

Sesquipedalianism¹ and Logophilia² Engage in Logomachy³

(The definitive annotated version
which is dedicated to Arron Shilling
who laughed when I sent it to him)

ATTENTION: The part of Logophilia, written as an avatar for Arron will be played tonight by Anna (on the recording) because, well, she looks better in a dress (wait, didn't you say on the recording?) – also, she will have to play the part of Sesquipedalianism since she couldn't find a pompous ass to pull it off - however, stay tuned kiddies because at some point in the future Arron and Anna will role out a poetic/philosophical dialectic⁴ complete with Thesis, Antithesis, and dueling Syntheses⁵ which we both promise to keep short) Now without further interruption the poem begins:

Sesquipedalianism, a mathematician in his prime⁶,
frets on his way to the 1.0×10^{-6} society⁷ for
the infinitesimally small number of people
with über IQs, born without a sense of irony⁸

Once there he converses with the child prodigy
pontificating on the demerits of ochlocracy⁹ and Fourier¹⁰

$$f(x) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left(a_n \cos \frac{n\pi x}{L} + b_n \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L} \right)^{11}$$

Eigen solutions¹², elementary really

Then she walks in the side door
Logophilia¹³, dressed to the nines
snickering in a daring act of trespass
cutting through to the alley leading

¹ Sesquipedalian language uses long and obscure words when shorter, everyday words would be more effective. From Instant Word Power by Norman Lewis ©1981

² Logophile: A lover of words. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Sixth Edition ©2007 Logophilia: Goddess of the love of words, i.e. a damn fine lover

³ Logomachy: contention about words

⁴ Dialectic: originally Socratic philosophical discourse or style of inquiry based on critical examination

⁵ Developed by Hegel as dynamic process based on Socratic dialectic Word Menu ©1992

⁶ 'prime' a mathematical joke and play on words, ding!

⁷ 1.0×10^{-6} = 99.9999th percentile IQ society called the Mega Society, they look down on the Promethean Society and way down on Mensa

⁸ Oxymoron alert: these are people who are too dumb to question the validity of or ponder the original purpose of IQ tests and the pseudoscience it lent credibility to, namely eugenics, high IQ but not gifted, narrow-minded smart people

⁹ Ochlocracy is mob rule!

¹⁰ Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier: French mathematician (1768-1830)

¹¹ Fourier Series – a formula Microsoft Word can insert in the text but apparently befuddled Wordpress

¹² Small mammalian frogs (really?) no but do you know what it is, I mean really know? Wiki says any of the results of the calculation of [eigenvalues](#)

¹³ See footnote #2.

to Eudaimonia¹⁴, the philosopher's club next door
notorious for attracting Sappho¹⁵ wannabees

¹⁴ Eudaimonia: concept in virtue ethics that translates to happiness or flourishing but contingent on ethical imperatives. The concept of *eudaimonia*, a key term in ancient Greek moral philosophy, is central to any modern neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and usually employed even by virtue ethicists who deliberately divorce themselves from Aristotle. It is standardly translated as “happiness” or “flourishing” and occasionally as “well-being.”

Each translation has its disadvantages. The trouble with “flourishing” is that animals and even plants can flourish but *eudaimonia* is possibly only for rational beings. The trouble with “happiness”, on any contemporary understanding of it uninfluenced by classically trained writers, is that it connotes something which is subjectively determined. It is for me, not for you, to pronounce on whether I am happy, or on whether my life, as a whole, has been a happy one, for, barring, perhaps, advanced cases of self-deception and the suppression of unconscious misery, if I think I am happy then I am — it is not something I can be wrong about. Contrast my being healthy or flourishing. Here we have no difficulty in recognizing that I might think I was healthy, either physically or psychologically, or think that I was flourishing and just be plain wrong. In this respect, “flourishing” is a better translation than “happiness”. It is all too easy for me to be mistaken about whether or not my life is *eudaimon* (the adjective from *eudaimonia*) not simply because it is easy to deceive oneself, but because it is easy to have a mistaken conception of *eudaimonia*, or of what it is to live well as a human being, believing it to consist largely in physical pleasure or luxury for example. The claim that this is, straightforwardly, a mistaken conception, reveals the point that *eudaimonia* is, avowedly, a moralized, or “value-laden” concept of happiness, something like “true” or “real” happiness or “the sort of happiness worth seeking or having.” It is thereby the sort of concept about which there can be substantial disagreement between people with different views about human life that cannot be resolved by appeal to some external standard on which, despite their different views, the parties to the disagreement concur.

