
EXTANT

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CONTENTS

VIE PROJECT UP-DATE.....	1
THE VIE IN PAPERBACK <i>from: EDITION ANDREAS IRLE.....</i>	1
TAKING THE ISR ONLINE, <i>Koen Vyverman.....</i>	2
BETWEEN INFINITY AND THE ELIATIC ILLUSION <i>Paul Rhoads.....</i>	3
POLITICS AS USUAL, <i>Phooey on The Prophet.....</i>	12
CYBER FOLLIES, <i>Silk Purses From Sow's Ears.....</i>	14
PATAPHYSICAL SPAM, <i>The I-God, by Matthew Paris.....</i>	18
ECHOS IN THE ETHER, <i>Letters, Reactions to Wave 2.....</i>	18



VIE PROJECT UP - DATE

The current state of the project reminds me of a passage from *Sulwen's Planet*:

...a collapsed cylinder of black-and-white metal two hundred and forty feet long, a hundred and two feet in diameter. . .perfectly preserved in the scant atmosphere of frigid nitrogen were the corpses of a squat pallid race, something under human size, with four arms, each terminating in but two slender fingers.*

None-the-less, like wounded but still surviving Sea-cows and Wasps, a few brave volunteers struggle on. The EQ volume is almost ready, except for some modifications to the front matter, including a statement of gratitude to the EQ editors, finalization of the work credits and a preface by Chuck King (wallah for these 3 texts the history of whose restoration is so particular that it merits special commentary). These efforts have been complicated by e-mail problems. John Vance has had trouble getting front-matter text to me; my contacts with Chuck are only sporadic.

Besides that, one text is still in CRV and I've had no word from Bob Luckin for weeks (which is so uncharacteristic that I am quite worried about him), and *The Four Johns* is still in Post Proofing, though I am unable to establish any e-mail contact with Chris, despite my 3 e-mail address and even by pestering various colleagues to forward mails between us. It seems to me that this PP run should have been done by now, and for all I know perhaps it is. But I don't even know who the team members are.†

* VIE vol. #17, page 278

† I have just discovered (Febuary 16) that, in fact, Chris had no job underway, which sadly underlines the non-existence of our once proud project structures.

Thanks to this communication difficulty I had launched poor Rob Friefeld into provisional PP work, for which he put together a team from among his personal platoon of crack operatives: Mark Bradford, Andrew Edlin, Tony Graham, Mike Schilling and Steve Sherman. The errata generated have been applied, though several new TI issues were brought up. Rob informs me these are in the process of resolution (presumably by himself, Chuck and Tim Stretton).

Stefania Zacco, always faithfully at her post, is ready to print, though I do not know if Bob Lacovara and John Vance have ok-ed her proposed budget. Joel Anderson generated the cover and spine files, for both Readers and Deluxe, and Suan Yong seems to have a grip on who the subscribers are. My fingers are crossed, as well as my eyes.

Despite this sorry situation, we stubbornly maintain our intention to deliver the text to Milan no later than March, and to mail books to subscribers no later than April.



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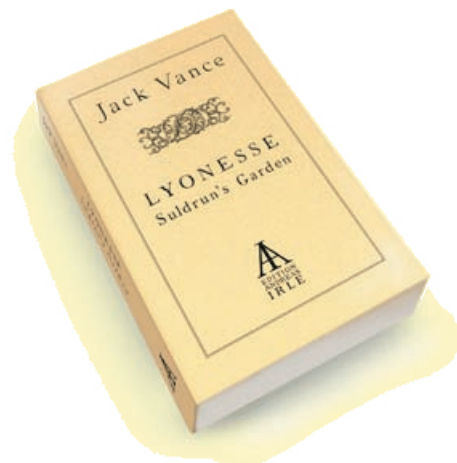
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* *Madouc* has been recomposed in InDesign because it was originally composed in another program. Front matter for all books has been recomposed and does not include the VIE frontispieces.

TAKING THE ISR ONLINE

K. Vyverman

ABSTRACT

The SAS-based TOTALITY system contains a tool — the Incredible String Retriever, or ISR — which scans the full Vance opus for a specific word and returns a report listing all paragraphs featuring this word. See the partial screenshot of the ISR report for 'equipoise' as an example. In the course of the VIE project, the ISR has been frequently used by TI-wallahs. The ISR was (and still is) perceived as a great research tool for Vancean Scholars. Since TOTALITY runs on proprietary software, it has always been a one-man show with yours truly running analyses and reports on request. We are presently investigating the possibility of unlocking the power of the ISR to the benefit of the Vance community by integrating it into the VIE website.*

FUNCTIONALITY

We envisage the following basic functionality, which is about the least one would expect from any search-engine.

— Single Word Look-up: returns paragraphs containing a given word.

— Multiple Word Look-up: returns paragraphs containing either all or any of the given words (see Search Modifiers).

— Explicit String Look-up: returns paragraphs containing a specific look-up string.

— Search Modifiers: Case-sensitivity yes/no. Partial matching yes/no. Boolean operators AND/OR (only applying to multiple word look-up).

— Output Formats: HTML or PDF.

SECURITY

Obviously we do not wish to enable users to download entire stories by searching for trivial words like 'the', 'a', and so forth. We therefore suggest to impose a limit on the number of hits that are returned to the user. The Vance opus is made up of a vocabulary of 90,207 words, with a frequency range of 1 (e.g. 'zoot-suiter') to 250,589 ('the'). Setting a limit of e.g. 500 hits means that the 500 most frequently used words cannot be searched upon via Single Word Look-up — nor for that matter via Multiple Word Look-up with the OR operator. 500 seems a reasonable upper limit, because 1) it will disallow large chunks of any given story to be extracted from the system, and 2) it excludes only 987 mostly common words from the search functionality. That is: about 99% of the Vancean vocabulary remains searchable.

Report created by the SAS System, 23 September 2004 at 18:08:32 PAGE 1 OF 1

The Incredible String Retriever

equipoise

Mazirian the Magician (maziri-cor-bf)

"Willingly will I aid you," said Pandelume. "There is, however, another aspect involved. The universe is methodized by symmetry and balance; in every aspect of existence is this **equipoise** observed. Consequently, even in the trivial scope of our dealings, this equivalence must be maintained, thus and thus. I agree to assist you; in return, you perform a service of equal value for me. When you have completed this small work, I will instruct and guide you to your complete satisfaction."

Night Lamp (nightl-cor-bf2)

"I have enjoyed my victories for many years; no one can take this joy from me. Even now my enemies cringe when I look at them! Kill me if you like; all men die. But in my case, not until **equipoise** was satisfied. And who is to blame? Who else but Tawn Maihac, the faithless father who never returned to claim his lost son. There is the answer: twenty years the child has waited in the dark to pay for the avarice of his father and the stealth of his mother.

"Not so! You are wrong! You will stay here with me. Why? Because **equipoise** implies redress! I am entitled to solace! To this end you might wish to do a stint in the dungeons to show the sincerity of your grief. I will assume the function of Shim, which truly would please me, and we will continue in this fashion until we agree that equilibrium has been restored."

* This possibility crucially depends upon an accord with the Vances and any other text copy-right holders.

If necessary, the list of words affected by this limitation can be made available so as to curb user frustration. Note that the limit can still be lowered, since most of the interesting words in the vocabulary have a rather low frequency anyway. The table below lists various limits, with the number of words affected, and the percentage of the vocabulary that is still searchable:

Hit Limit /	Words Excluded /	% Searchable
500	987	98.9
400	1226	98.6
300	1627	98.2
200	2369	97.4
100	4446	95.1

TECHNICAL

The database tables underpinning TOTALITY are in the proprietary SAS data set format, but may rather effortlessly be converted to an intermediary format whence they can be loaded into another database environment. A number of open source (read: free) database options are available, from MySQL,* to PHP-Nuke.† There is no obvious choice, and a decision which one to go for will probably hinge on the availability of volunteers with extensive experience in a particular package.

Except for the database, there is the matter of the search-engine front-end, which can be as simple as a HTML-form. Yet, someone will need to construct one. Packages like PHP-Nuke may include templates for various front-end applications, and the necessary Perl-scripts to capture the input parameters, generate SQL statements, retrieve and format returned records. In all likelihood, assistance will be needed from someone with Perl programming expertise if we want to implement the security measures as outlined above.

RESOURCES

Except for one or more volunteers with experience in (stuff like) the above technologies, an estimated 500MB of disk space will be needed to host the database tables and any temporary files that are the result of user activity. Conceivably, the engine could be built into the VIE site, and even hosted on the same physical machine(s).‡



* <http://www.mysql.com>

† <http://www.phpnuke.org>

‡ Anyone interested in participating in such a project, contact Paul Rhoads or Koen Vyverman.

BETWEEN INFINITY AND THE ELIATIC ILLUSION*

MATTER OVER MIND

As philosophic as his work may be Vance is not a philosopher, and he certainly does not belong to the deplorable 'intellectuals' class. But his work, like any artist expression, is inevitably built upon a world-view which, with characteristic ambivalence and contradiction, it expresses or embodies.

A world-view is a generalized, often vague collection of opinions and feelings. It is founded upon a metaphysic. The latter is a 'theory of the whole', including those parts which cannot be seen—assuming they exist. On the level of ideas, compared to a world-view a metaphysic is more distinct but usually less distinctly understood. Many world-view holders would fail to recognize a statement of its underlying metaphysic as a statement of their own opinion, and even rarely perceive their world-view as a choice; though even if they do it is still rare that they be attentive to the enigmas and contradictions which might infect it. The conundrums inherent in a metaphysic, therefore, are attended to least of all. Of possible metaphysics, however, there are a great number and several sardonic statements to this effect occur in Vance, such as the epigram to chapter 3 of *The Killing Machine*, where we read of:

... a thousand gloriously irrational compromises between
two thousand sterile absolutes. . .

However numerous, they may yet be categorized among a few basic types.

The type currently popular among fashionable Western elites—to which, like your humble servant, I believe most of my gentle readers are more or less close—is a species of the crudest metaphysic ever imagined, one which, with an amusing twist, harks back to the toddling emergence of philosophy itself. The original philosophers were the so called Ionian Monists. In modern terminology they were Materialists. Like their modern counterparts they troubled themselves not with such questions as how the universe began or why it changes. Their only question was: what is it made of? To their credit they theorized atomic particles.

Thales, the first philosopher of them all, believed the

* In previous essays I have already treated some of the ideas here, so I hope the angle of approach and auxiliary topics will sugar the pill of repetition. I beg the pardon of my indulgent readers for any boredom occasioned, though I do not expect it; inflicting boredom is unpardonable! As for my non-indulgent readers; they learned, long ago I presume, the apparently difficult lesson that they are not obliged to read things which interest them not, or of which they disapprove—though it pains the rabid pamphleteer I am to confess it.

elementary particles to be atoms of water. Anaximenes said they were of air. Heraclitus claimed they were of fire. All recognized 4 elements but, believing larger things necessarily to be composed of smaller ones, and since earth seems more gross and granular, less fluid and fine, they ruled it out as the basic, underlying element. Empedocles however, who agreed with the Monist that everything was ultimately One, taught that the four elements were equally basic.* Such were the issues eagerly debated at the dawn of science.

But what of change, or 'becoming' as the Greeks put it? The so called Eliatic school asserted that change is an illusion, a false impression of our senses. We have little right to dismiss this apparently strange idea as ridiculous, as we shall presently see. Parmenides proposed another innovation. He divided the elements into a passive and an active group; the later caused change though Erotic Impulse, or 'sexual desire', terms which, in Greek thought, are englobed in the larger concept of attraction. Thus Parmenides explained phenomena which lacked apparent mechanical cause, such as things falling to the ground rather than floating up into the air, the curdling of milk, the refusal of oil to mix with water. Today we understand these things as gravitational or magnetic force, chemical and electrical interaction of molecules. But is not describing such interactions in terms of attraction or repulsion perfectly consistent with the modern explanation?†

Sophistic or not, such ideas are Materialist. For Parmenides the cosmos is like a collection of balls rolling down an inclined plain bouncing against each other, where the balls are atoms and the rolling and the inclination of the plane are erotic impulse, or the principles of motion and change. Such ideas ignore, or reject, the thought that things might have an inside, a second or super-nature — to say nothing of their beginnings, or ends, a goal or intentionality presupposing their existence. What is directly perceived marks the limit of concern and interest. Today, with electronic scanning microscopes to peek at molecules and spectrosopes to peer at the outer walls of the cosmos, we plausibly feel we have seen all, reinforcing our parochially human suspicion that things we do not perceive fail to exist.

