkavage: Yes, in *Man the Musician* he says we have a false idea that the professionals are up there on the stage and we are the happy receptacle of someone else's genius. But for Zuckerkandl, the origins of music, music in its primordial stage, in its original phase, was communal. Even if you had some member of the group standing out for a moment to sing, he represented the group and then he would come back in, such as in early folk songs. He mentions Gregorian chants. It's part of a communal celebration. And probably at least implicitly, an attempt to touch the divine, the divine forces at work in nature, or the god you worship, bridging a gap by means of music, praying, celebrating. So, there's another conception of music that's important to remember. But, Zuckerkandl isn't interested primarily in folksong. It's just important to remember that music started there. He's interested in art music.

Colloquy: *Speaking of community, I want to get back to the classroom. Please correct me on these details, but you've taught at St. John's for many years, and you also had some hand in writing the undergraduate music manual.*

Peter Kalkavage: I wrote some of the things that appear in it having to do with Pythagoreans and the Timaeus. Other people worked on it as well.

Colloquy: *Right. One thing I'm curious about, and I'm assuming this happens in the classroom all the time, what happens when we don't understand music? Or to put it more concretely, what happens when we don't hear, over and over, a theme recurring? That seems to be one kind of understanding. But in a more general sense, what does it mean to understand music?*

Peter Kalkavage: My first response is an analogy between poetry and music. Especially short poems, they can be remarkably difficult. Do I think it is possible to be moved by that which we do not understand? Absolutely. I can read something, and I'm moved by it, but I can't – I must have gotten something, but at what level, it's not at a discursive level for sure. It makes me want to go to the discursive. I want to know what is moving me here. I have that experience with music too. Music though, has an immediacy. Poetry is in that realm of words, so I can read a difficult poem, and maybe I'm moved by it, but my guess is that I stand more of a chance of being moved by music I don't understand than poetry I don't understand. But both can happen. There's something about the immediacy of music that gets to us. It often has a deep effect. Sometimes we're just utterly perplexed by what we're hearing, and we know that.

What we try to do in the music tutorial is to listen to things carefully, sing them – not just listen to them, but make the music, communally. Make music. It has that in common with the laboratory. You know, the animals we're studying are pieces of music, and in this case, we get to know them by being them. So, we make the music and we ask, 'what was going on there?' Things are revealed in the effort to sing a piece. Say, *Sicut Cervus*, you discover why it's hard. You discover causes. What makes it's so difficult to learn that? It's not the tones, they're pretty easy. The timings are hard. Hard syncopations. You're singing one thing, someone else is singing another. It's not homophony.

Mozart's *Ave verum corpus*, on the whole, is a lot easier to sing and learn. There's an experiential element that has to be there or we're not talking about music. But then our discursive intellect wants to know what is going on here. What is this thing that we call music? Well, let's take this particular piece of music, what does it ask of us if we are going to understand it? Do we hear a beginning that's recognizably a beginning? Is there an end? Do we know when it's over? Is it just because the music stopped, or is it because something persuaded us that there was a conclusion? What was that? What does motion even mean? This is where Zuckerkandl comes in with his fabulous 'what is it' question – 'What is music?' 'What is motion in music?' And so the effort in the

tutorial and it can be involved quite a strenuous effort just in listening for the things our minds are discovering in the sheet music. You can go both ways. You hear something – I’m always telling my students ‘Don’t just go by the score. Listen to the music and if something stands out, let that be your guide.’ So, it sends you to the score and now you want to look at causes. What produced that effect that so struck me? It can go the other way around. I find a diminished 7th chord and my eyes and mind tell me that. Well, how does that register when I actually hear it? What is its purpose? How does it fit into the whole? But you’re constantly trying to wed, and this can be very hard, analytic elements with experiential ones. The idea is to get them to come together for a fuller understanding of music. It’s hard to do. You have very different levels, not just in background, but levels of receptivity. You really have to make an effort to hear things eventually that you’re not hearing right away. That’s an effort. You have to be open to that, so when you say that you’re not hearing the tension in the raised 7th that Zuckerkandl talks about, well, keep listening.

