

On Leibniz's Monadology: A Critique of The Cosmological Argument

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Abstract

Coming back to the use of typefaces in electronic publishing: many of the new typographers receive their knowledge and information about the rules of typography from books, from computer magazines or the instruction manuals which they get with the purchase of a PC or software. There is not so much basic instruction, as of now, as there was in the old days, showing the differences between good and bad typographic design. Many people are just fascinated by their PC's tricks, and think that a widely-praised program, called up on the screen, will make everything automatic from now on.

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Contents

Introduction	2
References	3

Introduction

Coming back to the use of typefaces in electronic publishing: many of the new typographers receive their knowledge and information about the rules of typography from books, from computer magazines or the instruction manuals which they get with the purchase of a PC or software. There is not so much basic instruction, as of now, as there was in the old days, showing the differences between good and bad typographic design. Many people are just fascinated by their PC's tricks, and think that a widely-praised program, called up on the screen, will make everything automatic from now on. (Merton, 1979) Donald Knuth has spent the past several years working on a system allowing him to control many aspects of the design of his forthcoming books—from the typesetting and layout down to the very shapes of the letters! Seldom has an author had anything remotely like this power to control the final appearance of his or her work. Knuth's $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ typesetting system has become well-known and is available in many countries around the world. By contrast, his METAFONT system for designing families of typefaces has not become as well known or as available.

In his article “The Concept of a Meta-Font”, Knuth sets forth for the first time the underlying philosophy of METAFONT, as well as some of its products. Not only is the concept exciting and clearly well executed, but in my opinion the article is charmingly written as well. However, despite my overall enthusiasm for Knuth's idea and article, there are some points in it that I feel might be taken wrongly by many readers, and since they are points that touch close to my deepest interests in artificial intelligence and esthetic theory, I felt compelled to make some comments to clarify certain important issues raised by “The Concept of a Meta-Font”. (Simon, 1997) Thus, I came to the conclusion that the designer of a new system must not only be the implementer and first large-scale user; the designer should also write the first user manual.

The separation of any of these four components would have hurt $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ significantly. If I had not participated fully in all these activities, literally hundreds of improvements would never have been made, because I would never have thought of them or perceived why they were important.

But a system cannot be successful if it is too strongly influenced by a single person. Once the initial design is complete and fairly robust, the real test begins as people with many different viewpoints undertake their own experiments. (Likert, 1948) This nation, turning 100 years old, had no *Odyssey*, no St. George slaying the dragon, no Prometheus. The emerging American genius for making a lot of money was a poor substitute for King Arthur and his knights (although the Horatio Alger myth of rags to riches was good for a lot of mileage). Without a mythology and set of ancient heroes to call its own, America had to manufacture its heroes. So the mythmaking machinery of nineteenth-century American media created a suitable heroic archetype in the cowboys of the Wild West. The image was of the undaunted cattle drivers living a life of reckless individualism, braving the elements, staving off brutal Indian attacks. Or of heroic lawmen dueling with six-guns in the streets at high noon. This artificial Wild West became America's Iliad. (Weber and Henderson, 2012) This nation, turning 100 years old, had no *Odyssey*, no St. George slaying the dragon, no Prometheus. The emerging American genius for making a lot of money was a poor substitute for King Arthur and his knights (although the Horatio Alger myth of rags to riches was good for a lot of mileage). Without a mythology and set of ancient heroes to call its own, America had to manufacture its heroes. So the mythmaking machinery of nineteenth-century American media created a suitable heroic archetype in the cowboys of the Wild West. The image was of the undaunted cattle drivers living a life of reckless individualism, braving the elements, staving off brutal Indian attacks. Or of heroic lawmen dueling with six-guns in the streets at high noon. This artificial Wild West became America's Iliad. (Merleau-Ponty, 1996)

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