All standard versions of virtue ethics agree that living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for *eudaimonia*. This supreme good is not conceived of as an independently defined state or life (made up of, say, a list of non-moral goods that does not include virtuous activity) which possession and exercise of the virtues might be thought to promote. It is, within virtue ethics, already conceived of as something of which virtue is at least partially constitutive. Thereby virtue ethicists claim that a human life devoted to physical pleasure or the acquisition of wealth is not *eudaimon*, but a wasted life, and also accept that they cannot produce a knock down argument for this claim proceeding from premises that the happy hedonist would acknowledge.

But although all standard versions of virtue ethics insist on that conceptual link between *virtue* and *eudaimonia*, further links are matters of dispute and generate different versions. For Aristotle, virtue is necessary but not sufficient — what is also needed are external goods which are a matter of luck. For Plato, and the Stoics, it is both (Annas 1993), and modern versions of virtue ethics disagree further about the link between *eudaimonia* and what gives a character trait the status of being a virtue. Given the shared virtue ethical premise that “the good life is the virtuous life” we have so far three distinguishable views about what makes a character trait a virtue.

According to eudaimonism, the good life is the *eudaimon* life, and the virtues are what enable a human being to be *eudaimon* because the virtues just are those character traits that benefit their possessor in that way, barring bad luck. So there is a link between *eudaimonia* and what confers virtue status on a character trait. But according to pluralism, there is no such tight link. The good life is the morally meritorious life, the morally meritorious life is one that is responsive to the demands of the world (on a suitably moralized understanding of “the demands of the world” and is thereby the virtuous life because the virtues just are those character traits *in* virtue of which their possessor is thus responsive (Swanton 2003). And according to perfectionism or “naturalism”, the good life is the life characteristically lived by someone who is good *qua* human being, and the virtues enable their possessor to live such a life because the virtues just are those character traits that make their possessor good *qua* human being (an excellent specimen of her kind). Stanford Online Dictionary of Philosophy If you actually read this footnote it is quite possible you are living a eudaimon life or maybe have too much free time. This is the reward you've gained (sorry no extra credit). If you didn't read this entire footnote then you won't know we're calling you names like Fred, lazy, or solipsist behind your back.

she pauses to overhear the conversation
Sesquipedalianism is sententiously¹⁶ spouting in the hall
“Poesy¹⁷ as noted by literati¹⁸ is in the antechamber¹⁹ of expiry²⁰
all the better for us” he concludes with an air of superciliousness²¹
“Poetry isn’t dead! Why just yesterday I said:
In noumenon dominion shakes
Roquentin’s nauseated theme park,
the fugitive melody - Seeping
the external drift²²”
and so the verbal barrage continues, each
point and counterpoint escalating their logomachy²³

as the altercation reaches a fevered pitch
Logophilia howls the club needs a higher ceiling²⁴
at which point it would later be generally remarked
she took it to the mattresses²⁵

Now no self-respecting pedant²⁶ could bear the dishonor

¹⁵ **Sappho** (♣ /[sæfo](#)/; [Attic Greek Σαπφώ](#) [[sap](#)], [Aeolic Greek Ψάπφω](#) [[psap](#)]) was an [Ancient Greek](#) poet, born on the island of [Lesbos](#). Later Greeks included her in the list of [nine lyric poets](#). Her birth was sometime between 630 and 612 BC, and it is said that she died around 570 BC, but little is known for certain about her life. The bulk of her poetry, which was well-known and greatly admired throughout antiquity, has been lost, but her immense reputation has endured through surviving fragments. Or so says Wikipedia. joshua says: On Sappho [...] born of eros[ion...] resin and ruin [...] who is what Time did to her [...] the fragment suggests [...] ineffable who[le...] ©2011 @[expoetics](#) vandalized today

¹⁶ Sententiously – delivered in a pompous or moralizing manner – like this poem

¹⁷ Poesy: poetry darlings

¹⁸ Literati: fancy people, not you or me, who read the right books and discuss them, they hang with the intelligentsia, also now a variant of Scrabble™

¹⁹ Antechamber: vestibule

²⁰ Expiry – a frilly way to say death

²¹ Superciliousness: feeling or displaying haughty disdain says the free dictionary (free source=questionable data?)