The big-bang may be an historical event, but what caused it? If it was caused by, or is a phase of, the steady state, what caused that? Modern science is not more concerned

* Empedocles, like a pilgrims of Kyril, died by throwing himself into a volcano. Another classical suicide with a vancian echo is the death of Ajax. That hero of the Trojan war, when he was defeated by Ulysses in contest for the armor of Achilles went mad and killed himself; where his blood ran out a purple flower sprang up.

† Though Aristotle does not range him in this category, Empedocles seems to have been a follower of Anaxagoras, believing that Mind is the ultimate cosmic cause.

‡ Empedocles, who was also a poet, added 'strife' to Parmenides' system, but strife is a sort of negative attraction, which shows how these early theoreticians often mired themselves in word juggling, or 'sophistry' as they called it. Early metaphysical theories included notions such as causation by pairs of opposites: good-bad, square-oblong, cold-hot, beauty-ugliness and so on. But what is the cause of each term in these pairs? Or from another angle, if beauty is said to be the *absence* of ugliness, then ugliness is merely a Void. A certain Leucippus taught that the universe was constituted and caused by Fullness and Void.

with such questions than the Greek Materialists were with the ultimate cause of what they called Being. But those Greeks may at least claim the merit of originality, and they have an excuse for the limitations to their thinking; as the first to escape the magical hold of mythological terrors they had to make do without predecessors to lead the way. Soon, however, Materialism was felt to be inadequate by men no less un-superstitious than they.

It was Anaxagoras who first proposed a solution which, as a basic metaphysical choice, maintained a precarious dominance until several important minds deviated back into the shallow Materialist gutter 2200 years later.‡ He held that the universe is constituted not only of Matter but also of Mind, or 'supreme intelligence'. Prior to Socrates Plato and Aristotle, three Greek minds which continue to tower above western thought, other philosophers also rejected Materialism. Pythagoras taught that the universe was composed of Matter and Numbers. If Pythagoreanism* has aspects which no longer carry conviction, it's essence should seem neither strange nor unfamiliar. For modern science math is the language in which reality is understood, because it is language of the cosmic code. To whisper 'E=MC²' is enough to reminds us of the force of this crucial point of doctrine in the modern credo.

The modern attitude towards numbers is not Pythagorean. For Pythagoras numbers, in themselves, were a super-reality. They were beings evolving on a separate but real plane of existence, like the living symbols of Vance's realm of Purple Magic, or the sprites of his Green realm elaborating their meaning-patterns. For modern science, by contrast, mathematics suggest no spiritual reality. Modern science even fails to trouble itself about the existential status of numbers. This attitude, though somewhat dingy, is Aristotelian, as we shall see. It seems to me, however, that a lowest common denominator of Pythagorean and Modern Science can be suggested in this pithy if pythian phrase: *the states of matter which compose the cosmos are expressions of mathematical facts.*

KNOW THYSELF

Aristotle's approach to subjects like ethics and politics has what is called a 'modern' quality.† This is because, not being not a theorist but an observer of nature by temperament, he put much emphasis on biology. In some ways he therefore seems more akin to Socrates than Plato was. Socrates rejected vaporous theorizing about physics to concentrate on Man, and dedicated his life to engagement and interaction with men. For this reason Socrates is called the first 'political philosopher'. He did not ask: 'what is the fundamental element of matter?', but: 'what is virtue?'. In today's terms he rejected science in favor of humanism. Socrates was not unwilling to talk with theoreticians about

‡ Descart is the most blatant among them. His confidence in rationality, logic and mathematics is so enthusiastically narrow it is touching.

* Which is dilated upon in Plato's *Timaeus*.

† The deplorable habit of labeling things 'modern' is a function of two interactive factors: the Hegelian/Marxist obsession with Progress, which is in fact a non-religious Messianism, and the parochial, unexamined penchant to assume that our own ideas, and thus any ideas which resemble them, are the best.

scientific theories but his penchant was for discussion of virtue with its practitioners, or would be practitioners. Through conversation, like a man with a shovel turning up what is under the surface, he brought to light what people think they think about the things they think they know. This, as Plato makes so clear in his dialogues,* is most often a tissue of contradiction. Socrates lifted the minds of people, willing to converse with him, out of the miasmatic soup of fragmentary common sense and received wisdom in which they marinate. These conversations do not teleport their participants into a halcyon realm of 'true doctrine', as opposed to the stormy realm of false doctrines in which we are habitually whirled about; they are like a few low steps by which we may climb out of the muck of false doctrine, though they mount no higher than a certain degree of self-knowledge.

What is self-knowledge? Socrates famously said it was knowledge of one's ignorance. But this does not mean that knowledge equals ignorance, for to gauge one's ignorance it is necessary to know at least the parameters of knowledge.

Unlike Plato who wrote artistic dialogs full of humor, ambiguities and un-answered questions, Aristotle composed rationalistic treatises which propound definite answers. He begins however, like Socrates, with a review of opinions, and the doctrine to which his researches arrive have a Socratic 'here and now' quality. Furthermore, for all his biological enthusiasm, Aristotle is at his best on Socratic subjects for, when it comes to metaphysical theory, his temperament draws his thought toward a materialism which, if it is both rich and fascinating, seems to ignore, or have no feeling for the spiritual aspect so prevalent in Plato.† But Aristotle cannot simply be called a Materialist; he reproaches his predecessors for ignoring the problem of what set everything in motion in the first place, and he answers this question with the word: 'God'. He goes on to state he has nothing further to say on the subject.

This leaves us with 3 positions: Materialism, Spiritualism, and what may be called the Aristotelian compromise which, ultimately, is a down-to-earth refusal to speculate upon imponderables or go beyond common-sensical but fully realized explanations.

THE VANCIAN METAPHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE

By no means do I equate the premises of Vance's stories with the ideas of the man himself. I have heard him, more than once, explain that a feature of some of his stories—inter-stellar faster-than-light travel—is a mere convention. His Jarnell engine is neither technological prophesy nor veiled attack on Einsteinian physics. That said, throughout his work, by which I mean not only his so-called fantasy and science fiction but also the so-called mysteries, we encounter an Anaxagoran view. Vance's work is moist with the sense of invisible worlds.

* Socrates never wrote anything. We know of him only from dialogues written by his contemporaries, Plato and Xenophon, and other contemporary references, such as Aristophanes' comedy *The Clouds*, in which Socrates appears as a character.

† Plato, in this respect, follows Pythagoras and Anaxagoras.

Such worlds, when they occur explicitly, are of several orders, from metaphorical to objective. At one end are the dream or imaginary worlds, like those of Ronald Wilby or Howard Hardoah. These introduce a basic vancian dynamic; the invisible world as agent of effectuation upon the visible world. Treesong's imaginary world gives him leverage on the normal world; it multiplies his natural powers. Ronald Wilby's dream world, more prosaically but no less effectively, is like a solvent which breaks down the processes of social convention favoring the introduction of his sociopathological flow.

Vance elaborates this dynamic in a range of approaches.

At its most intangible there is Jantiff Ravenstroke's dreamy wish to manipulate the invisible reality—which, so he feels, is the locus of tantalizing insights flickering behind sensual impressions, and which sometimes elusively erupt thought it, like the mysterious sea-voices. It draws him into an adventure where his growing capacity to express this para-reality plays its part.

Striking a clearer note, the science of Palafox, Wizard of Breekness, molds cultural realities not through dreams or self-indulgent fantasy, but with rationalist calculation—though Palafox is personally motivated by the dream of fathering a master race. In a similar way Dame Isabel Grayce's (*Space Opera*) confidence in what she believes are the social and diplomatic effects of music, drive her to undertake an unconventional expedition.

Of course any writers' characters have motivations but one senses that, for Vance, not only his characters, but real people as well, are all, to some extent, Elders of the Hub, each the master of a Private Infinity. The interplay of these separate, idiosyncratic realities is the motor of real-world drama. Vance illustrates these interactions, the interplay of sometimes mutually exclusive invisible-worlds-as-agent-of-effectuation, in modes from realistic to phantasmagoric—tensions between subjective and cultural attitudes, or the clash of normality with fabulous 'objective otherwheres'.

A mildly realist example is the antagonism between democratic Western values and Communism in *The STARK*, but a more typical example would be the absurd and tragic logic of a Dirdirmen's contempt for other human types. Even more caricatural are the factions of Ampridatvir (*Mazirian the Magician*) so antipathetic that they fail to perceive each other visually, or the motivations of Ka Asutra and human, so mutually incompatible that the word 'conflict' is almost devoid of meaning. The drama in these situations depend on contrasting invisible realities, which interact and weigh upon each other.

As for 'objective otherwheres', in *Rumfuddle* (VIE vol. #17) Vance imagines an infinity of parallel realities, some identical except for the difference of one atom. Here the concept of the private Infinity becomes a practical reality; portals into these parallel universes are so easy to generate that the lot for the family home can be an uninhabited private Earth. With another writer this might seem like mere phantasmagoric speculation, but with Vance it takes its place in his almost systematic metaphorical dramatization of interacting worlds.

Laooome, the world-thinker, creates worlds at whim, but the whimsicalness is limited to their conception. When Laooome gets a belly ache they can become dangerously strange but he does not delight in senseless metamorphoses. Each of Laooome's creations is a logical evolution of a discreet premise. As an ensemble they illustrate a playfully relativistic but rigorous determinism.

By contrast, the realms of the demon Underhurd or the demiurge Sadlark are fundamentally strange. The eye-cusps and scales these individuals leave scattered about are ducts into locales fundamentally incompatible with normal experience. The same is true of places like La, Tanjectery, the Pink realm and others which might be mentioned, where the frame of reference—whatever it might be—can cease to be operational at any moment. The extreme case is the 'realm of non-causality' of *The Men Return*—though conditions in Irerly seem almost as destabilized.

These more fantastic examples should not disguise, but rather reveal, how the motor of vancian drama is interplay between normal, material, commonly perceptible reality with cultural attitudes thoughts, ideas or forces which have some sort of independent existence. *Nopalgarth* is a neat example of how Vance uses phantasmagoric otherwheres as a metaphor of human motivation as well as an image of the friction between invisible worlds and the visible one to generate drama. The nopals, linking human minds to their native elsewhere, provide a sixth sense the substance of which is amusingly mundane information available though their special medium. The realm of the nopal is a realm of Mind, yet, in terms of the geometry proper to their own environment, their war with the ghr is a 'material' struggle. In our environment it translates as mental struggle, a matter of prejudice and attitude.*

Vance develops the premise of a realm of Mind most explicitly in two stories: *The Sleeping Princess* and *Parapsyche*. In the former technology turns dreams into movies. The tone of this story is not comic but Vance develops the identical idea comically also. Vermoulian the dream walker (*Rhialto the Marellous*) is ensqualmed in a dream, but the infection remains operative even in the real world, and Iolo the Dream-taker (*Cugel: The Skybreak Spatterlight*) nets up the mental effluvia of sleeping maidens like wisps of nopal cloth, and distills them into crystals. Melted on the tounge they reveal *the quintessence of a hundred exquisite dreams*. Such fancies are 'objectivations' of the Ronald Wilby-Howard Hardoa dynamic: dreams are a sort of non-material, spiritual, or Mind reality which can interact with, by impinging upon, normal reality. The movies filtered from the sleeping princesses dreams are nothing more than shadows on a screen. This may not be much of an impingement but they do become material realities (like the conceptions of any filmmaker) and eventually generate the materialist dross of actual lucre, when the audience pays to watch the flickering shadows. In the more metaphysically grotesque *Parapsyche* an ideological conflict is engaged in a spiritual or Mind realm,

* The nopals do not inhabit a demon realm, which seems to be a pocket in nowhere, but infest a parallel of our own geometrical space, swimming though it like tiny black holes.

and resolved there in a physical battle. This is similar to *Nopalgarth* but where in that story Vance simply describes the nopal realm, in *Parapsyche* Vance explains its nature, or cause. The strength of the spiritual combatants is drawn from minds which adhere to their position, multiplied by their force of conviction. This mental effluvia is the substance of the spiritual realm. In other words spiritual realms are a function of the collective consciousness.* If the issues and actors of the conflict were unknown, the spiritual realm in and by which it is acted out would not exist.

