

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This issue comprises four articles. I hope there is something of interest for all.

We all like a paradox, and one of my favourites is the Unexpected Hanging. The judge, passing sentence of death, wishing to make the prisoner suffer as much as possible, tells him he will be hanged at dawn one day in the next working week, but does not specify which day so that the hanging will be unexpected. No worries, says the lawyer, the sentence can't be carried out: the last day is Friday, but then you would know after dawn on Thursday that Friday was the only possible day, so it wouldn't be unexpected. No, the last possible day must be Thursday. But then, if you survive into Wednesday, you would know Thursday's the day, so that wouldn't be unexpected either. No, the last day, really, is Wednesday. But then, on Tuesday etc... so Wednesday is out, likewise Tuesday, and Monday. You can't be hanged unexpectedly. The prisoner rests easy. Until, unexpectedly, on Wednesday, they take him out and hang him. The paradox can be formulated using any promised surprise event, such as the unexpected exam. In this guise, Sainsbury deals with it in depth (1), including nine pages of challenging symbolic logic, but with no agreed solution. In the first article, Edward suggests a novel solution. It is agreed that the teacher must fail, no unexpected exam can be held. Her options are to give no exam or to give one which is not unexpected. The options are equally rational as attempts to keep her promise as nearly as possible. The pupils' mistake is to assume no exam can occur, so that they don't expect one, making it unexpected after all when it does happen.

Moreno follows with a defence of the view that truth is always relative to some context rather than ever being absolute – radical epistemological relativism (RER) as he terms it. Philosophers, as truth-seekers, bristle at relativism. “The first refuge of the scoundrel” as Scruton terms it (2). The prospect of my truth is mine and yours is yours and there's an end of it, of no facts only interpretations, and of nothing bring true period, is alarming. But Moreno reassures. Necessary truths survive, the context being all possible worlds; likewise contingent truths in the context of the actual world. And he deftly counters the traditional argument against relativism that it is self-defeating. So, having come to terms with truth as disquotational, it seems we can also rest easy with truth as relative. Truth remains the property of a proposition that entails the fact (purportedly) stated.

The third article, also by Moreno, reminds us that the quantum vacuum is something not nothing, so that the spontaneous emergence of virtual particles is not a refutation of the causal productive principle (“whatever begins to exist has a cause”), one of the expressions of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. And so, even if our universe (whether unique or one of many) arose as a quantum fluctuation, and has net zero mass-energy and charge allowing indefinite persistence without violating the Uncertainty Principle, we still haven’t explained why there is something rather than nothing. We need to explain emergence of the universe from absolutely nothing.

The final article by myself deals with the self as a construction. The dialogue speaks for itself and I need say no more about it here.

## References

1. Sainsbury R.M. (2009) *Paradoxes*, p107-120. Cambridge University Press
2. Scruton R. (1995) Some More –isms, *Modern Philosophy*, p32

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Email: [ingridandcraigskinner@btinternet.com](mailto:ingridandcraigskinner@btinternet.com)