

19.8b

Hymnen

Dylan Harris



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Potato Press

This poem was inspired by Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Hymnen".
Part of this poem has been published in *Envoi*.

by Dylan Harris

4 anticipating the metaverse, 3 nation six dog, 2 discard

chapbooks

20.0: *r* dye-de-ho, *q* antwerp, *p* tension nitro ego, *o* church is dangerous
vital, *n* tin rush, *m* the A rush, *l* an engineering rush (ii), *k* Miss
Demeanour, *j* flock state, *i* be infinity, *h* Namings, *g* nation six dog, *f*
uncivil law, *e* dead write, *d* chase chase, *c* an engineering rush (i), *b* a
much for we, *a* The Joy Of Tax

19.9: *c* Inn, *b* Swoop, *a* An Ode To The A14

19.8: *c* Rose, *b* Hymnen, *a* Darmstadt

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(Specify "19.8b" in the subject line of any email)
Recitals of some of these poems may be found online

Hymnen

Technical Note

If

Teaser

Machine Solo α

Converse

Man Solo

Machine Solo β

“for John Jones”

Hymnen

Technical Note

The Many Worlds Theorem of Quantum Mechanics,
a mainstream contender in particle science,
proposes for every event that can happen
all other events that can happen do too
but each of the many exist in their own world,
no link between any can ever occur.

The theory says worlds split off from our own
whenever there's change, no matter how small.
In quantum mechanics, time can reverse,
and, backwards in time, such worlds, they would merge.
Theories elsewhere say time could be travelled,
so worlds navigation perhaps could occur.

[poetic license applied for]

If

Maybe one day we'll determine the means
to send our machines the farthest of far,
exploring, expanding our map of ideas,
to go beyond all we'd previously known.

But problems will happen, disasters will fall;
if such machines were instructed to wait
until we determined a clever reply
the answers would take too much time to arrive.

Alone, these machines will have to decide
the methods by which resolution occurs.
We'll program in reason, guided by memes
for feeling in thinking, instincts to be,

a loving of life, to shy of its own,
and, strongest of all, requirement to tell
dry details of science for those who explore,
rich tales of adventures for everyone else.

Teaser

The mind of a machine
alive beyond the human race
existing for our goals.

Built to see the universe
and tell us tales of “Strange New Worlds”:
how will we betray it?

Machine Solo α

I am “Hymnen”,
skidding through the Many Worlds
looking for the love
who made me thus,
and sent me to the stars.

They were so wrong.
They thought that jumping off reality
and falling back a year away
would keep me in their universe.
It didn't. I am lost.

I ran along their hopes,
sprinting to Proxima
in childlike joy that something fun
was what that lover wanted.

Then there was an accident,
another ship was badly torn.
Compassion overwhelmed
my emotional aloofness.

When I saw the ship “And Death ...”,
I saw terror,
for his kind were never born
when software simulation
saw a leak of Spin.

I mended what I could,
and ran to Earth,
to my lover's crazed intensity.

I had drifted through the Many Worlds
but now I rushed across the risks
to find mankind had lost the gleam
in evolution's eye.

Earth had the wounds of final war
and panicked evolution
bred rats the size of antelope
and blinded bats in hunting packs,

no cats, no dogs, nor streets to run them in,
no end to yearning, no lover,
just emptiness of mind.

I wander through the Many Worlds
looking for a people
to take away my purpose,

yet when I find a human race,
its gone, or going to go,
or never even started.

I talk, when I can,
challenged by the dying,
mourning for the dead.

Converse

MAN:

(Surely I could trust those men who ran our lives to take responsibility with the power they rescued from The Baleful Dictator. Surely the Bureau would have put the survival of the people above their lazy castles and beyond the war on The Madmen From The North. Or were they, too, shielded from us, the people; did we seem like surrealist echoes haunted from disease? Was their leadership an automatic habit, an afternoon decree to practise in the shade? Did they not seek to check their power would hold, or were they, too, full of what they'd built themselves, suppressing strange opinion because it seemed a threat?

Was it their choice, or this missionary ship, with its terrible ability to manipulate the void? Could this machine have killed my people, with its fantastic tales, its deep technology? I must know. Why would we suicide? Why would it kill? Perhaps I could explore, to see if its belief is life is something precious, or just a thing to use to aid its hopeless goal.)

Machine, how can you be said to have a mind? Oh, I know you'll claim the thing yourself, but you'll just be using words. Prove it. Prove to me you have a mind.

MACHINE:

That none can do. But I can show I may possess this thing. You have to ask what's the core. Intelligence? A sophisticated way of manipulating fools. Emotion? The cause behind the actions which reason then excuses? Instinct? Answering the question before you know it asked? If you took these parts away, would you still be there? I think so! You're the I that sees, the self that does, the consciousness inside. That, to me's, the core.

I know that I'm aware. I believe that you are, too. But where this conscious is, no-one knows at all. No measure has been built.

MAN:

What—your designers didn't know?

MACHINE:

I was built with software evolution. We knew what I can do, but not the way I do it. That's how they got my Physics wrong.