Colloquy: *That we have to be persuaded, that reminds me of something Zuckerkandl writes, “Such a [tonal] development makes sense only when we recognize that at certain times composers discover new meanings in tones and gradually persuade the change resistant ears to accept and understand them”. This idea of persuading change resistant ears. This seems provocative given the argument. I would think you wouldn’t be persuaded given that we discern music not through something like habit. Or how does persuasion happen? It’s strange at first to think that change resistant listeners have to be persuaded to accept new meanings in tones.*

Peter Kalkavage: The perceived ‘oh I didn’t know that could happen’ is not coming from something that is merely psychological. I’m not being re-habituated, but something is being disclosed, a potential that wasn’t there before. The best example is Zuckerkandl’s brilliant discussion of the opening of Tristan and Isolde and the opening Tristan chord resolves to a dominant seventh chord. It resolves to a dissonant chord. And we go, yes that sounds like a resolution. Now, it’s not the same kind of resolution you would get from a tritone going to the five seven chord going to the one, but it does sound like a tension has been resolved. And Zuckerkandl says does that mean we were re-habituated, that we no longer heard it as a tense chord? No, that didn’t go away, but something new was added and it took Wagner, almost like a sorcerer. So it’s not merely psychological persuasion, we are persuaded because it is persuasive.

Colloquy: *That an act of persuasion has to take place...*

Peter Kalkavage: And what does it mean to be persuaded? Of course, Plato was very worried about precisely this aspect of music, because if I could use the verb, it persuades the soul, it leads it, it can lead it down some pretty bad roads. Certain modes contribute to disorder, other modes to order.

Colloquy: *Maybe we can even be persuaded about twelve-tone.*

Peter Kalkavage: Schoenberg thought we could become habituated to hearing twelve-tone as naturally as we do tonality.

Colloquy: *If twelve-tone has no tonal center or dynamic quality, then it seems like it could be the case in lieu of Zuckerkandl’s argument against associationism, that well, couldn’t associationism actually be a case for habituation and persuasion.*

Peter Kalkavage: Right, that you’d get used to it. What would it mean to catch on? Not for the intelligentsia, because they have an ideology in play, but for regular listeners. It’s hard to... well, what do we want out of music? What are the tunes we want to sing and why? Now, can we be habituated to music that is not good for our souls? Yes, we can. I think there has to be something catchy there, maybe perversely so, but nevertheless it has to be catchy, the way one speaks of a disease, it has to be something that infects because it can. It’s inside of us.

Colloquy: *Twelve-tone definitely is not catchy.*

Peter Kalkavage: And it means not to be. It doesn't seem like the composers were striving for familiarity, but celebrating... well, the unkind way to put it would be to say it's struggling to be artsy, to be of a higher sort. But that's not all they're struggling for. It could be a will to power, a forcing of a certain scheme onto the nature of things. Although, what I come back to is twelve-tone music as music, especially when it's done by these brilliant composers, does reveal something about the soul and about the world. Maybe not what they thought, but one only has to listen to Berg's Violin Concerto or Wozzeck, especially. The story and the music go together perfectly. It's disturbing, but artistically impressive, maybe even beautiful. The fit is perfect: truths of human existence and the world, an authoritarian and brutal world. We're not just reading about it, we're feeling it. It's extraordinary. Berg in his twelve-tone world and Poulenc in his tonal world are both doing some very similar things, getting to the interior of a world and of our souls.

Colloquy: *There have been many musical developments after twelve tone music, say the development of synthetic sound, experiments in indeterminacy and chance operations, and musique concrete. Does Zuckerkandl still have something to say? These are worlds too.*

Peter Kalkavage: True, and then I wonder, in a platonic spirit, what do those worlds say about the people who conceived them? But in any case, that's another ethical, metaphysical question. Well, as you know, for Zuckerkandl: no dynamic qualities, no Zuckerkandl. So, another version of sound, pitch, sound effects, but not, as Zuckerkandl would say, not the tone *gestalts* that come about only from dynamic qualities. He's pretty careful in his writings not to say too much about twelve tone music. He says we'll have to see where it goes. That's pretty much where he is. Of course, if his dynamic quality is no longer present. What do we have to talk about except pitch? Could that itself be a kind of musical world? Yes. Twelve-tone music is a gorgeous example of that. There are great pieces of music written in that style. Whether I want to listen to them, I can admire them and their structure and their aesthetic goal, I suppose, certainly their ingenuity. We really come back to the question of what music is. That's where I end up in the book. What is that? What can it sustain? What are the boundaries? Are there boundaries past which music is no longer music? And how to give an answer that's not parochial? "Well, Bach and Mozart!" Well, but, you have to think outside the box!

Colloquy: *There's a sense with Zuckerkandl that maybe music at its height really does only cover certain periods.*

Peter Kalkavage: I get a strong sense of that from him, but like I say, he's careful not to go beyond that to make judgments that would be hard to know. It would be hard to know what he would do with that, if there are no dynamic qualities, then where is coherence? Where is tonality? Hard to see that would be music for him. But it is. I think what I'm trying to say is that there are limits to Zuckerkandl.