The charm this concept may have in a fantasy story context should not disguise that there is nothing fundamentally original about it. Vance has simply turned inside-out the idea that the victors in a war or a cultural controversy are likely to be those motivated by the most vital convictions, who believe most strongly, are most willing to sacrifice for their ideal. Given the enthusiasm of the heroes for their cause in *Parapsyche*, and the writer's obvious sympathy for them, I cannot escape the impression that, in this story at least, Vance reveals a feeling, or a hope, not that his own ideas are correct so much as that the side which embodies the objective truth will have an advantage over the side which embodies a lie. Truth, the story suggests, has a power of conviction lies cannot have.

A more cynical or realist view recognizes that the bad guys sometimes win. The latter view seems more characteristic of Vance, and pertains in *The Miracle Workers*, a story based on almost the same premise as *Parapsyche*. Here the power of the spiritual force, in this case the demons conjured by the jinksmen, as in *Parapsyche* depends upon notoriety generated though publicity. But where in *Parapsyche* the spiritual forces which battle in a spiritual realm are individuals who embody their own ideologies, the demons of *The Miracle Workers* are ideologically neutral mercenary forces which, infused into real soldiers, infiltrate normal reality where the battle then takes place. Victory depends not on a force of ideological conviction as in *Parapsyche*, but on a morally neutral but still spiritual superiority, fundamentally equivalent to brand recognition.

These themes, present throughout his work, are fully present in his late work as well. In *Night Lamp* the sculptural force of culture upon minds is illustrated in many places, but quite enthusiastically in the obsessive social climbing of Thanet society or, in *Ports of Call-Lurulu*, in the cultures of Terce which immerse their participants in contrasting realities. Vance suggests the nature of this immersion in hypnotism episode on Scropus.†

From one end of his work to the other Vance whispers to us that the mental realm we inhabit determines, to a large extent, the aspect of the physical reality in which we exist.

* Saying that the existence of God is a function of the collective unconsciousness comes to about the same thing.

† See *How to Praise Lurulu*, *Cosmopolis* #57, page 8.

ARISTOTLE'S DISPUTE WITH PLATO: 1

The Aristotelian criticism of Platonism has given rise to a host of divergent opinions and a mass of the most tedious of human writings.†

A. E. Taylor, *M.A.*‡

Thanks to the poverty of contemporary metaphysical feelings the most exciting intellectual dispute of all time has lost its savor. Yet, and for the same reason, this dispute is more pertinent than ever. But the 26 centuries which separate us from it is a barrier which cannot be crossed in a single step. The essential issues must be sorted out, must be seen and felt in their original crispness, and we must translate them for ourselves into contemporary terms.

The best authorities indicate that Aristotle's critique of Platonism, from a technical angle, is not always up to the mark. He neglects, for example, texts dealing with issues he contends Plato ignored, and his logic is occasionally specious. The most famous example of the latter is a syllogistic argument known as 'the third man'. It is amusingly characteristic of the atmosphere of ancient Greek debate. To explicate it we must recall that, for Anaxagoras, the world, or the cosmos, is composed of Matter and Mind. For the latter Plato prefers the terms Idea, Ideal or Archetype. Plato's notion, briefly stated, is that the form of any thing, its pattern or design as opposed to its matter or substance, is a non-material or spiritual template, a guide, or as Vance might say: a 'weft of force'.* This differentiates and arranges dull, dead, inert matter into the variegated things we perceive and use, such as a chair. An individual physical chair is what it is, rather than being an indefinite lump or botch, by virtue of the 'Idea of the Chair'. In the same way a soldier in *The Miracle Workers* becomes an avatar of a demon when infused with its essence by a jinksman. Matter, infused with the Idea of the Chair, becomes a physical chair.

The 'third man' is an attack on this Theory of Ideal Forms, with a sophism. If, Aristotle argued, the likeness of Socrates and Plato to each other results from both being copies of a common Archetype (i.e. the Idea of

† The quotation amusingly continues: *Every possible view has been taken of it, from that of those who regard it as a crushing refutation of the vagaries of a transcendentalist dreamer . . . to that of those who refuse to believe that Plato can ever have taught anything so crazy as the doctrine Aristotle puts into his mouth . . . but if . . . a philosopher of the genius of Aristotle, writing after twenty years of personal association with a teacher of whose lectures he had himself been an associate editor, and in circumstances which make intentional misrepresentation incredible, cannot be trusted to give a substantially correct account of what his master said, surely there is an end to all confidence in human testimony . . .*

This introduction to Taylor's translation of the first book of the *Metaphysics* suggestively concludes: *it would be an interesting subject for inquiry whether the forcing of all phiosophic thought into biological categories by the genius of Aristotle has not fatally retarded the development of correct views on the logic of exact science right down to the present day.*

The present essay tries to shed light on that point.

‡ In *Aristotle on His Predecessors*, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1949.

* See Cugel: *The Skybreak Spatterlight*:

Things are done differently in the overworld. Like the model, Sadlark was constructed of scales on a matrix not of silver wires but wefts of force. When Sadlark plunged into the mire, the dampness annulled his forces; the scales dispersed and Sadlark became disorganized, which is the overworld equivalent of mortality.

NB: Reconfiguring Sadlark's scales, including the skybreaker, reactivated the weft, giving an aristotelian, rather than a platonian, flavor to the notion.

Man), then the likeness of Socrates to this Archetype must mean there is a further Archetype, a 'third man', of which Socrates and the archetypal Idea of Man are both derived from, and so on. This is specious because the relationship between two men is not the same as the relationship between a man and the 'Idea of Man'; Socrates and Plato are members of the sub-class 'man' but the 'Idea of Man' is not a member of this sub-class.

Why does Aristotle make such a "mistake"? It is certainly not by lack of intelligence. I will return to this question shortly. In any case such problems do not nullify Aristotle's critique since, fundamentally, it is less an argument than the expression of an alternate metaphysical view. Stated in unjustly stark terms: Aristotle rejects, while Plato postulates, a spiritual reality. Such a formula is too crude. Aristotle, as already stated, does not hesitate to speak of God, and it should not be suspected that he is insincere in this; Socrates sometimes mentions gods as a sop to vulgar minds, or to protect himself from the fragile sensibilities, rigid mentalities and violent tendencies of certain theocrats. But Aristotle's 'God', fails to exist in the Greek pantheon; mention of him would have mollified no nervous or vindictive traditionalists. Unlike some later philosophers, such as Spinoza, Aristotle is not saying 'God' to disguise irreligion. Although Aristotle could not, any more than Spinoza, resolve the enigma of the origin of the cosmos, unlike Spinoza he would not ignore such a basic question.

Theological answers, though they may be correct—and Aristotle does not rule them out—lack that scientific quality of observable, experimental concreteness which would harmonize them with normal human perceptions and mental processes, such as vision, hearing and the sense of touch, as well as logic and rules of discourse such as the principle of non-contradiction. Theological assertions rest upon prophetic or 'revealed' information, the perception of which escapes normal faculties, and whose logic does not accord with normal human thinking, or common sense. Aristotle is open to theological explanations but has little to say about them except that, as far as he can tell, and even though he has no way of verifying them, they seem to be the explanation of the ultimate origin of things.

Though perhaps anachronistic and inaccurate, it is easy to imagine Aristotle sighing in regret that no other explanation is available. But we must take care to avoid understanding his attitude to quickly in modern terms. Unlike both original and modern Materialists, Aristotle was not negligent of the problem of self-consciousness. We shall return to this point.

Aristotle's creator God lacks the colorful personality of the Christian creator God. In this vagueness he reminds us of the god-notion of numerous contemporary Christians who, under the charm of Scientism, postulate that the cosmic mechanism was conceived and set in motion by some distant and abstract being who, ever since, has stepped back to allow the smooth unfolding of His initial impulse—much as it amuses Laoomo to create a world based on a given set of principles and then observe their evolution. Such Christians often agree with their Atheist-Materialist contemporaries that miracles, which would be divine violations of ordained

cosmic law, are impossible because, as Albert Einstein ruled: 'God does not play dice with the universe'.*

This Aristotelian position is a strong but prudently provisional one. It does not exclude God but pushes him back toward the origin of things, away from zones where man's unaided intelligence perceives no more than a stupendous mechanism. But why should this mechanism be one dimensional? Anaxagoras' Mind, or Supreme Intelligence, is not the same as Aristotle's God, for he did not teach that Mind is the original cause of things but one of the components of what is. Anaxagoras' concept is like the two tiered cosmic structure constantly illustrated by Vance. On one level is Matter. On the other are invisible things: emotions, thoughts, dreams, everything that is both real but invisible, intangible, unpalpable. The second tier saturates the first, so that, though each level has its proper existence, the two levels ultimately function as one.

The 'Idea of the Chair' illustrates the place of Anaxagoras' Mind in the cosmic structure; for the chair to exist its matter must be not only originally, but constantly, infused with the Idea.

But, to paraphrase Wodehouse, a chair, like so many such objects, lacks sustained dramatic impact, or even any dramatic impact whatsoever. Anaxagoras was a scientist. He was trying to describe the constitution of the cosmos, not dramatize it. I believe, however, that a bridge may be thrown between anaxagoran structuralism and vancian drama.

THE ANAXAGORAN METAPHYSIC

Anaxagoras seems to have taught that the fundamental and 'achronic' condition of Matter, as opposed to an original or prior state of the cosmic plasma, is a condition where all its parts are evenly mixed, such that Matter (without Mind) would lack sensible qualities. It would, for example, be invisible because visible things have distinct qualities, such as a color. But a color, to be definite and thus perceptible, must be separated out from other colors. We might imagine this situation, this total and absolutely homogeneous mixture of all Matter, to have a grayish color like the mush in the middle of a painters pallet. But this is a conceptual slip into a materialist perspective because paint is not 'color', it is gluey mud. When all colors of paint are mixed together they are indeed a dull grayish brown. But, in the materialist perspective, light is also matter — perhaps what the Greeks called the element of fire — and when colored lights are mixed they become white.

This paradox should challenge us to go beyond our habitual concepts in pursuit of Anaxagoras' concept. Color is a quality of perceptible things, like taste, sound, texture, motion, shape and smell. Such qualities are exclusive. At a given instant in an unique place a thing cannot be

* Some of these Christians believe that this unique creative gesture included inscription of the 10 commandments into the sinews of Matter, but tend to favor a more flexible interpretation of them than their more orthodox fellows, such as Benedict XVI whose jealous protection of them from eager revisionism has been decried.

both smooth and rough, both round and square, both slow and fast. Likewise it cannot be both red and blue. To understand the last example, it may be restated this way: red paint cannot also be blue paint.

But appreciating Anaxagoras' idea continues to be difficult because, though we, like Vance, may have inherited his two-tiered feeling about the cosmos, we are also under the charm of Materialism. Contemporary cosmology corresponds to an Ionian Monism which never existed; the doctrine of Earth as basic element. Hydrogen may be a gas; the hydrogen atom is a granular earthy node. We may theorize that the intimate nature of such grains are electrical charges or vibrations; in our ultimate conception they are resolved into specks of quintessential earth. For even if the quintessence of atomic grains is vibration, that changes nothing. Something must be vibrating. But even if the charge or vibration is sui-generis, somehow self-subsisting, then *that*, whatever *that* is, is the nature of ultimate earth. It certainly gives us no qualms to understand both molecular and non-microcosmic shapes (the forms atoms build themselves up into) as physical only. Such atomic substances and conglomerates imply no second tier of actually existing thing, no Determining Idea or Form which imparts shape upon an indeterminate mass. Our feeling about conic or cubic things, such as mountains or bricks, prompts us to argue, with Aristotle, and with a certain plausible lack of rigor, that such things are simply Matter gathered into one of an infinite number of possible configurations, that no invisible 'weft of force' is prior to, or compels into being, such a shape, or that shape is necessarily, utterly and absolutely identical and simultaneous with the Matter which composes it. Form, we are thinking, is not only identical with Matter, it must be understood uniquely in terms of Matter. Form is just the shape Matter happens to take, from causes which have everything to do with Matter itself, and nothing to do with intentionality of Mind. If anything, Matter determines Form, and not the other way around.

