

Opinion Article

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Ode to Science: With Eternal Thanks to Rudyard Kipling

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If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you.
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too.
If you can wait but not be tired by waiting
And yet don't look too good nor talk too wise.

If you can embrace the subtle ways
That Nature constantly displays.
If you can explore distant galaxies in every detail
And analyse their content as blind men read braille.
If you can dream and invert the Periodic Table,
If you can think and extend it as far as you are able.
If you can put two and two together
And place Hydrogen and Helium by each other.

If you can force fields and energy to serve you
And locally reverse time and entropy aplenty,
Wilczek's asymptotic freedoms to enjoy.
If you can picture how patterns within the Table
Allow neutrons and protons to intertwine and coalesce
All manner of fusion, nucleosynthesis and elements possess
To produce Wigner's magic numbers in excess.

If you can explain how radioactive decays
Occur by such varied pathways
In so many mysterious times and byways.
If you can entangle every quantum state
Then in an instant allow them to consolidate
And all matter known to man create.

If you can meet with gravity and quantum theory
And treat those two imposters just the same.
If you can apply mathematics stochastically yet with serendipity
To show how Nature develops empirical yet orderly tranquillity.

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to trap men's minds and create indifference.
If you can talk to chemists and keep your virtue
Or walk with astrophysicists nor lose the common touch
If all scientists count with you but none too much.
If you can follow quantum pathways

Familiar to bacteria, plants; all manner of beings
That photosynthesize and thrive.

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds worth of distance run,
Ladies and Gentlemen -- yours is the Universe and all that's in it
And which is more -- you'll be enlightened empowered and inspired.

And yet and yet
Nature's mysteries still conspire like Heisenberg's Uncertainty
To tunnel, superpose, entangle and decohere
Within its very own quantum world so near.
To cloak its dynamic evolution
Allowing only to reveal at any one instant
What humans can observe by thought, action, inquiry or experiment.
Maybe masquerading as fermionic or bosonic phase transitions
To be illuminated by future insights
Derived from large data telescopes and artificial intelligence.

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