Serendipity

We at Blog Wyrm thought we would build on the theme from last month’s intro column, which was on the [Beauty and Hope of Summer](https://www.blogwyrm.com/2023/06/30/issue-138-the-beauty-and-hope-of-summer/). As we’ve been poking around in an outside world that has largely gone back to business as usual, it is gratifying to see how many beautiful, natural events serendipitously presented themselves to us. Creation and providence are communicating to us all the time if we just take the moment to listen.

Take for example this photo of the sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean. The ocean and the sun, of course, move quite slow in human terms and, while lovely, provide little in the way of a surprise but note how the seagull quite kindly provided the dynamic silhouette that provides that special pop.

\*\*image\*\*

Likewise, clouds, sky, and the setting sun are common enough but rarely do they conspire to produce a backlit light show just after a set of thunderstorms as was captured below.

\*\*image\*\*

So, we recommend that all of us put down our manmade distractions from time to time and enjoy what is really worth enjoy.

Now onto the columns.

A human being, regardless of how ‘smart’ or how ‘dumb’, has an amazing capacity for intelligent behaviors. One of the most profound behaviors, and one almost always taken for granted, is the power of speech. Not just the ability to syllabify without sounding like those electronic voices from electronic toys of yesteryear (yes, Speak-and-Spell, we’re talking about you) but the real talent to convey and understand meaning. The Winograd Schema provides a set of sentences whose meaning is quite easy for even the most clueless of us to get while providing a stiff challenge for artificially intelligent systems. Come and join [Aristotle2Digital](http://aristotle2digital.blogwyrm.com/?p=1646) in exploring this interesting intersection between human speech and cognition with natural language processing and machine learning.

To paraphrase *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul* by Douglas Adams: *it can hardly be a coincidence that no language on earth has ever produced the expression ‘as smart as a politician’. Some are stupid. Some are very stupid.* *Some attain a degree of stupidity that can only be the result of a special effort*. Case in point: the state legislature in the golden state of California. As this month’s [CommonCents](http://commoncents.blogwyrm.com/?p=1236) details, through a variety of special efforts the public servants of Sacramento have managed to produce an economic environment perfect to screw over the new home buyer. Two of the state’s biggest home insurance policy providers, State Farm (largest) and Allstate (4th largest) are no longer accepting new home owners policies while other insurers are limiting the ones they provide – all because of a variety of measures designed to protect the home owner.

Computing a theoretical model is one thing, putting the theory into dynamic action with a simulation is entirely another. This month, [UndertheHood](http://underthehood.blogwyrm.com/?p=2096) takes the hard sphere dynamical theory developed within the context of classical statistical mechanics and extends it to a simulation. Along the way, an additional set of considerations, falling within the realm of computational physics, are developed for handling a world in finite time steps. The resulting time evolution allows us to visualize how an out of thermal equilibrium thermalizes into the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution and, once reached, how it fluctuates around the equilibrium.

Enjoy!