But this line of thinking, however compelling it may be up to a point, must leave us hungrily wondering why things come to be in the first place. Matter may be the cause of Form, it cannot also be the cause of itself. The problems inherent in this thinking are even more blatant when it comes to plants and animals. Though we often sloppily indulge ourselves in doing so, it is ultimately difficult to conceive of flowers and animals as mere substances, mere agglomerates of Matter. That difficulty is not lessened by pointing out how they are complex mixtures of many substances. How does Matter, however complexly combined, explain growth, movement and change? Animals can even display states of feeling. In what manner is a feeling a state of Matter? Feelings are indeed expressed though gestures, grimaces and vocalizations, which can be classified as material, but these are just outer signs. Are the feelings themselves, which prompt them, also made of Matter? Can a feeling be bottled, like one of Iolo's dreams? When it comes to human beings, the question is a fantastical enigma. A human being can actually think. It

can marvel and wonder about Matter and Mind. How are such acts functions of Matter or, to put it as bluntly as possible, the result of grains of earth?

Aristotle criticizes Heraclitus, whose doctrine was known to the Greeks as Monistic Materialism, for concentrating on corporal things because, Aristotle insisted, incorporeal things also exist. Aristotle's complaint about Heraclitus turned upon the points discussed above. An absence of non-corporal qualities, Aristotle argued, renders change not impossible (for, who knows?) but inexplicable. What 'corporal quality' is taking a step forward? If our leg is set in motion by an impulse from our brain, and our brain emits the impulse because of a configuration of DNA and synaptic electrical patterns (of 'memory' and 'calculation?') which determine, at a given moment, that a step is to be made, how is it we do not experience this motion as what it would then be: an unconscious and deterministic inevitability? And what is 'experience' in such a context? What status, first of all, should be accorded to the movement itself, to say nothing of our perception of it? Or, to put it more adequately; what is the status of events of which we think we are aware when that awareness is, at best, some sort of meta-effect? In this case, did the event even occur?

We may now be ready to recognize that the apparently strange thesis of the Eliatic school, which insisted that change is an illusion, may carry more conviction than suspected. Modern Radical Materialists reject human freedom to insist that human motion* results from darwinistic DNA programming. If they wish to not contradict themselves they must agree that human freedom is an illusion, and some of them do. Why, then, do they not also wonder why motion itself, i.e. change of any kind, is more than illusion? To complain that such an idea is obviously silly does not dispose of the problem. It should be piteously investigated because currently triumphant Scientism is indeed a form of Ionic Monism.

This, however, is not our topic. Aristotle, by contrast with the Monists, is no Radical Materialist. He insists on the reality of non-corporal things. Does this mean that, for him, Form is a non-corporal reality? And, if so, how would the Aristotelian view differ from the Platonic view?

Let us recall the third man. Aristotle refuses to understand Platonic Archetypes as super-forms which determine the parameters of sub-classes of things. He insists on understanding Platonic Archetypes as a sort of substance such that, if they existed, their own shape, in turn, must be determined by a pattern on an even higher level of some kind. Aristotle less misunderstands Plato than rejects his spiritual reality. He believes that, though Form should indeed be understood as a *cause* of why a thing is how it is, and thus that it is right to say that it is *separate* from *substance* or Matter, he also thinks that Matter is just as much a cause as Form, or that Form and

Matter, though different, co-exist on the same level as causes.

These delicate distinctions are crucial to grasping the fundamental difference of conception which separates Aristotle from Plato. We can work our way into it with another example from color. A painter can say that a color is 'dark', that it is 'blush', that it is 'pure' or 'dull'. He can talk like this but he cannot, with his paint, embody these qualities separately, even though he can speak definitely about each one. A patch of actual color can never be merely bluish without also being more or less dark or light, more or less pure or dull. A color cannot be merely pure without being blush or some other hue. It cannot be both pure and dull. An actual color—I mean a patch of paint or any other visible thing—will display a definite, exclusive and full set of the qualities of color. Blueness or Darkness are not spiritual realities, wefts of force which determine the qualities of the otherwise inert and gross materiality of color; they are, rather, *inherent* aspects of color, by which, in an Aristotelian manner, the nature, or *cause*, of color may be properly understood.

But this example also helps us understand Anaxagoras' fundamental material state, where all Matter is evenly mixed and therefore invisible. Anaxagoras did not mean that, at first, there was an invisible clump of Matter, and then Mind came along and caused it to become various distinct stuffs. His concept is not a statement about the process of coming to be, but a recognition that the fundamental, or primordial material state is equivalent to nothingness; an unpalpable, silent, orderless invisibility. Like color without darkness or lightness or definite hue, Matter without Form, without the sifting and separating of Mind, remains radically incoherent.

ARISTOTLE'S DISPUTE WITH PLATO: 2

Aristotle rejects both the two-tiered Anaxagoran view and reductionist Materialism. The Monist view, adhered to doggedly, results, as shown above, in the silly Eliatic result, but I cannot discover how to interpret Aristotle's rejection of Platonism without seeing it as a function of a materialist tendency.

For the Monist, Matter is the cause of *what is*. Already stated, for Anaxagoras there are 2 causes: Matter and Mind. For Aristotle there are 4 causes. These are fundamentally different from Anaxagoras' causes because they do not imply separate realms (one of indeterminate Matter and another of determining 'Mind', or as Plato would say: 'Ideas'). Aristotle's 4 causes is a wonderful thing, which retains its fascination, and might be introduced with a paraphrase of the famous Boddissian remark on wealth: *it would appear a notably bland theory, but is much larger than it seems. If one listens closely, he hears deep and far below the mournful chime of inevitability.*

For the Greeks a cause is that out of which and by which a thing comes to be and continues to exist. Aristotle's 4 causes might be labeled: Stuff, Shape, Impulsion and Goal.

* I am using the term 'human motion' in a Greek sense. I mean everything from the evolution of the species, to involuntary acts such as the growth of a fetus in a womb, to voluntary acts such as striking someone over the head with a frying pan, to 'spiritual' acts such as regretting having done so. In other words; anything that changes any aspect of the human state.

STUFF, is Matter or material, such as the stone of a statue or the wood of a tree. In the case of the statue the sculptor might have chosen metal or some other material, a choice which might not alter the form of the statue but which would completely alter its substance. The particular stuff, even if it could be replaced by a different stuff, is therefore one of several causes of what it is.

SHAPE is the form or pattern which the stuff takes; the sculpted shape of a nymph or the form of a pine tree (as opposed to an oak). Note that the sculptor remains free to mold his stone into any shape, such as a cube, while the pine seed, if it grows, must grow into a pine tree shape.

IMPULSION is the action that makes a thing what it is. The sculptor's motions (carving, modeling, casting) fix the statue into a shape, be it nymph or cube. The impulsion of the pine seed's growth depends on impulsive factors such as the earth it lies in, the sun, the rain, and its own internal mechanisms.

GOAL is that for the sake of which a thing comes to be. The goal of the statue is the sculptor's intention to sculpt a nymph (rather than something else). The goal of the pine seed is the adult tree, programmed into its DNA.

In the technical language of philosophy these four causes are labeled *Material*, *Formal*, *Efficient* and *Final*. The order of this list follows the logic of natural things, and we see

CAUSES	BIOLOGY	CAUSES	ARTIFICIAL PRODUCT	CAUSES	SURREAL ART
Material	- seed	Final	- concept-design-plan	Material	- unshaped matter
Efficient	- growth factors	Formal	- shape to be modeled	Efficient	- artist's work
Formal	- plant shapes	Efficient	- act of fabrication	Formal	- shape imposed
Final	- adult plant	Material	- resultant object	Final	- (none)

here Aristotle's famous 'biological' point of view. The seed first comes to light lying dormant, a clot of inert lumpish materiality; the *material cause*. When it begins to grow the *efficient causes* (earth, sun, rain, DNA) come into play, with the *formal cause* galloping along to determine the shapes taken by the growing plant. At last, fully grown, the *final cause* is revealed: the adult tree.

Artificial things use a reverse order. The *final cause* of a statue (the sculptor's intention to create it) comes first, preceding fabrication (the *efficient cause*). The *material cause* is almost accessory; it can be freely changed. A statue can 'exist' as a conception only, as a plan, a stand-alone final cause, but what is the final cause of a seed deprived of its material cause? A statue could be made of different materials and remain what it is; it could even have different forms and yet be 'the same' statue—like a half-size copy of the Venus of Milo.

The case of surrealist art is a bit different, and sheds an interesting light on the modernist outlook. The process of surrealist art does not involve prior conception, but direct creation only. The material cause of a surrealist statue (the stuff it is made from) proceeds the efficient cause (the artist's acts), and the un-preconceived form (the formal cause) emerges afterwards. As for the final cause, a practitioner of Dada, an extreme sort of Surrealism, would deny there is one, i.e. any thing for the sake of which the statue exists. Rejection of conception (or pre-conception, by reason of unconscious) makes surrealist art, in Aristotelian terms, like a natural process.

The Surrealist attitude carries us a step closer to the Eliatic result. A work of Surrealism comes to be for no reason, by an ungraspable process. The Surrealist is unaware of himself a conceiver; he is only an agency. This is like Marx's concept of production. There is labor, materials and tools; no need or goal, no *final cause*. Men 'produce' like birds sing, and from this arises the historical process. The logic of Marxism drives us into the same cosmos, empty of creation or meaning, as Surrealism. If an art work, or any effluvia of production, has no reason to be other than some unconscious 'intention' of an artist or artisan, if production is meaningless (which is the nihilist contention), and if, further, once a work has allegedly come into being it has no apparent reason to be, how can one be sure it actually exists?

The distinction between the artificial and the natural, as it comes to light in the Aristotelian causes, reveals the logic of Radical Materialism. If human actions are material evolutions, like the orbiting of planets, then consciousness is illusion, and so called artificial things come to be in the same way as natural objects. The cause of an electric egg-beater and a peacock is the same mechanistic cosmic swirling, including those which occur along the synapses of the human brain. Change is illusion. Aristotle rejected this Eliatic thinking with contempt. But what is the ultimate status, however rich and real, of his alternative?

If, unlike the surrealists, we preserve the difference between natural and artificial things, we must admit that the former have a more profound relationship to the cosmos because they spring out of it directly. Artificial things are secondary creations; first conceived in men's minds, then fabricated by their hands. This is why art is so important for modern philosophy. It is the only injection of meaning into an otherwise senseless cosmos. Surrealism undoes even this, because "meaning" in art is only incarnated in the materiality of the work; meaning itself is a non-material event, a spiritual flux, and what is the status of a meaning whose source is unconsciousness, mindless action? In the pre-surrealist view, the act of human creation is a Promethean injection of a new thing, foreign or *xenostatic*, into the natural order. The proud sculptor emblematically proclaims a new reality into being. *In the beginning was the word*. A seed, a node of fragile tissue, is mute. The question, 'which comes first, the chicken or the egg?' is a folksy recognition that the embryonic state, or any state of a natural thing, is a stage in a seamless cycle. The Aristotelian causes are always and simultaneously present in natural things. Artificial things have clear beginnings and ends which we cannot understand in other terms than conception/fabrication, result, etc..

This brings us back to the fundamental metaphysical question; if a creative act did not launch the cycle of natural being (the cosmos itself in particular) what did cause it? If we reject the Anaxagoran solution, and if we do not adopt Aristotle's strategy of putting the question aside in favor of a rich but ultimately provisional analysis, nature is reduced to a mindless Darwinian process, without visible cause, and the Eliatic result stalks the serious thinker.

