

On Rejection

...for centuries of an elegant geometric language

Gary Harper

My paper, *Meaning-Imposers versus Meaning-Derivers*, was first rejected by the esteemed *American Journal of Physics* in January, 2008. “Read our editorial policy” the editor wrote, “our readers are not interested in a new interpretation of Geometric Algebra.” (Quoting from memory, since I had rejected his rejection letter.) New interpretation, sir?!—the whole point of the paper was to avoid *imposing* an interpretation, thereby *deriving* “the keystone of the entire structure of mathematics” to echo the hero of the paper.

The editor had the grace to say that he considered himself an associate member of my “organization” (his quotes, referring to my *Institute for Nagging Doubt* organization, unquoted, no less serious than the *Rejecta Mathematica* organization, unquoted.) I happen to admire this particular editor, enough not to embarrass him by name, and would be proud to have him as a full member, if he would actually read my paper. (Okay, he had a point: it contained mostly mathematics, not physics, even tho it did have *torque* in it, and *linear force*, *angular velocity*, not to mention *balance point*.)

The second rejection occurred in February from the august *American Mathematical Monthly*. This time my paper received a good editorial review, as I know from the kind rejection letter and from concurrent hits on my website where the ideas are leisurely developed. “I have reviewed your submission in detail with our editorial board” the rejector wrote, “and we have reluctantly concluded that it does not have broad appeal to our diverse audience. We have only a limited amount of space available each month, and are forced by the enormous volume of submission to reject many fine papers.” (Quoting from memory.)

Where did I go wrong? Perhaps I should not have called professional mathematicians, in the first paragraph, “meaning-imposers” who generate “inconsistencies and confusions”. Perhaps I should not have asked “Where did I go wrong?” on page 61; or, “Have I made another blunder?” on page 62. Perhaps I should not have given equal time to the blunders of my Geometric Algebra heroes, especially the living ones; or should not have written, “*points have not yet become full-fledged geometric objects*, like scalars!” on page 68. Maybe I used too many exclamation marks.

Please tell me, sirs, what to change because this paper is dead serious. It is an attempt to introduce the reader to the very expressive geometric language that germinated in the fertile young mind of Hermann Gunther Grassmann in the early 1800s. Altho we have recently understood a good half of his language, the other half, which is just as good—or perhaps better since it is the foundation—remains unknown because it seems strange. But it really isn’t, what *really* is strange is the perverse historical trajectory that makes it seem strange.

Just by reading this paper you have no hope of becoming articulate with Grassmann’s full language. For that you will of course have to also read his two books and play with the ideas. And good luck with that—it took me a good ten years to really understand his fundamentals, and then another good ten years to make them cohere in my mind. So, if this paper succeeds in its purpose, you will have twenty good years in front of you.