Colloquy: *But still a fascinating writer.*

Peter Kalkavage: Yes. No matter how many times I read it, and I've used it in my class for decades, it's always thrilling to read the opening sections of *The Sense of Music*. How he gets the question of music, music as a question, out on the table. He dares to ask simple questions.

Colloquy: *Why is *The Sense of Music* not taught at the GI?*

Peter Kalkavage: Yeah, there isn't a musical segment. It would be interesting, maybe there should be. It is a liberal art. I don't know what seminar would be.

Colloquy: *You say it's the most comprehensive of the liberal arts and we're missing this in the graduate program.*

Peter Kalkavage: Tutors have done preceptorials on music, but it's not the same as a music segment that would really make music, say music in connection with mathematics, and then there could be something with Zuckermandl to explore a non-mathematical approach to music.

Colloquy: *Mr. Kalkavage, thank you very much for speaking with me and I hope we can talk again soon.*

Peter Kalkavage: Thank you, I'm sure we will.

Memoria

A Toast to the Fall 2022 graduates delivered on behalf of the faculty at the Associate Dean's Reception, 12 December, 2022.

Sarah Benson

I know from talking with other colleagues that we can feel a bit guilty on seminar nights around dinner time when it's hard to be fully present with kids or partners because our minds are already absorbed in the seminar discussion to come and the phrasing of our opening questions. So, having been given a platform in the hour just before seminar, my theme is tonight's reading: Aristophanes. *The Frogs*.

For those of you reading Jung not Aristophanes for seminar tonight, here's a synopsis. Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, laments the poor quality of tragic playwrights in Athens and travels to the Underworld to bring a better poet back from the dead. The poet he has in mind is Euripides, of *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and *Bacchae* fame, whose tales treat of incest, slander, and adultery and end in dismemberment, cannibalism, and infanticide. Though Euripides, with this resume, seems like the right poet to return to Athens and edify the citizenry, the ghost of Aeschylus also shows up and gets into a verbal skirmish with Euripides. I won't say who wins. In the play the servant and master get mixed up, turning hierarchies topsy turvy, and there is a chorus of frogs who croak in tragic meter. The play is a comedy. We know this from the first line, when Dionysus's servant offers to make the audience laugh with some tried and true fart jokes. From that first line the play makes comedy, not only tragedy, its topic.

Here's what I want to suggest. We too, all of us here, participate in Dionysus's project of bringing dead poets back from the Underworld on Monday and Thursday nights. And the mode in which we do this is in some important ways comedic. Or it should be. I want to offer a brief explanation and praise of these comedic elements of liberal education.

Have you heard the one about Thales and the well? I'll let Socrates tell it. In the *Theaetetus*, the dialogue that examines how we can know anything, Socrates recounts:

They say Thales was studying the stars ... and gazing aloft, when he fell into a well; and a witty and amusing Thracian servant-girl made fun of him because, she said, he was wild to know what was up in the sky but failed to see what was in front of him and under his feet. The same joke applies to all who spend their lives in philosophy. It really is true that the philosopher fails to see his next-door-neighbor; he not only does not notice what he is doing; he scarcely knows whether he is a man or some other kind of creature. The question he asks is, what is Man?

The image of the philosopher gazing at the heavens and falling down a hole or slipping on a banana peel is kind of funny. But why?

On this I got some help from Henri Bergson, whose *On Laughter* is a poetics of comedy, investigating its structure and effects as Aristotle does for tragedy.

First, Bergson says that we laugh when a character's own rigidity brings them up short. In Socrates's example, the servant wouldn't have laughed if Thales jumped into the well.

Second, Bergson says that laughter is an intellectual rather than an emotional response. In a tragedy the fate of Thales should arouse pity and fear, but that would ruin the comedic effect. To laugh at Thales we must be insensitive and distance ourselves from him, however briefly. Socrates uses the story to let would-be philosophers gain some distance and laugh at themselves.

Finally, laughter is social. It is a communion of intelligences. Says Bergson, "you would hardly appreciate the comic if you felt yourself isolated from others."