²² From Arron Shilling’s excellent Atomic Charade to which I commented, “I have not read Sartre's Nausea but now I am intrigued and must do so. Antoine Roquentin is liberated, as I understand it, to engage in creating his own meaning in the world. A real existential crisis is apparent in this work. These lines feel seared into your being (sorry if the narrator is not you but a fictitious ‘I’ for effect) perhaps the Atomic Charade of the title. The cognitive dissonance is at a frenetic pace here: if the resurrection is fallacy, is entropy the only legacy of life? Where is integrity at the atomic level, ethical action birthed, when all you’re left with is emetic phenomenological concerns? Is Kant’s noumenal world real just completely unknowable or are we left with no beyond the knowable? You’ve certainly sparked the desire to reread and read new philosophical arguments. Your poem is finely wrought, heartbreaking, and it seeps all the way to the quarks.” You see how I am qualified to write the part of Sesquipedalianism ;).

²³ Summation because this poem is long enough as it is without adding pages of dialogue, you’ll be happier I didn’t in the end

²⁴ IQ tests have ceilings, the higher the ceiling the greater its ability to discern the upper echelons of intelligence. Presumably the society club they fight in would have the highest ceiling (ha! though maybe you don’t enjoy jokes that have to be explained)

²⁵ “Take it to the mattresses” Godfather © 1972 During mafia wars it isn’t safe to sleep at home.

²⁶ I’m getting tired of these notes! You’re getting tired think of the poor reader. Pedant: **noun**

especially within the hallowed halls of his own club
“‘Le coup de Jarnac’²⁷ won’t save you now missy
Choose your second! I choose Evariste Galois²⁸”

“This ain’t no ‘petticoat duel’²⁹
I don’t need a second; I was trained by Carlos Hathcock³⁰
our words will manifest our weapons
upon the field of honor”

Sesquipedalianism confident agrees
he shows up early to practice shots
his abstruse words conjure up
an English Flintlock Blunderbuss³¹
flared at the end, a gilded dragon thunder pipe
powder box and all
that misfires and kills his second

on the next practice shot he focuses
remembering he hung the ‘ten of diamonds’³²
surely he can kill a girl
and hits a bystander square in the jaw
Harry Wittington³³ winces
reloading he never makes
that third practice shot

Logophilia miles away
incants her power phrase
conjuring a .5MOA³⁴ 50 caliber
5000 meter range
Precision Sniper Rifle

1. a person who makes an excessive or inappropriate display of learning. 2. a person who overemphasizes rules or minor details. 3. a person who adheres rigidly to book knowledge without regard to common sense.

4. *Obsolete* . a schoolmaster. Sayeth dictionary.com

²⁷ ‘Le coup de Jarnac’ a legend arising from a French duel that lead people to believe there was a move an amateur swordsman could pull on a master to win.

²⁸ Evariste Galois a mathematician who, at 20, died in a duel under suspicious circumstances!

²⁹ The Petticoat Duel was fought 1792: Lady Almeria Braddock versus Mrs. Elphinstone – don’t believe me then look it up - them bitches took it to the mat!

³⁰ Carlos Hathcock trained snipers at the Marine Corps Scout Sniper School in Quantico after distinguished service in Vietnam.

³¹ England 18th Century; a blunderbuss is a muzzle-loading firearm with a flared, trumpet-like barrel and is the predecessor to the shotgun; known for its inaccuracy.

³² ‘ten of diamonds’ is the nickname given to the VP of Iraq Taha Yassin Ramadan who was hanged for his crimes. In 2002 he suggested that President George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein resolve their differences though a duel

³³ Harry Wittington was shot in the face by Vice President Dick Cheney in 2006 (no, I am not making this up)

³⁴ MOA = minute of angle

calculates the range, wind direction,
wind velocity, air density, and elevation
with a single shot
pierces Sesquipedalianism's brain stem

She says "now kiddies remember:
'Talent hits a target no one else can hit;
Genius hits a target no one else can see'³⁵"

Or I could have avoided this confounding,
annotated, curious, satirical and long winded tale
and simply said:
Logophilia shoots Sesquipedalianism dead!
or alternately poetry beats pedantry
(or even simpler as Brian
@dVerse already knows, 'love wins!';)

(but where's the fun in that?)

³⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer (Who? Oh, go read a book.)