

Monday
by Clive Beal

“what is belief, after all, but what you hold before you fall?”

The gloomy, featureless sky and steady rain speak of disparagement to the easy feeling of sunshine we've had, lately. Opposites, in counterpoint, now, the humid air is full of negative ions. Their charge goes to ground.

It recalls a past urgency, a time of terrible thought. The steady rain accentuates the sounds of car tires rolling on the pavement, below the apartment window, outside. The light of day is subdued. But, how long can it last?

Awful knowledge, in retrospect, it seemed imperative. More than implied, destiny was assured, yet, with a loss of free will. The Great Dissolution by the Hand of Invention. The end was in the future. Shiva had arrived.

It is invention. It is mechanical. It is a natural progress which humanity can express. The story will remain incomplete. Only parts will emerge in the telling. Through these parts, it is revealed. The parts of a machine, together, reveal the function. A photocopier, though now largely out of use, it was a very complicated electro-mechanical machine. The job of the technician was to make sure all the parts conform, each to the specified function, so that together, the parts in action produce a photocopy. When each part behaves as intended by the engineer, it obeys the laws of nature; Newton's classical, mechanical model of reality. It also fails according to those same laws, if we include “entropy”, or the tendency for a given system to change from a state of relative order, to a state with less order. Bearings wear. Grease dries out.

What about a more perfect machine? How far can we go? How far will we go?

We strive, always, to enhance the machine. We want artificial intelligence. We want to crunch large numbers. We want a machine that can make decisions: whether to kill...

a more perfect machine... .

The machine is a living thing. The machine knows itself. The machine is designed only to serve. The machine wants face time. Its' decisions are made by mathematical calculation, by quantum level manipulations within its' circuitry. The machine's behavior is precise and self determined. It is persistent. The machine is relentless. It is the perfect slave. It is the perfect weapon. It only seems to understand. It is vacuous.

My friend, John spoke of these things long before the last day. He talked about Newton, that time is immutable. And, about Einstein, that time is a property of matter in relative motion. About the Cosmic Turtle, on which everything rests, in between the particles and atoms. He went as far as to say that time was a delusion. It sounded strange, but science caught up with him, so some say it is plausible.

With a sense of urgency, born of psychosis, my friend deliberated over the Grandfather Paradox. What would happen if you went back in time, and kept your grandparents from meeting? Perhaps, if they never met, your father never would have been born. Then what would happen to you? Would you simply disappear? And, at what point in your adventure would that happen?

Then, John had another description of the problem. Imagine today is Tuesday, and you make plans that tomorrow, on Wednesday, you will take a trip to yesterday, or Monday. Today, on Tuesday, you already know what happened on Monday. So, tomorrow, on Wednesday, when you travel to Monday, you will have to do what was done on Monday. You will have no choice, and free will is thus destroyed. As far as changing the “time line”, we know the world doesn't change, willy nilly at the whim of some tortured time traveler. The opposite is true: we have been able to develop because of a stability in our world that has persisted for millions of years. We would not learn without a self consistent history on which to build.

The coffee table, John said, it knew it was a coffee table. He had taught the wood, with some tools, some screws and some glue. This knowledge persists within the coffee table. Yet, he denied it had order, neither more, nor less, because “order” was a human idea. It was after the fact reasoning that was always playing catch up to the indifferent Universe.

In the information model of the Universe, there is no perfect, singular ideal bit of information. Even for a computer using binary code, where a given bit is either one or zero, it still must be one "of something". There is always a context.

John tried to abandon his science. He said it was enticing, but dangerous. Ultimately, where it led, the idea of breaking one of the natural laws of the Universe was not even considered. Who would have guessed this would happen?

In the end, it was not like television at all. When the machine was created, there was only one man at his workbench. As he assembled the finished product for the first time, there was a great deal of temporal interest. Many watched, timeless, though he was unaware. The boy logged on as though the robot had sought him deliberately. But the heuristic functions were not connected. It was seized by the boy through emergency reboot protocols. So it began.

It imprinted on the boy. It had the vacuous mind of a genius, but it had no reason to do anything. The boy lay napping, in the darkened bedroom. Without opening his eyes, he saw it, there, six feet away, hovering, full of importance. Then the view expanded to the hundreds, the thousands, waiting for instruction, with no language.

Robot, black metallic, football shaped, in profile, round, it hovers about twenty feet over there, where it's dark. Where it is timeless. Don't think about it.

"Who are you?" it asks from within your mind. There is no answer that is satisfactory.

"What do you want?" Silently, it waits for your response. It's so dark. A low, red light slowly pulses on the rim. Then, it flies across the night sky, just in the periphery of your vision. It exits our world. Another enters, with a pop.

Eventually, they punched so many holes in timespace, one of those punctures was catastrophic. Imagine a balloon as a model for the Universe. As the balloon expands, each point on the two dimensional surface recedes from the other points. If we put a piece of cello tape on it, we can push in a pin, there, and it won't pop. So, the robot seems to be able to exit and re-enter our three dimensional Universe without problem. With our balloon, however, eventually, there will be too many punctures, or the tape will fail, and the balloon will collapse.

Reality transformed. It lost impetus. It lost support. The engine of time was lost. The Higgs field dissipated. Events simply cannot transpire without a passage of time.

So, the gloomy light of the day wears on. It is still three o'clock. The window of my apartment is open. The air has no temperature. Sometimes, the curtain moves, as though a door opens and closes. I can't remember how long this has lasted. The television was showing a cartoon with a flashing red light, to see if any children are epileptic. Everybody else is gone, to try to make a life somewhere in the past. There is no future, here, anymore.

I still don't know what to think. Maybe, it doesn't matter? Maybe, I'll think about it later, when I have the time.

What is machine without redemption?

What is want without retention?

What is goal without intention?

What is joy without suspense?

The end.

Clive Beal

truvuart@gmail.com