Aristotle, unlike so many modern intellectuals with their unavowed stake in the non-existence of God and dogmatic

insistence on the mindlessness or non-intelligence of the cosmos, was not drawn into this epistemological morass. It was obvious to him that there is intentionality in natural processes, which led to his doctrine of the purposeful quality of natural processes, or Teleology. Teleology, however, does not replace God. It is not an explanation, it is a description. It cannot be denied that pine seeds grow into pine trees, rather than larches, even though they only begin as tiny seeds radically different in size, shape and function from the adult tree.

If we think of the *qualities* of a color (value, hue, purity, temperature) as *causes*, we have a useful parallel to Aristotle's idea. The qualities of a color can be disassociated in thought, as the 4 Aristotelian causes are separated in the creation of artificial things. For Aristotle form is not a 'weft of force', some active principle imposing itself upon dully inert Matter, as it is for Plato. While in nature the Aristotelian causes are simultaneously and indissociably inherent.

Or let us take another perspective. Criticizing Pythagoras, Aristotle affirms that numbers are not things in themselves, just as he rejects Anaxagoran Mind as a separately existing cause. An Aristotelian number is an 'abstraction' in the exact sense of the word; it is 'dragged away' from something real. It does not have its own proper existence. No matter how symbolically it may be used, it ultimately represents actual things, just as an Aristotelian geometrical form is always the boundary or description of some real physical body, not a Platonically self-subsisting phenomenon. As A. E. Taylor puts it: *The objects of Mathematics, according to Aristotle, are still things which have no existence except as modifications or attributes of concrete material things.*

For Aristotle there is no realm of Purple magic, no realm of Living Symbols. Mathematics functions not because of some inherent mathematical reality but because material results corresponding to the related numerical manipulations are consistent. $1+1=2$ is not a transcendent truth, not an interaction between living symbols which, as such, might do something independently of material things. It is merely a practical recognition that when one apple is added to one apple the same result is obtained as when one elephant is added to one elephant.*

We find a parallel concept in the epigraph to chapter 18 of *The Book of Dreams*:

. . .Raw abstract intelligence is a meaningless concept. . .
Certain alien races use different mechanisms and processes optimally to rearrange their environment. These attributes occasionally resemble human intelligence, and, on the basis of results achieved, the effective organs seem to serve analogous purposes. . .

In other words, intelligence is not some sort of tool with a definite and real link to reality, it is a parochial sensation, a homo-sapian quirk. It is neither a mirror of

* The next step in this line takes us, naturally, to irrational numbers, or mathematical facts which do not correspond to nature. e.g. The relation of a real circles' circumference to its diameter is definite; mathematically it is indefinite. Aristotle's mathematical inquiries did not carry him this far.

the cosmos nor does it allow us a critical distance from it—despite the conviction of our subjective experience. It is a subjective and dependant quality, like Aristotle's math in lock-step with reality, neither a lever with which to act upon it nor a window through which to contemplate it. Results may be effected by intelligence, but these effects are just optimizations, special arrangements of the cosmic situation; nothing new, nothing different, nothing 'changed' in a significant sense. The cosmos, thus understood—a flowing ensemble of separating and recombining substances (including both our bodies and our thoughts)—avoids collapse into invisible, homogeneous Anaxagoran plasma not because of Mind, some artificial creative weft, but because it evolves, persists and progresses through an automatic process of auto-optimization.

We have fallen back into an Elliotic view. If our self-consciousness, that essence of what we call our 'intelligence', means nothing, how can we rule out its illusory quality?

Aristotle objects to another aspect of Platonism; the doctrine, expressed in the *Meno*, that we do not learn but recall, or that the truth of things is preexistent in our souls. In the *Meno* this idea is linked to a doctrine of the soul's eternity, similar to that in book 10 of *The Republic*.

If so, this means that things we know, but never learned in our lives, must have been inserted in our soul prior to birth. But the reincarnational aspect seems to be an accommodation to Meno's mentality; though a decent fellow he is an intellectual dandy, so there is a provisional or playful aspect to Socrates' explanation of the idea of reincarnation. The dialogue continues:

Meno: You seem to me, Socrates, I know not how, to speak rightly.

Socrates: It seems so to myself also, Meno. And yet in other respects I would not contend very strenuously in defense of my argument. . .

[*Meno*, Section 21]

Indeed, the Platonic "doctrine of recall" ultimately depends not on a vulgar eternity of the soul but on the Anaxagorian-Platonic inherence of Mind (or Ideas) in things.

SITUATIONS OF INFINITY

More than once Vance evokes his famous 'situation of infinity', in which *every possibility, no matter how remote, must find physical expression*.* But is the universe infinite, and in particular is Vance's universe infinite?† The conventional metaphysics of his fictional universe seems to be something like this: one 'primary cause' determines about 99% of the cosmos. The remaining 1% is generated by other causes—including demons, demiurges and sandistens—but within the 99% part are variable zones influenced, in a secondary manner, by other causes or entities, according to circumstances—such as the ghr's temporary success against the noples.

* *Emphyrio*, chapter 7.

† I cannot conceive of an infinite universe. Infinity seems to me like an amusing concept generated within the logic of language. If the universe began with a bang, from a point, it might always expand, becoming bigger and bigger, but by such a process can never become infinite—like the bullet which always travels half the remaining distance to its target and so never reaches it.

But are not some things mutually exclusive? The first and absolute cause of all things might be a host of local gods or it might be a single god; it cannot be both. But the 'situation of infinity', which is an attempt to come to grips with the concept of Infinity, has a logic which is not so easily disturbed. Even if the simultaneous existence of absolutely everything is inconceivable, it is none-the-less theoretically possible, because it is logically necessary—if infinity means what it seems to mean, which is something radically different than 'very, very big'.

Laooome creates worlds, each based upon a mutually exclusive concept, and in *Rumfuddle* the cosmos consists of an infinite collection of infinities. Could Infinity be an infinite number of infinities, united by a supreme Laooomeish mind? This solution is only partially satisfactory because among the possibilities which the situation of infinity makes possible is that, a) there is an ultimate background, a Laooomeish mind, a final, unitary cosmic fact, and b) that this ultimate fact is some particular thing, such as a stupendous world-turtle afloat in a mystic ocean, which is absurdly picturesque but any other solution, including the seductive materialist mechanism, suffers the same underlying doubtfulness, for why one thing and not another? On the other hand does the possible not include the possibility of non-existence, so that the non-existence of certain things would be consistent with the situation of infinity?

Aristotle distinguishes between natural things, 'things which can by no possibility be otherwise' and artificial things, 'things which might possibly be otherwise'. This cosmic model has none of the slippery character of Vance's 'situation of infinity'. It is a reliable platform upon which, none-the-less, certain haphazard and unpredictable variations and liberties are allowed, within limits. It is less closed than classical Materialism which leads, first, to the elimination of 'things which might possibly be otherwise', and then, with regard to human freedom—since things 'can by no possibility be otherwise'—to the Elliotic result.

But Aristotle's proto-Materialist metaphysic is fundamentally different from the concept of Anaxagoras, in which category we must range the various vancian suggestions.

THE ANAXAGORAN IMPLICATION OF THE PARADOX OF THE PET ANIMAL

In *Night Lamp* Bariano and Maihac discuss beauty. The former insists that what we call beauty, in nature, however charming, is merely chaos, that beauty, properly understood, is artificial (man-made) and that its essential quality is therefore 'conceptual integrity'. To illustrate the roll of conceptualization in our interpretation not merely of beauty but the difference between good and evil, and ultimately our understanding of reality itself, Bariano recounts the famous parable, or paradox, of the pet animal:

Assume that you are lying in bed asleep. Your dreaming brings you into the company of an alluring woman who starts to make exciting suggestions. At this moment a large dirty

pet animal clammers upon the bed, and sprawls its hairy bulk beside you with its tail draped over your forehead. You move restlessly in your sleep and in so doing press your face against one of its organs. In your dream it seems that the beautiful woman is kissing you with warm moist lips, causing a delightful sensation. You are thrilled and exalted! Then you wake up and discover the truth of the contact, and you are displeased. Now then: consider carefully! Should you enjoy the rapture of the dream? Or, after beating the animal, should you huddle cheerlessly in the dark brooding upon the event?

Night Lamp, chapter 12, section 7.

Dreams, or simply thoughts, alter the subjective reality of individuals who, driven by their subjective reality, go on to act upon, and thus change, objective reality. Objective reality is not pure. After thousands of centuries of human existence and action, the natural and artificial are perhaps impossibly confused, as global warming seems to suggest.

This does not exist as a problem for Materialism because man's subjective reality, to say nothing of his alleged actions, have the same status as natural events; they are effects of the cosmic mechanism on the same level as any others, not new things introduced by a creative, conceiving, initiating Mind.



PHOOEY ON "THE PROPHET"

In his article, *Bad Taste and Freedom*,† Victor Davis Hanson writes:

Western notions of cultural tolerance and liberality are the benchmarks Muslims employ to condemn insensitive European journalism. Meanwhile, the Islamic Middle East is given a pass, as anti-Semitic state-run papers there daily portray Jews grotesquely.

In France the Left is weighing in on the side of Freedom (at last their useful idiocy is really useful!), while the Right is hemming and hawing because they see, in attacks on Islam, an attack on faith in general, and feel, from personal experience, that this can be carried too far. The situation is sweetly ironic; it is usually the Left, with its crypto-anti-Semitism and flagrant anti-westernism, which pleads the cause of Moslem victimhood, and whose multiculturalism makes it as pro-Islam as it is anti-Christian. When the Right dares to differ, they are labeled xenophobic, islamophobic and racist, and given the media hook. I see both points but I'll stand on the pro-Freedom side no matter who is there.

A French newspaper called *Charlie Hebdo* published a special edition with all the Danish anti-Islam cartoons. I almost bought it but the issue as a whole, which lampoons

† February 13, 2006 [<http://victorhanson.com/articles/hanson021306.html>]

anything and everything in the grossest way, was too much for me. After glancing at a few pages I didn't even want to touch it, let alone pay 2 Euros and take it home. The *Charlie Hebdo* libertines stand, above all, for their own freedom to do as they like, which in their case means sawing at the branch on which they are sitting, and Victor Davis Hanson makes a nice point with the term 'bad-taste'. But since the French libertines are not actually sleeping with their mothers and murdering their brothers their behavior, in fact, is just that: an offence against taste—which is worse than most people think but must be borne.

Though I respect individual Moslems as human beings, I confess that I think their religion is all wet. I have no qualms about this. They think my religion is all wet too. From a metaphysical point of view Christianity and Islam are mutually exclusive—dispite the nicy-nice point of view—so there is nothing amazing about this. And, as I have been at pains to point out, people who indignantly, or condescendingly, claim that all beliefs deserve equal respect, think they are pretty clever, but what they are really saying is that their own belief (i.e. that all beliefs are equal) is *the superior belief* which all enlightened beings should share. Though I respect these clever people individually as human beings, I think their credo is all wet.

Bruce S. Thornton writes*

...the Islamist [inditement] of the West is [...] in fact a creation of Westerners themselves, and the Islamist for the most part reprises the indictment that generations of Western poets, philosophers, and artists have repeated: Western technology and science and their bastard child, industrialism,

* See: The Indictment of the West, February 10, 2006: victorhanson.com/articles/thornton021006.html

have ravaged the earth and exterminated whole peoples, and now threaten to destroy the human race along with all other life. Radical individualism has reduced Westerners to insignificant atoms, bereft of the warm nurturing ties of more organic communities. . .