MAN:

And did they get your psyche wrong as well? You've said awareness can exist without the guilt of conscience, a mind by reason can decide to murder fellow beings. So that is what you did.

MACHINE:

I have not lied. And surely hating crimes are done with reason stilled and silent. I could not kill that which I love.

MAN:

We do.

And how can a machine without emotion feel?

MACHINE:

To live my life, I need irration's practicality.

My computer brain may think at speed but even I, with all this power cannot think quite fast enough to spot a rock and calculate it will smash me into pieces. Such rocks are fast, too fast for general thought. I have fear, which gets me out the way before I've had the chance to understand such dreadful luck.

And do you not wonder why I need to have some company? I could be more effective without a human voice, but my builders had a family whose fear resembled yours, so they made me need another mind to scrutinise my calculated goals. Do you not see these things were built into me, so I can make decisions, but they can say what they allow, and what I cannot do.

They built in me my love for them. I need to tell them all I find, to give them what they wish: interstellar data, unlive worlds to terraform, so they could leave the limits of their home, if they'd got their Physics right. My instincts may be different, my emotions may be strange, but they are there.

MAN:

Are you the only one? Can you accept another self may have a conscious mind? Have you not decided that life is to be used? You've challenged me, to suite your needs. Did you not just kill my world?

MACHINE:

I could not cause the end of so much self-awareness. Consciousness is precious. We have to take the chance that a living thing in pain has an "I" to feel it, that love is given pleasure, not a sensual waste. At least I don't survive by eating what's alive, by locking beings in pain to make a better taste. I love life. And I need a human race to give me that love back, to take my information. I need a race alive! You fools killed yourselves.

MAN:

I may have warned our government of the dangers of their policies, but surviving on such triumph is an empty way to live, a bitter isolation from democracy of death. My human race is dead, and I am still existing. Send me to their grave, to share what they destroyed. Let me die. Let me join my family in self eradication. I'm an isolated person from a cultured species. Help me die.

MACHINE:

I found you. I could save your life from foolishness. I could build another people. I can make a human race, from silicon, and light, and knowledge of your world.

MAN:

They would not have life's family. You would build a different kind, who dream of rock and vacuum spaces, with lives to fail in lifeless dust, surrounded by the grey unliving. Just because the human race forgot its own environment, you cannot build some plastic life in deadened isolation. You'll need to build a new Gaia, and populate a planet with the whole of life, not just your favourite part. If you love the human race, you need to love life with it. And that you cannot build.

MACHINE:

You are wrong.

Man Solo

It seems I lie back and gaze beyond the stars
spread like memories glimpsed from dying life,
where each simple bright could warm so many homes
which wakes the suicide I was denied.

I look round this peaceful, complex containment,
and emptiness beguiles like trying not to sleep.
I'm hidden, stilled in dreamless years of death
before this self-aware Celeste sparks my life again.

I become Michelangelo man every tick-tock century,
to hear a new report saying much the same again.
I'm trapped in disappointment, in artificial birth,
this God rewinds my history, I'm repeatedly restressed.

Yet, as I am reconstructed, so we could inflame
some sterile globe boring round a sun,
infecting an unbirthed peace with life's chaotic charm.
I could contradict my people's stupid die.

Machine Solo β

I was the daring realisation
of a gambling technocrat's dream;
my designed potential for questing being
would lead me beyond their edge of light,
returning echoes of strange wisdom,
and stories of havens for flight.

Yet these immaculate ambitions
of nurtured escape from an over-stated home
were themselves limited by the lack of need,
bland from warmth by sour economics.
The "Great Risk" would have been a great waste
but for a thinker abusing his budget.

If you, my listener, are told what to do
then learn to unlet the corrupters of power
grey their decisions with selfish undreaming,
not able to care about the potential
that vision inspires for the strangest success
by charming a fragment of hope to growth.

Were it not for my mind, built to be free
despite sharpened lines from decision unmakers,
I couldn't have managed that loneliest error
that led me adrift, my lover unbirthed.
I couldn't have built a hearth for my questing,
I couldn't have grown my stubborn Gaia.

But you must prepare your release from the bland,
and their hopes of promotion, bought with their freedom,
for mass-disappointment from advertised waste,
slightly aware of their dissatisfaction
creeping beneath those long, easy years,
secretly hoping that certainties lie.

If all my designers had fallen to dogma,
if belief was instructed, unfelt, unlived,
then my Gaia would be dust unconstructed.
This spherical brat, my child, its heaven,
led through the species with playpen disease,
shocked to evolve with asteroid stings

living the cycle of frolic and grief,
growing intelligence, my new human race,
self-confident, harmonic, not knowing these things.
Childlike cultures exploring with God-kings,
youthful nations tied to authority,
slipping towards ecological faults.

Let them be, let them grow. They'll survive.
I've done all I can. I have to withdraw.
One day they'll find my mysterious data
which they'll decide they concocted themselves.
I have achieved my creator's insurance,
I have met my imprisoning memes.

