

Apple Romance. Quest for an alternative theory of gravity

I know what gravity is. I learned it in school. I might not be able to recite Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation, but I do remember the apple that fell on his head.

For a few centuries after 1666 - *annus mirabilis* - the same apple lorded over everybody's head. That until Albert Einstein came to prove that space and time are not static and absolute, but dynamic and relative. Gravity does not exist; gravity is an illusion.

My high school physics teacher never really managed to fully explain the theory of relativity to his pupils and himself. He had stopped at Newton. And I with him. ("It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry," A.E. wrote in 1949.)

While I observe the metal plates deforming under the pressure of the liquid plaster, I see the apple rolling uselessly at my feet. An original, sovereign form of energy is at play here; one which seems not to care about the concepts of mass and weight force, and how they are supposed to interact with each other. How am I supposed to interact with them? ("The attempt to erase physicality is, for me, highly problematic," T.S. told me in 2020.)

I become aware of the ignorance that has been handed down to me. It's not muscles that make it strong. It's not bars that make it straight. If I really want to penetrate the process at stake beneath the epidermis, I should consider avoiding the path of least resistance. I can start by googling how gravity has otherwise been explained. Maybe something like "can gravity be romantic" would do.

At the hundredth tab I open in my browser, I lose track of what I have been looking for. I got distracted by reading that the bite (byte?) in the Apple logo is there for scale, so that it cannot be mistaken for a cherry.

What I eventually find exceeds my expectations. Serendipity can still occur in the realm of the algorithm! And surely in the realm of the artist. But of course, the most notable example of serendipity remains Newton being struck by a falling apple. (Thump.)

Light

expansive

(universe dissipates)

□

MAT'TER

□

Gravity

contractive

(universe collapses)

Here is the fundamental formula of the *Naturphilosophie* by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. In opposition to the Newtonian picture of matter as constituted by inert particles, Schelling argues for it as a constant negotiation between active energies that engage in opposition to one another. ("Without contradiction, there would be no life, no movement, no progress, a deadly slumber of all forces," F.W.J.S. wrote in 1811.)

Hold on! The apple is proving worth the headache. Gravity, as the physical weight that precedes light as its dark foundation, opposes resistance to nature's free productivity. Gravity grounds the matter and limits its desire to produce indefinitely. By doing so, it saves the universe from dispersing into the shapeless chaos of its own dynamism.

While plaster dust fills the room, my vision clears up. If one force won, the trinket would explode or crumble. It's the combination of the differences that keeps it together.

Now, before I continue in my quest for an alternative theory of gravity. Let me ask you, Sir Newton: how do you fit such a throb in that mechanistic box of yours? You can bolster and prop it, and still, it will deform, react, readjust. It has its own *Potenz*. Sure, you can stretch it so to make it look smooth and proper. Yet if you look beyond the corners, you can see it overflow. It slips. Which, I would say, is more than just a metaphor: it's an image. ("I have a recurrent mental image of things slipping out of my hands," T.S. told me in 2020.)

Things slip and fall because of gravity. All things, including those with no mass. In the last book he finishes in his lifetime, Schelling highlights the correspondence between gravity (*Schwerkraft*) as the weight of the matter and melancholy (*Schwermut*) as the weight of the soul.

I wish I learned *this* in school: melancholy is the world's original condition. The productivity of nature and the creativity of the spirit are governed by the same intrinsic structure. A structure that is hard to lift, hard to carry because it is impregnated, heavy with life. ("In this melancholy is founded the sympathy of man with nature," F.W.J.S. wrote in 1810.)

Hence, that raft of magentas is not light by definition. Accordingly to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Color Wheel*, magenta is *schön*. In his earlier *Temperamentenrose*, which matches colors with associated psychological characteristics, magenta is grouped with violet and red under the melancholic temperament.

For Newton, color is a scientific measurement. For Goethe, it is a subjective experience perceived differently by each viewer. How many shades of magenta can light kindle at once? ("Colors are light's suffering and joy," J.W.G. wrote in 1810.)

The apple is ripe. In no particular order:

gravity;
light;
magenta;
beauty;
melancholy

are its components.

The results achieved by physics in the decades following Schelling's treatises demonstrated their nonsense on a scientific level. His doctrine has longly been marked as ambiguous and unclear. But hey. He saw the world's soul where Newton could only see the world's clock. He borrowed the terms *gravity* and *light* and changed them radically. I hope poetic visions are still worth the headache of reading twice.

Bearing this in mind, I would now like to invite you, Sir Newton, and you, Mr. high school teacher, and all of you, dear guests, to take a bite of this apple and chew on its ontological queerness for the space of your visit.

After a few nibbles, you will realize that your apple does not taste like others you have savored before. Or like your neighbor's. It borrows the form of an apple and changes it radically. Swallow it, and all the *-isms* will drop on somebody else's head. You might find out you like cherries best.