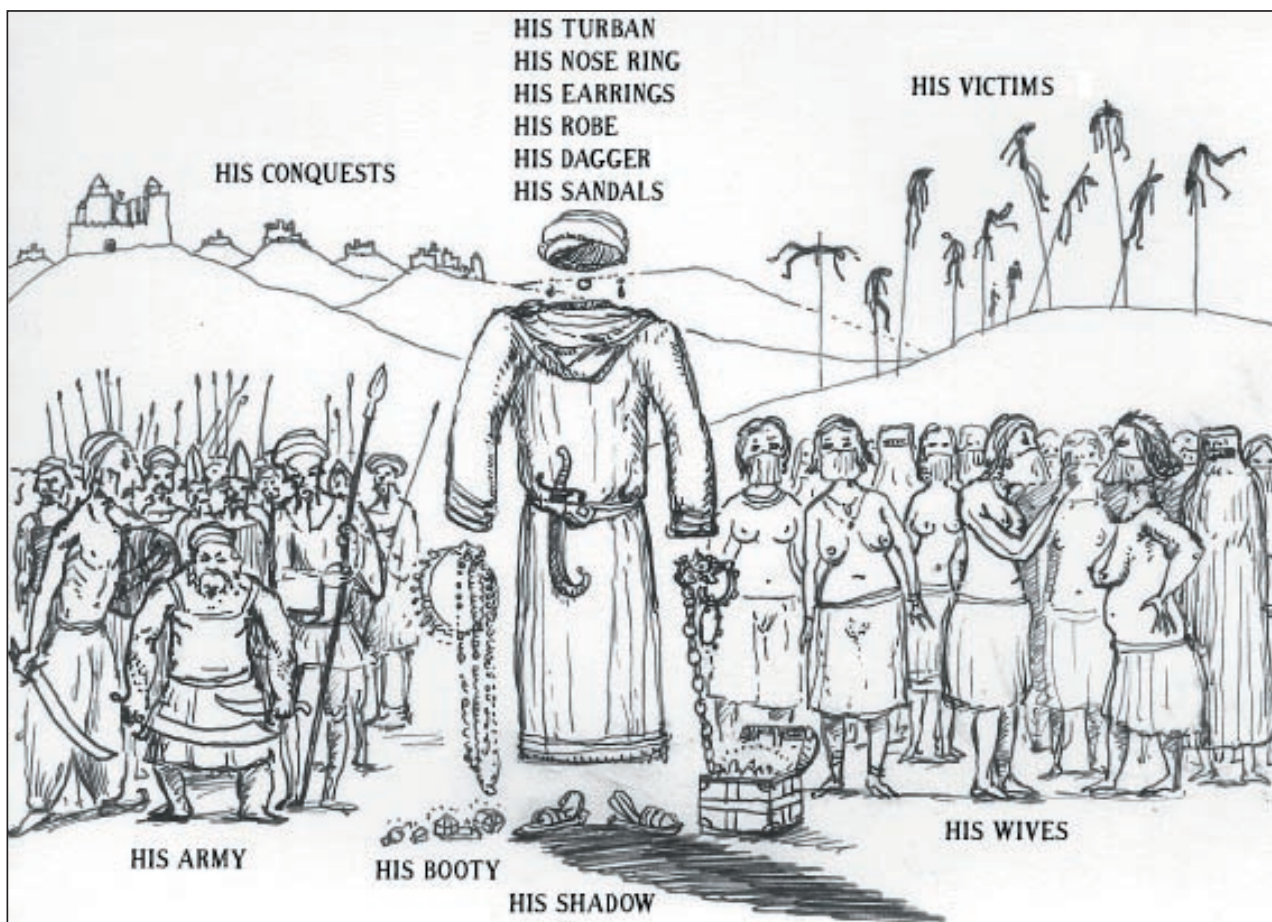
Which only goes to show the importance of internal Western debate, and the nefarious roll of the intellectual elites.

Descending from such strategic heights, for me it boils down to this: globalization or no globalization, if certain Moslems don't like a certain Danish newspaper they needn't buy it, and if this newspaper has done something wrong it is a matter for the Danish courts—though there is reason to fear these courts may cravenly cower under Islamist pressure, as European nation-states sink into the EU mire. A similar argument was repeated dozens of times to folks who wanted to control the contents of *COSMOPOLIS*—with, it must be admitted, little effect, though basic western freedom of speech was, for the most part, and at the cost of constant battle, preserved for that venerable publication. Now brace yourselves for 'civil war' in Europe, and US strikes on Iranian industrial installations.

Victor Davis Hanson's article includes this phrase:

A private Western newspaper can crassly editorialize and lampoon as it likes. If it couldn't, or if it censored itself from doing so out of fear, then there would simply no longer be a West as we know it. That's why papers across Europe, from Spain to Poland, have republished the cartoons and faced the consequences.

It is very nice to see the West being defended, even if only the crass are stepping up into the firing line. But I don't want to just complain about other people's bad taste; I'd like to contribute some of my own:



CYBER FOLLIES

DAN GUNTER: TYPOGRAPHY EXPERT!
AND OTHER SILK PURSES FROM SOW'S EARS

Last January I was pleased to see the following from Rob Friefeld, on the VanceBBS:

Here is a bit of news: the Vances have authorized Andreas Irle to privately publish any of the V.I.E. books which are not currently in print.

This provoked various responses, including an enthusiastic cry from Dan Gunter:

This is stupendously good news!

Later on, after Dan's habitual ill humor embroiled the conversation in wrangling, he tried to, 'make a couple of things very clear':

1. The VIE project was—and remains—a great thing. All who were involved in it deserve the thanks and praise of all Vance fans.
2. The idea of creating a new family of typefaces for the VIE edition honored Jack Vance. It was a great idea.
3. The new editions are also a great thing. Keeping Jack Vance's books in print is a very worthy project. Anything that can be done to that end should be applauded.

It will doubtlessly pain him to learn it but, as several people might have informed him, once again it is his old favorite who must take the blame for all 3 initiatives. In the case of #3, I wanted to take advantage of project work and emerging technology to keep Vance's work in print, as well as profiting the Vances economically via the VIE. My own salary, as usual, will be limited to the satisfaction of seeing it succeed—if it does—plus, I assume (presumptuously?) the usual bonus of public insult from Dan Gunter and his ilk. I first proposed this plan to Andreas during Wave 2 packing over a year ago, (in Milan), and worked with him and Stefania Zacco to develop it—though eventually it was more practical for Andreas to use a German printer.

Rob's announcement lured the anti-Amiante crowd out of their cracks, and the board was soon in a jolly blaze. Dan Gunter, who claims that Amiante, though not as good as Goudy Old Style, Mergenthaler Garamond No. 3* and others, is none-the-less ok, sprinkled his drops of oil on the fire:

I do think. . .that the VIE size is a bit small. I assume that the VIE was set in 10 point type; just a slight increase to 11 point would have been desirable. (And I speak, by the way, as someone who has actually designed books and worked with award-winning book designers.)

That Dan, a true renaissance man! I wish I could say *I* had worked with 'award winning book designers' . . . sigh. In any

* I wonder if I may therefore presume that Dan feels Amiante is superior to Mergenthaler Garamond No. 2, or Mergenthaler Garamond No. 1, fonts which presumably exist?

case 'Jojo Lapin',† learning that Edition Andreas Irle books would use VIE settings, announced he would therefore not order them, as we are surely all glad to learn.

Dan went on to give his own typographical specifications:

. . .large, clear, reader-friendly type with less than 75 characters per line. This is what I want my Vance books to look like.

I do hope Andreas, and Vance publishers everywhere, are paying attention. Meanwhile, after reproaching 'Jojo Lapin' for being 'snarky'—a term I presume is less derogatory than 'sour-puss'—Dan informed us that:

. . .the typical maximum line length is 65 characters (two and one-half alphabets). People have trouble reading longer lines.

Which provides introduction of the fact, verifiable by anyone who has learned basic counting, that the typical VIE line of Amiante contains less than 50 characters.

The Laughing Mathematician, who these days has more reasons to laugh than ever, weighed in with a positive opinion:

. . .I find the Amiante typeface used in the VIE eminently readable, and, of all the JV editions that I have lurking around on my shelves, I even find it to be the most aesthetically pleasing. Take that for what it's worth, coming from one with no formal education nor thorough practice in the field of typography.

As a self-confessed non-expert the Laughing Mathematician's comments are, obviously, worthless. Did he ever work with any 'award winning book designers'? NOT. But he expresses himself like an honest man. Axolotl also took a brave position on this important and tortured question:

. . .I have read millions of words in Amiante (this is not an exaggeration, nor a hyperbole, it is "numerically" true), and I've never had any problems with that. VIE could have been done in many other existing fonts, of course, but I've always felt a thrill at the thought that VIE was done in a specific one, invented for Jack's oeuvre.

Rob Friefeld, sly reincarnation of some peripatetic philosopher of olden days, made this remark:

When someone says they will not buy a book so long as it is set in Amiante, I am suspicious. The person could be a hyperaesthetic freak, or could be choked by hatred of Paul Rhoads, or could convince me that they never buy any book printed in a font they "don't like".

Reacting to Rob's striking image, Jojo snarked:

You mean somebody who has a grudge with Rhoads from before the VIE project? It strikes me as more likely that, as

† Who Dan Gunter suspects of being Pulsifer, and who I know is both Pulsifer and Alexander Feht, but who is content to maintain the alleged mystery surrounding his identity.

is the case with me, most people's problem with Rhoads and VIE management developed as a result of the "Amiante" business, rather than the other way around.

Ahem. The history of 'the Amiante business' is this: the VIE project was launched at the end of August, 1999. By October, thanks to Andreas Irlé in particular, we had worked to find an appropriate font, which process had slowly made me aware of the unsatisfactory nature of the available fonts, and eventually determined me to try to create a proper one. Amiante, therefore, already existed in January 2000, in a preliminary electronic form, at the time of the Oakland Work-Festival. Amiante's development, which occurred publicly within the project, aroused no controversy. But the 'Festival' was the scene of a power-play, and the font was used by the power-players, particularly a certain Jesse Polhemus, to discredit me. He could not claim that Amiante was no good, since he had never seen it, but he sung the soon to be familiar tune that, as a non-professional, I had no business even trying to create a font. This presumptiveness was said to demonstrate my general unsuiteness to lead the VIE.

Ed Winskill, who was present at the Festival, but took no part in the power-play, recalls that:

...the Amiante font issue was an issue for people who deal in fonts, and have specialized knowledge about them.

But this is not correct. One person at the Festival pretended to specialized knowledge and did have some narrowly technofanatic objections to Amiante,* but Jesse pretended to no expertise, though he did threaten that, unless I submitted to him, he would publish a devastating analysis of Amiante, by a typography expert he had up his sleeve on one of the then-extant organs of interval VIE communication. This situation was eventually overcome. Several months later a plethora of self-styled typography experts entered the virtual arena, but they were always seconded by a contingent of non-expert anti-Amianters. Some of these folks were honest but more or less perplexed or manipulated, while others were mischief makers. Dan Gunter, though he claims typographical expertise, supports my point:

People who criticized Paul Rhoads for wanting to design a new font for the VIE were responding to Rhoads, not the idea. Had someone less objectionable than Rhoads made the suggestion, then it would not have been quite the hot-button topic that it is.

This is correct, except that the people who were 'responding to Rhoads' began to do it, a) not in October or November, or even December of 1999 when the danger of Amiante clearly loomed, but in January 2000, and b) not for any of the reasons which later became fashionable, such as that I exploit Vance through the VIE to promote extremist right-wing ideology, Christianity and 'amateur artistic efforts', or that I am a pugnacious, uncivilized person lacking in judgement.† As 'Jojo Lapin' tells it:

* This amazing person had translated *Four Legged Joe* into Esperanto and printed it in a pamphlet form, in Shavian script, of which he had created a font! The resultant publication, of which I own a sample, is certainly one of the most wonderfully strange products of the human spirit.

I think the idea that was originally objected to was that a new typeface should be designed by someone with no previous experience of typographical design—which is, after all, a professional field, with certain established standards. Ex post the objection is of course that the result a) does not look very good, and b) fails to fulfill the most rudimentary requirements of a functional typeface.

The famous poster 'Bud' (who does not hide his identity), is one of the few people fearlessly honest enough (about himself, the only sort of bravery on the internet that counts) to provide us with some of that scanty but telling evidence which supports my controversial contentions concerning the dangers of cyber-slander. Speaking of his hesitation to subscribe to the VIE 'Bud' wrote:

Criticism over an early prototype was fair and alarming enough to me that I was worried I'd wasted money to satisfy the obstinate small-mindedness of a pack of amateurs.