These three aspects of the stumbling block of rigidity, distancing, and the social savoring of the comic are a picture of something that we do for each other in order to learn more about the books and ourselves. Both the Politics & Society seminar that I had with David Pierce and Joshua Laperche in the spring of 2021 and my current Literature seminar with Benjamin Pershall are ones where I was rediscovering the seminar

table after time away; our Politics & Society seminar was the only class I had in person for a year and half at the beginning of the pandemic. Last year I was on sabbatical doing my own thinking and reading. Both these seminars were a reminder of what I find meaningful about our endeavor. What is meaningful, I see, partakes in the comic, even when we're not laughing. The twin virtues of seminar are to make space for other people while also letting them get in our way. We need to trip over each other and the text sometimes to avoid the illiberal rigidity of Thales or master and servant get mixed up and we become the servants of our fixed ideas. Thales needs company to avoid being absurd.

I thank all of you, and our graduates especially tonight, for keeping the faculty company.

Here's to the laughter that shows us what we are, to letting both the texts and our classmates get in our way, and to the newest graduates. May the comic muse never desert you.

Brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax!

A Toast to the Tutors, delivered 12 December, 2022.

Tanya Fuller

Good evening to the present Polity of St. John's College -

I had a total meltdown today in preparing this toast, and I did not call my husband, my best friend, nor my pastor - I called one of my St. John's tutors (who's name I will not call because I don't want to embarrass her). Today I did not need a lover, a friend, or a spiritual guide; I needed a tutor. Someone who had been in my place, read the same literature, worked the same Euclidian proofs, tussled with the forms of Aristotle and made it out of Plato's Cave alive - someone who could guide me back off of the proverbial cliff from which I threaten to jump.

I told her how nervous I felt to make this toast. I told her that I did not have enough to fill the prescribed time and that I felt inadequate. And that's when somehow and suddenly we were translated back centuries to the Grecian Isle of Ithaca. She was the grey-eyed daughter of Zeus and, well, I guess I was that man of twist and turns, my favorite literary character - Odysseus trying to make it home.

"Courage!" - she said with eyes afire - "Free your mind of all that anguish now. Come, quick, let's bury your treasures here in some recess of this haunted hallowed cave where they'll be safe and sound, then we'll make plans so we can win the day." With that the tutor-goddess swept into the cavern's shadowed vault, searching for hiding-places far inside its depths, while I-Odysseus - hauled my treasures into the cave.

The golden evenings on the deck with my family in the cave, the shopping trips with my girlfriends for finespun clothing in the cave, the extra hours at work with my beloved students - all the people and things that my studies required me to stow away for a time while I pursued this MALA degree remained safe in the cave. Once assured that I would return to my normal life soon, the tutor-goddess, Pallas Athena, daughter of storming Zeus sealed the Zoom room with a stone and led the way with a preceptorial opening question. Why are you here?

I started to explain why I came to St. John's. I felt that I was writing an application essay when she redirected me with another question, "No, why are you melted, stuck, not writing out your speech?" Then Jung and his buddy Freud appeared, saying - it's something from her childhood, trauma, the unconscious. Then Madison joined in about government being a reflection of human nature, and Nietzsche yelled that poets exploit their experiences. I began to unravel, but the tutor goddess placed her shield over me and took a defensive stance, silencing the writers and evoking from me my WHY! I pulled myself up slowly, wiped my tear-stained face and said: "I am here in emotional disarray because of the lions."

"What lions?" She inquired and turned, armed with her spear.

I responded: "The ones that tell me my students don't need great books, they can't understand the great ideas of history on which civilizations have stood and fallen, liberal arts education is not for my community - those lions." In an instance another Athena appeared, a little older than the first, and with her where great elephants and corvids swarming overhead - she whispered a poem to me - I joined in:

I say,
It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

The fire that burns in me to teach my students, to guard my students, to join with them in their quest to

learn returned;
And I could hear the Negro Poet, Claude McKay reciting,
I plucked my soul out of its secret place,
and held it to the mirror of my eye, ...
Contemplating the strange, I'm comforted
By this narcotic thought; I know my soul.
My two Athenian tutors smiled and said – "She's got it."

Because I had tutors that invited me to join them on an adventure to think, and rethink, to pose questions and search for my own answers; to learn and understand; they waited for me; they guided me; they discovered with me; and for all of this I am eternally (we don't know how long that is) grateful. I will return to my community armed with the great ideas and the great books in my heart and on my shelf. Ready to lead seminars and to tutor others that want to be liberated. I will "always keep Ithaca fixed in my mind."

I am grateful to all of the tutors of both Annapolis and Sante Fe campus of the St. John's College and I invite you all to raise a glass with me, and toast to the tutors of St. John's College, Thank you.

COLLOQUY

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