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Locked in Functions: A Short Poem for Robert Langlands

Virgilio A. Rivas

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Here was a thinker, with nature
tucked in his hands. It's not like
the pebbles, not those of the
wreckages
of stars a child could count
when coaxed to climb, eyes
dazzled by the light of the morning sun.
For once,
let's divine a mystery:
In his hands, a version of nature,
invisible, doubtless, doubles into
a dreamlike beauty.

Take a modular of ' $A = x$ '
folding onto ' B ' eons later.
Or take the same ' x ' apart from time
as doubling as always as the same
mystery, the same uncharted 'continent'
before which stands the prize of beauty;
the third in his walks that doubles
 A/B into the same 'footpath'-
soul for mathematicians, energy for physics.
It's the math that makes him dream of fields.

But just as when the series gathered up a storm,
the old man recoiled. Unlike automorphic
forms dreams do not leak into physics;
proofs are for functions (take a Rosetta stone,
fold it by three).

They repulse experiments, but keep
the questions by motives.
He who looks right through an empty
universe gains the secret: Prime numbers
hidden from sight, specters for the deep,
overlays for veiled affinities.

This is the same nature on the same page
but written three times over.
Einstein was in his room.
His space was a realm of functions.
Everywhere but the physics' region.

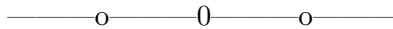
Take my name off it.
He once told a young student.
We climb geometry, not the universe.
Then he recalled an incident
in his youth.

His dream could have been
an empty wastebasket rivaled only
by spreading mimeographs. In his old age,
he was asked—

If things fit together,
why avoid the question of beauty?
Isn't beauty the path on which
the 'here to there' makes 'walking'
reveal a pattern from chaos?

Warning his listeners that only God
knows the motive behind
the question of beauty, he asks,
"What would you do with all
the information on a zeta-function?"
Assume too much and dive into errors.
The old man advised.
Assume too less, even passions
won't work. That, "I have none."
The last thing he said.

That, for one to cross a space with math
functions must have none.



Virgilio A. Rivas, Ph.D. is an independent researcher from the Philippines. His research interests intersect with natural philosophy and social science. Rivas is affiliated with Polytechnic University of the Philippines and University of Santo Tomas.