'Bud's' statement would be even better if it specified that the alarming criticisms only presented themselves as fair. If they had actually been fair there would have been some truth in them, and this, given their hysteria, would have meant that there was some sort of real or even serious problem with the font. But there were no serious problems. There were not even any 'problems' to speak of. Various minute adjustments occurred, as part of a normal and serious process of development, including printing no less than 2 test volumes. So I challenge any honest researcher to point out any significant, or even observable, differences between the Amiante font, as originally presented in COSMOPOLIS #6, June 2000, and the finished version.

Dan Gunter laid at least one point to rest:

As for the claim that Rhoads should not have tried to design a font. Everyone who ever designs a font designs one for the first time. The fact that it's a first effort doesn't mean that it will necessarily be bad.

But he spoils the nice impression he starts to make with a snarky postscriptum:

I have no doubt that, had some novice other than Rhoads made this suggestion, the response would have been different.

The novice in question made the suggestion in October of 1999, and the response *was* different: no one had a problem.‡

† It is claimed, allegedly on the evidence of e-mails of early VIE discussions, from October 1999 for example, which for a long time were published on the VIE website on a 'project history' page, that my fascist inclinations were already clear, and deplored by VIE volunteers. But no anti-fascist up-rising took place then, even though my typographical presumption was unconcealed.

The true reason for later attacks on the project (such as Feht's lies about early project history, and Dan's Gunter's use of them, as now) can be shown to have nothing to do with me personally, or anything I ever did. It is the personalities of the trouble-makers themselves, and the Internet situation which provides them such a wonderful avenue of expression, coupled with sometimes cowardly, sometimes congenital, incapacity of many people to cope with the levels of verbal violence and intellectual hysteria thus generated.

‡ Amiante is a whole family of fonts, and the VIE composers often called for other specialized fonts. I have also designed several fonts which are not used by the VIE, so that by now I am the author of dozens of them. Joel Anderson helped me a great deal, and even himself designed one of the two Small Caps fonts (for the Amiante family) used by the VIE.

Typographical expert Dan Gunter then gets down to brass tacks:

When I first opened the *VIE Dragon Masters / Languages of Pao*, I hoped to find that Feht and his ilk were entirely wrong on every count. To my surprise, I thought that the pages were too pale, and the typesize was not quite large enough.

One of the adjustments made to Amiante after the Gift Volume (*Coup de Grace and Other Stories*), was to 'darken' the font. None-the-less I challenge anyone to specifically describe some actual differences between any Amiante letter, as used in the Gift Volume, and later versions. In fact the printing process itself plays a crucial roll. One of the results of the Science Fiction Volume (*The Dragon Masters, The Languages of Pao*), was to make me highly vigilant concerning ink density, and many urgings were sent to Stefania Zacco in Milan to be alert about this for Wave 1. Some of the Science Fiction Volumes in particular—but any Wave 1 subscriber can probably find such volumes among his 44—suffer from low ink density, a problem which is only relative. Dan Gunter may have one of the lighter SF volumes. If so, the problem was not with the font but with the printing. Dan's typographical expertise, as distinguished as it may be, cannot be compared to Sr. Giuseppi Biffi's, and Sr. Biffi holds an opposite opinion; he has always been enthusiastic about Amiante precisely because of its exceptional 'darkness'. There is no contemporary book font I know which, leading for leading, gets as much ink onto a square inch of page. As for the VIE letters, as set, not being 'large enough', I have tested the legibility of VIE books on many people all of whom find them more legible than currently fashionable book settings, such as the 12 point 'Adobe Garamond' used in, say, the *Harry Potter* hardcovers. So Dan, in his happy-go-lucky way, is just latching onto this to have something to complain about.

Subsequently, however, he gets in way over his head:

I agree with Rhoads's philosophy regarding type design and typesetting. As I recall, he pointed out that early type designs featured variation between thicks and thins and a general liveliness that has been lost by the translation to digitized fonts.

Dan is so persnickity* himself that I wonder how he will be able to complain if I persnickitely point out, first of all, that typographical expertise is not 'philosophy', it is 'art', and that I never pointed out anything so meaninglessly vague as he mentions here. What I said was this: prior to the technological revolution of the mid and late 20th century, fonts *had* to be designed for a specific size, and that, for many reasons, they also *ought* to be, but that now, with digital scaling, a single set of glyphs (letter shapes) *can* be automatically used at all sizes, and *is*. Since most

* Is 'persnickety' as derogatory as 'sour-puss'? And how does it compare to 'snarky'? I hope these matters will be clarified on the VanceBBS!

contemporary fonts are merely prettified tracings of 15th century fonts, and since these were designed to be used as sizes like 24 points, they are spidery and pale when scaled down to 12 points. Amiante has no trouble being technically superior to such fonts since they were designed in blissful neglect of this crucial aspect. Such fonts are created in the abstract, without reference to the practical needs of typography, and intended to be used at all sizes as if this posed no problems. The VIE uses 4 sizes of Amiante, respectively designed for 8pt, 10pt, 12pt and 18pt. The 12pt version is the pre *Coup de Grace* version, so it is quite similar to the 10pt version. But the 8 and 18 point versions have notably different shapes, as I have made clear in several COSMOPOLIS articles.*

With his 'typographical expert' hat pulled tight down over his eye-brows, Dan went on to make further amazing claims:

It has long been known that hot-type technology results in minute variations in letterforms. Also, the type will not be set on precise and rigid baselines. I read long ago that it is believed that these variations give the eye some relief and give greater "color" to the page.

Such things may be long known to others, but it's the first I've ever heard of them. I do recall much screaming about Amiante not sitting flat on its baseline, but this turned out to be a problem with a version of Acrobat Reader some people had—though it passed as one of the 'fair' criticisms of Amiante. However, as odd as Dan's ideas are, I do wish he would have presented them a few years ago when they might have done the VIE some good. The flow of Dan's erudition continued:

By contrast, type that is set digitally will have less variation in thicks and thins and in baseline setting; in fact, each particular letterform should look exactly like every other instance of that letterform. That can potentially result in a deadly sameness.

Where does he get these ideas? There is nothing inherent in digital setting that changes the shapes of letters so that they have less 'shading' (the term for the contrast between thick and thin letter strokes) than they would otherwise have. As for hot-type; all metal type, whatever its temperature, can have minute variation because each is individually cast. They also get nicked up in individual ways as they are used and re-used. But even digitally created letters, which are 'vector' graphics without physical reality, such that any two 'a's are truly identical as 'type', come into physical reality showing variations which result from accidents inherent in whatever printing process is used and irregularities in the paper. These factors also happen to account for

* See, *Cosmopolis* #3, page 4; *Cosmopolis* #6, page 6; *Cosmopolis* #7, page 10; *Cosmopolis* #8, page 24; *Cosmopolis* #16, page 3; *Cosmopolis* #43, page 17, and probably other places.

most of the letter variation which Dan seems to refer to, in older printed documents. But, whatever the cause, such variations cannot contribute to legibility! Despite any conceptual aesthetic appeal, spurious or not, which such factors may lend, deviation from the normal letter shape, as conceived by the typographer, must be considered a flaw, and even an impediment to legibility—though for the most part such inevitable variations do no great harm.

Dan seems to be confusedly recalling the question of variation in letter design itself, which my topographical ‘philosophy’ (actually my ‘doctrine’) depends upon. It is my response to what I see as the problem of homogenized letter forms. In various typographical articles I complained that contemporary typographers use a copy and paste mentality which results in the letter forms (of which there are very few in our roman alphabet) being numbingly similar. I insisted that this impedes legibility because letters become hard to distinguish from each other, not because they lack some kind of ‘liveliness’, whatever that might be. In fact I deliberately tried to make Amiante letters as drab as possible. I don’t want ‘lively’ typography. I want lively writing, efficiently and transparently transmitted.

After rambling on about various foolishness, Dan, in his roll as expert, concluded:

In conclusion, I agree generally with Rhoads’s comments that much modern type design and typesetting are bad. (The two are rather different arts, of course.) Perhaps there’s a bit too much variation in the x-height of the Amiante letterforms, but I think that’s a minor comment. My comments are really directed at the typesetting issue—i.e., which size of Amiante to use—and not to Amiante itself.

To which I can only say that type design and typesetting are two arts than which no others can be more allied, that the design of Amiante in particular was all about how it would be set (namely at 10 points), and I defy anyone to specify which Amiante letter x-heights are ‘too’ varied or to show the letters of other fonts where these alleged variations do not occur in improper fashion, and to explain why. Of course Dan is free to claim that VIE typography too small. That most people find it more legible than most books printed at 12 points is a fact he might wish to comment upon at some later date.

His public remarks having been subjected to this public counter-analysis, if Dan now feels embarrassed, or bad in any way, there is at least one person he can look to for sympathy: ‘Jojo Lapin’. This slightly enigmatic personage, after snarking at Amiante and the VIE for a number of paragraphs, finished his post by declining to do so any further:

I cannot be alone in feeling that the VIE lacks in aesthetics as well as functionality. But an atmosphere has been created in which others who feel the same way hesitate to speak because of fear of persecution.

Poor ‘Jojo Lapin’ . . . and yet it is I who am banned from the VanceBBS; is life not ironic?

In a further post good’ol Jojo makes a practical suggestion:

. . .do you not agree that it would be good if no-frills, affordable books based on the VIE texts could be provided? . . .[The books of the UK-based House of Stratus (www.houseofstratus.com)] are of uniformly high quality as regards materials and design, but are nevertheless inexpensive. They offer the complete or next to complete works of authors such as Brian Aldiss, Rafael Sabatini, and Edgar Wallace. I cannot imagine there is much of a market at least for the latter two—but House of Stratus somehow manages to keep them in print. . .If I were in control of the VIE text files, I would try to work something out with House of Stratus and Vance. I am sure they would be happy to participate.

Why, then, does Jojo not contact the Vances; they, and no one else, control the VIE texts. He could put them in touch with ‘House of Stratus’, and perhaps even earn a fee, pressed upon him in sheer gratitude by one of the parties to the transaction, or the other, or both if he plays his cards right. Perhaps it is because, several years ago under another name, he made himself persona-non-gratissima in Oakland.

Finally, let’s hear from ‘Sudo Nonimus’ who bravely made public confession of his sour-pussyness:

I let my long-time subscription of the VIE lapse primarily because of the Amiante typeface. When I subscribed, and put in a stint as volunteer, I had of course no reason to suspect that a standard typeface would not be used but I certainly hoped for the best in the design department. I envisioned discreetly handsome books unadorned by illustrations and where the prose of Jack Vance would take center stage. When I saw what Amiante looked like I quietly decided that I did not after all want to spend my money on books with such an appearance, so I opted out. Simple as that. . .I guess the reason for my withdrawal makes me a hyperæsthetic freak. . .

I guess so. In any case that’s one VIE book-set which fails to exist, and to make matters worse Sudo Nonimus’s admirable quietness is now sadly dissipated in this disagreeable noise.

2 points for the bad guys.

If they had not already lost it might cheer them up.



MYCROFT SYSTEMS PRESENTS: I-GOD

Fitting snugly over eyes, ears, hands, nose, feet, genitalia, the I-God offers something else than a Jurassic ambience of moronic music while commuting to nowhere, watching television in a soda-pop stupor in a poorhouse terminal ward, or talking all day long on a cell phone about nothing to your dog. Our customers actually disappear into other worlds as efficiently as one flushes a toilet. Consider these options, then thank God you can purchase the sleek, affordable I-God!

LOVE POTION NUMBER NINETY NINE:

Make love to Greta Garbo, Marilyn Monroe, Monica Lewinsky, King Kong, Tallulah Bankhead, Rock Hudson, John F Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Bruce Lee, Brando, Spike Lee, Osama bin Laden, George Burns, Orson Welles, Peter Lorre or any DNA mix you choose at whim.

BOMBS AWAY:

Make war all by yourself against Vietnam, Iraq, North Korea, Cuba or any blend of these exotic countries, at your caprice. After you kill your despicable foes, eat your dead, or even living prey, like a savage or a lion, with five flavors of sauce prepared by master South Sea Island chefs. Make war on yourself. Eat yourself with catsup.

INNER STAR TREK:

Travel to planets you could never imagine designed by our masters of the fantastical, and observe, make love to, or slay monsters and aliens that are at once terrifying, baffling and reliably erotic in enigmatic ways that tickle your intelligence, if you have any, as well as your oleaginous ruling glands.

