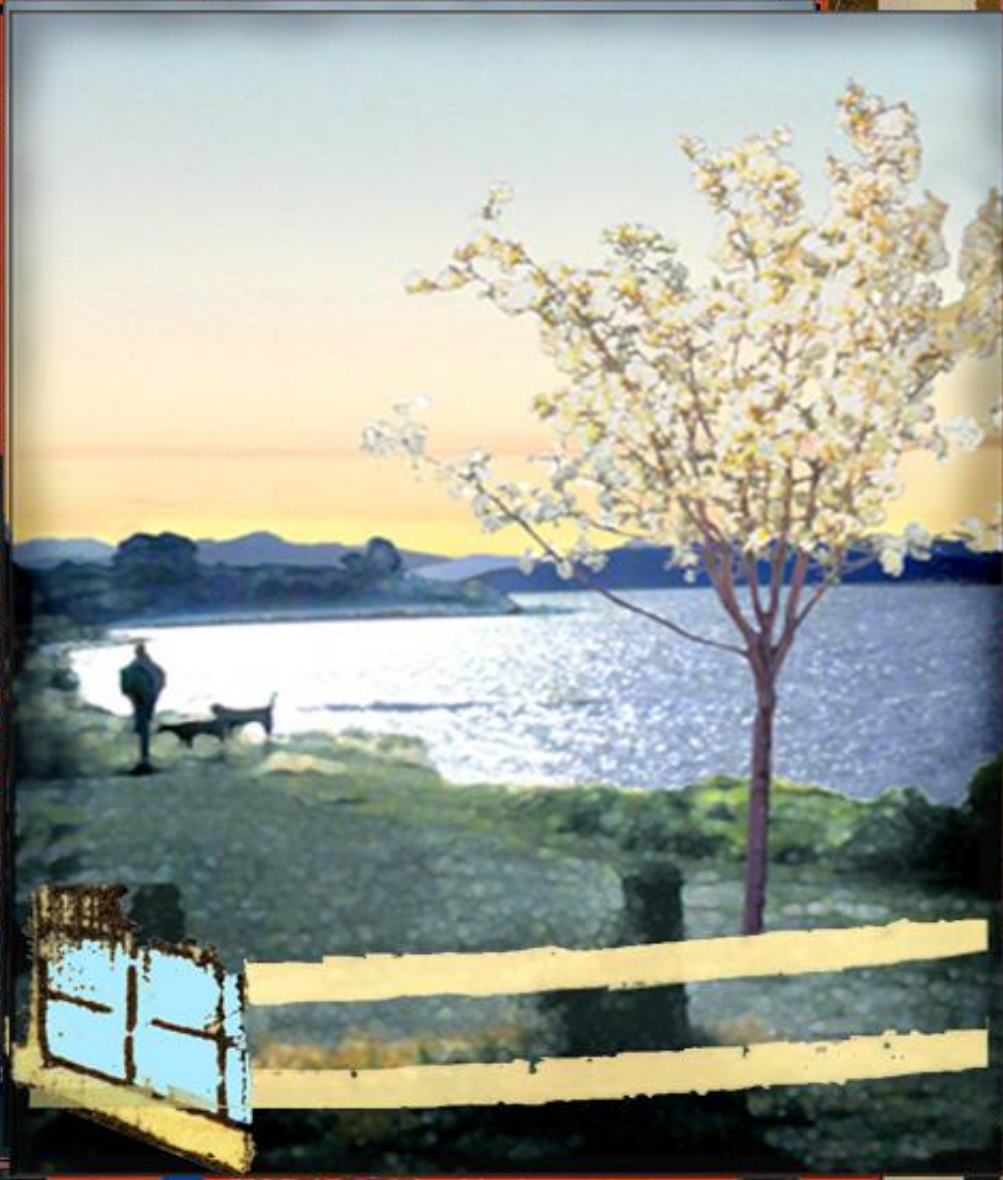


Accessorizing Mememes and Qualia

The Alphabet of Conceptualization



An Incomplete Pataphysic Sortie

or that **Wells Fargo agents had cheated him** out of a mine he owned several years prior to that. So with a shotgun, and a flour sack with eye holes pulled over his head, he became the infamous California highwayman-poet, specializing exclusively in Wells Fargo stagecoaches and their strongboxes. In August of 1877, at a successful holdup near Duncan Mills, he left his famous explanatory poem for the Wells Fargo bankers, which he signed, calling himself Black Bart: "I've labored long and hard for bread; for honor and for riches. ... Too long you've tread upon my corns; you fine-haired sons of bitches."

Bowles' contemporary, Charles Peirce (remembered as the father of Pragmatism) was a fellow of the erudite William James crowd at Harvard. He invented and named the modern science of *Semiotics*: the study of signs, and signals, and referential meanings. As part of that effort Peirce coined the cognitive psychology term *quale* in 1866 (from the Latin root for qual-ity.)

Johnson, however, doesn't really describe or explain her own meaning. It's tenuously engaging, but vacantly non-descript in that regard. It was that consideration of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a perspectival Rorschach test that got her to start thinking about her bandied didactic conundrum regarding whether non-descript (or non-referential) meaning per-se is more of a meme or more of an ablated quale.

Peirce's quales, or more properly qualia, are the most basic sentiences or experiences possible, Johnson says: like red, hard, cold, difficult, and salty, etc. Neuro-psychologists have called qualia the alphabet of consciousness. They're the leptons of awareness, the smallest single chunk of sentient-awareness one can detect. The awareness of red per-se is a quale. Conscious awareness of the quale red is integral to all possible ways of consciously experiencing or conceiving redness.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the popular word *meme* in 1976. It essentially refers to a packaged unit of meaning which can be transmitted from person to person. To continue the particle-physics metaphor: qualia are the indivisible smallest particular chunks of conscious awareness; and memes are the complex molecules of meanings which are ultimately composed of clustered quales.

The Renaissance inherited strong linear thinking, syllogistic logic, contrapposto, and single-point mathematical perspective from long previous Classical times. Picasso blew that all away in *Demoiselles*. There is no trace of contrapposto, or any of the Greeks' linearly isomorphic direct mapping whatsoever between Picasso's referential work and the group of ladies it represents. That painting is a second-degree permissive metaphor.

Expanding on the vicarial ontology of qualia, Johnson explains how they're fundamentally metaphoric in nature, allowing consciousness to reference the external world; and how it's not theoretically possible for the subject of a metaphor, a word, or any other kind of referential symbol to ever conflate in a perfect linear way with its own object. Never a perfect match; and sometimes (particularly in postmodern art and literature) a relationship between the subject and object of a metaphor or other symbol may be so obscure as to not be initially obvious at all. Or it might even be designed with random qualia, or a permanent vacancy in part, or even all, of the meaning.

Pataphysics is about half-addressed allegories, augmenting adjectives, generic signifiers, and deliberately focusing on exaggerated advantages in the fact that all words, metaphors, and other symbolic or referential communication can, at best, be only fuzzy representations. They can never amount to more than some significant flavor or degree of allegory or metaphor, which will remain in an unresolved