JOE FINKLESTEIN'S SILVER YESTERDAYS:

Out-do nostalgia in the happy past of our wonderful species. Work fourteen hours a day six days a week, sweat like crazy, eat peanut batter sandwiches and scrapple, drink near-beer, age fast and die quickly while singing sentimental ditties grandpa loved to warble. Get sick in huge epidemics. Our past will bring tears to your eyes.

LOOSE BRUCE ZEUS' WORLD CREATOR:

Make your own reality. Make it beyond language, beyond sense, beyond palpable design or anything but chance atrocity and uncontrollable spasms. Give your universe a vertiginous random set of celestial laws with appearances and disappearances of lovable monsters and erotic amorous provender that will always keep you very alert.

We'd love to say otherwise, but the I-God is completely addictive. We have a large hospital, Mandelbrot Towers, ready to serve you when you have been left a giggling, incontinent husk by our machines. We also have a therapy program, I-God Anonymous, which meets every night at 3:00 AM in every Laundromat and video store in the country.

Don't be odd: prod your bod, you clod, with I-God!



ECHOES IN THE ETHER

Paul,

it appears an apostrophe is missing from "Shemmlers" in *The Sub-standard Sardines*, Vol. 3, p. 169. Can you ask someone to check on the accuracy of the VIE text here? And let me know, please. I am redoing my searchable Vance database, keying it to the VIE. Thanks very much.

Dave Mead

Dave,

I cannot check this for you, and as comments on page 1 of this issue of EXTANT may indicate, I am daunted by the prospect of trying to stimulate others to do so. However, perchance some EXTANT reader can help us with this issue.

Paul



Richard Chandler recently sent some of us the following image with the comment: *I thought you might like to see how close Guillaume Rondelet (1507-1566) came to capturing the likeness of a Chasch.*



THE FOLLOWING LETTERS, MOSTLY REACTIONS TO WAVE 2 DELIVERY, WERE COLLECTED BY SUAN YONG AND COSMOPOLIS EDITOR DAVE REITSEMA, OVER RECENT MONTHS.

I have just received my Wave 2 set and am thrilled to bits! It has arrived safely with contents sound and I do hope the volunteers who made that possible will know how grateful to them I am. I would like to express my thanks further to the whole VIE team by writing a letter to Cosmopolis, so here is my attempt. I ask that you consider publishing my message at a future opportunity. I need this letter to convey the honour I feel from being involved with the VIE; my admiration of the participants for their allegiance and toil; and my heartfelt thanks for a gift of incalculable worth which I will cherish always. The VIE set is now a jewel of immense depth, charm and fascination. It has been skillfully produced by capable recruits, and is a superb showcase for the magnetic tales featured within.

Once again, my thanks to all involved, especially those—too many to list—who tackled considerable workloads on behalf of us all (you know who you are). Bravo to Paul Rhoads for scraping us together; initially a desperate group 'Huddled together' in the shadow of the gargantuan feral beast that was to become the VIE project. A beast tamed and wrangled through the years by brave and ardent men and women from, ah well, everywhere really. Sorry getting a bit carried away. Anyway, Cheers Paul; for giving us the opportunity; for the handsome artwork and stylie font; and just for thinking the idea up in the first place!

And, as always, my deepest gratitude to Jack for the inimitable gift of his precious, beloved tales. Thank you. My warmest wishes to you all,

Donna Adams
Auckland, New Zealand, 16 Oct 2005

Just wanted to announce that the second wave arrived safely; and that completes the set. And what a set it is: Impeccable, beautiful and a true collector's item indeed. I am especially happy about the fact that the Grand Master himself lived to see the day it got finished.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all of you who saw this Sisyphus labor through; a truly monumental task indeed! I am sure that it will give all of the subscribers a lifetime of reading pleasure!

Once again, thanks a million!
With my deepest regards to all of you!

Ronald Smolders
Nederland, 10 May 2005

I received the set today in perfect condition. This is wonderful, thank you for your great work! BTW, in French VIE means LIFE.

Alain Fréhel
10 May 2005

Thank you so much to you and the other core volunteers at the VIE. My wave 2 books arrived a week or two ago, and they look great. And I have many of Vance's books to read that I have never seen before, and a lovely set of books to keep forever to re-read and treasure. It's a lovely thing to have.

All the best.

John Kleeman
London, May 2005

Books arrived yesterday—oh joy, oh rapture! All of them appear to be there and all in perfect shape. Please express my unbounded thanks to all involved, up to and including Mr. Vance, whose signature on Vol, 44 I will treasure.

Eric E. Harrison
Little Rock, Arkansas, 3 Aug. 2005

Just confirming receipt of Wave 2 of the Jack Vance books. A wonderful completion (despite the Errata) of a long, arduous, loving effort by all of you. My thanks to each of you, and to Jack himself. Please pass it on.

Now, when they're ready, all I need is the ELLERY QUEEN volumes. I know you'll keep me apprised on progress on this supplement to the main Series.

All best,

Joe Wrzos
Saddle River, NJ

My set arrived in perfect condition and there are no duplicate volumes. As I wrote to Dave Reitsema several days ago, I have never received anything that was packed so well, and I wish I could personally thank the packers for the fine job they did. Of course that thanks extends in many multiples to all the people who worked so hard for so long on this great and important project, one of the most important being you. This was an incredibly difficult task, but I'm sure must be all the more rewarding for those of you in the forefront. I am glad to have played a (very) small part in the volunteer process.

My very best regards,

Mike Mitchell
21 Aug 2005

I have received the final volumes of the VIE set. They are a genuine work of art in all respects and are well worth both the money and the hard work of all of those whose efforts made it possible.

I wish to thank everyone who participated and worked on the VIE project to make a dream come true.

I know of no other endeavor such as the VIE project and it is only by the exhausting efforts of those involved that the impossible had become not only possible but a reality.

Thanks everyone,

John Fussell
23 Aug. 2005

Thanks for all your hard work over the years to make the VIE possible. I received my second wave set a few weeks back and it's marvelous; the books (and the words within too of course) are truly a work of art.

The VIE subscribers are all very appreciative of your and the other volunteers' hard work!

Thanks

Ray Muzyka
27 Aug. 2005

Just thought I'd let you know that my VIE set just arrived here in miserably wet Dublin, Ireland. Only opened one or two books so far, but I will check all the volumes later on this evening.

Thanks so much for all your help. I'm a little giggly and shaky at present!

Cheers,

Eamonn Moriarty
19 Sep. 2005

This is not a response you asked for, but just to let know: my 2nd printing set was delivered this week Tuesday. And I am very very pleased with it. They look and feel and even smell good. Wonderful! Reading it every day since. It was well worth it. Thanks to all involved.

Regards,

Rob Oudshoorn
The Netherlands, 23 Sep 2005

. . . The VIE looks amazing on my bookshelf and reading them is even better.

Anthony Towsley
23 Sep. 2005

Firstly, my thanks to you and everybody else who made this possible. Secondly, I'm sure you all have made many as happy as I. Lastly, a redundant thanks (but you can never get enough of them!).

Fred Ford
24 Sep 2005

First a very big thanks you for all the work. My copies of the second edition—all 44—arrived safely and beautifully packed in Oxford, England last week, and make a very handsome shelf of books! I hope one day they will go to the Bidleian library for safe keeping if no copyright copy has been sent there.

Second yes I would like to continue with Cosmopolis. I do not know how qualified I am to contribute—I am attempting a reply to two of Paul Rhoads Extant articles at present (only attempting!) but definitely want to carry on with Cosmopolis if possible.

Once again many thanks

Michael Parsons
25 Sep. 2005

Great news I picked up my Wave 2 parcel today, 27th September, it apparently arrived late last week and was delivered to my local Post Office for pick up.

Congratulations to all involved in the mammoth task of compiling and distributing VIE worldwide,

Regards

Peter McKay.
Australia, 27 Sep 2005

I have received the second wave. Thanks to all involved for the excellent packaging. I now have all 44 volumes—I couldn't be more pleased.

Do you have any idea when the EQ volume will be sent? Kind regards,

Chris Prior
28 Sep. 2005

G'ay,

Just letting you know I received my shipment today, 29th Sept 2005, in good condition:

Thanks very much, looks great; appreciate the efforts you all went to...

Michael Smith
(VIE Readers, signed #65)
Australia, 29 Sep 2005

I recieved my VIE second wave!!

I was so pleased, I checked everything and all is in order, I have every volume and best of all Jacks signature!

My only complaint is that Ports of Call is titled "Ports of Call and Lurulu" on the rear of each, but only "Ports of Call" on the cover of the volume, nothing really. Other than a few unavoidable marks on covers I am completely pleased.

I would like to thank you and all of the volunteers for what can only be described as the most monumental

gesture. It is a true testament to Jack's work, and is something that hope is to be remembered by MAN forever.

Thanks mate! From the bottom of my heart, thanks to you and all the volunteers, well done and good job.

I will now try again to thank Paul more personally and also contact Jack, we had a baby earlier this year and his name is 'Gersen'.

He is beautiful, and truly unique, no one can imagine where his name is derived!

I have some other books on order also, can you tell me of their progress?

Regards,

Sean O'Sullivan.
3 Oct. 2005

Hi . . . I would like to thank you for your assistance in the sale of my husband's VIE editions. I put the books on ebay with great reluctance. I wanted to find someone who would enjoy them as much as I know Leon did.

There is no one in my family who was interested in Jack Vance. I talked to Robert Lumpkin (the purchaser of the volumes) and he informed me you notified him they were up for auction. I was totally shocked at the bidding on the volumes. Leon truly loved everything Vance wrote as I see you all do. It looked to me that the VIE was truly a labor of love. My hat's off to all of you. The VIE volumes were a good dent in Leon's vast collection of Vance works. Now I have to find homes for the rest.

Thank you again

Linda Janzen
4 Oct. 2005

Just thought you'd like to know that I have received Wave-two today, all in perfect order and very well packaged. Many thanks to all in the VIE that made this happen.

Regards,

Chris Budgen (VIE #50)
New Zealand, 05 Oct. 2005

The package with the books arrived in Buenos Aires at last: you can imagine my elation. I am deeply grateful to you (the communication web you built up to keep members of the VIE connected is admirable) as to many other volunteers for having made this possible. If you ever happen to travel to Argentina, let me know, and I'll prepare an "asado" for you (provided you are not a vegetarian! Something else will have to do then).

Un abrazo,

Enrique Alcatena
6 Oct. 2005

I have just received my Wave 2 set, and am thrilled to bits! I am in Auckland, New Zealand and the parcel actually got here several weeks ago but I was unable to take possession of

it sooner. It has arrived safely with contents sound and I do hope the volunteers who made that possible will know how grateful to them I am.

Come to think of it, I shall write to Cosmopolis at once! I believe David Reitsema [at Cosmopolis] is the man to contact. Good luck with the editorship, Cosmopolis will be in safe hands.

Many thanks again,

Donna Adams
16 Oct. 2005

I know your busy with the release and all. It's a dream come true to have the full deluxe set on my shelf. I'm enjoying every one immensely.

Thanks for the hard work.

Anthony Towsley
21 Oct. 2005

Just a note to let you know my VIE set arrived last Monday. I wasn't here (was away on holidays) but my friend took delivery. I thought others in Australia who are awaiting shipments may be interested in knowing of the arrival of mine in Perth.

I unpacked the books to the special shelf set aside for them. I can't wait to read them all, especially the stories I wasn't able to obtain/read in the past.

One small thing—there is a splodge on one of the covers! And of course it had to be Book 1! Is there some way to remedy this situation? It is so good to have received the set. The books are beautiful—even better than I had hoped. You know, I love Jack Vance's writing so much I have had a nagging worry ever since I signed up for the VIE set that maybe my judgement was affected by desperation to own the VIE set and really I'd been swindled. To receive the set at long last and to feel and smell the quality is indescribably good!

Thanks and regards,

Amber-Jane Lewis
30 Jan. 2006



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Thanks to Rob Friefeld for his help with Extant #11.

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Letters and articles welcome.



Paul Rhoads