

## The Calculus Reservatus of Charles Stein



([link](#))  
CStein ([mail](#)):

### The Calculus Reservatus

I devised the glyphs for my *Calculus Reservatus* as a notational device for my own use in meditation practice. Each glyph articulates an aspect of meditation, and their combination makes it possible to hold in mind certain relations, to formulate intentions, and to establish foci for meditational work.

The system functions like a logical calculus in that there are a series of elements and a series of operators, constants, and so forth. But actually no calculations are performed with it?there is no sign for equivalence, no transformation rules, or anything of the sort. The system is, in a sense, pre-logical. It attempts to hold in mind only certain very elementary matters that over the years I have found to be of regular concern in my practice. Because the elements are not truly objectified or reified entities, I call them "quasi-elements." Similarly, I call the operators "quasi-operators."

I have attached words to them, but it should be understood that these words carry no denotations. They "mean" just what they suggest at the moment of their deployment in a specific operation. They are unabashedly subjective, though nevertheless public signs, and I imagine that other persons with similar meditational interests might be able to work with them. In any case, they seem to do their work in that philosophical no-man's land reputed not to exist: a private language.

The hyperlinks below are a complete elaboration, with examples:

Texts

*A Calculus Reservatus*  
*Construing the Glyphs*  
*The First Distinction (response to Chris Mann)*

Examples

*Milton Babbit*

*Attentions 2*

*Inquiry into Inquiry*

*Inquiry into Being Attention To*

*The Fool*

*The Chariot*

*An Ace of Birds*

Suitable for printing

*72 pt Glyphs (the quasi elements and operators)*  
*Glyphs of the additional signs (ken, variable, brackets)*

*Place mat -- 2 pages of closed a's*

*Place mat -- Awareness*

*Place mat -- The ken*

CS

6.25.2005 11:05am

([link](#))

CStein ([mail](#)):

*14. Advertise that you are performing a recital of John Cage's "4'33"" (Four Minutes, Thirty-Three Seconds) at a theatre or auditorium. After the audience is seated, raise the curtain to show a piano bench and no piano. Walk onto the stage and sit on the bench. Begin playing a pre-recorded version of the piece as performed before a live audience. At the end of the recording, stand up and leave the stage.*

The above is the fourteenth of Michael Harold's "Forty-six conceptual art pieces" from [Red Moon](#)

It serves as an illustration of the principle that my Fool card wishes to

show: that there are potentially infinite differentiations within the absolutely undifferentiable; and that potentially it is these impossible distinctions that constitute the potentiality for differentiation in the world. This is also the story of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life: the enigma of the Simplicity of the Eyn Sof: does it contain or extrude the principles of Creation?

6.30.2005 5:49am

[\(link\)](#)

CStein ([mail](#)):

I sent the following email to Mr. Harold after posting the comment above.

Not to be overly mysterious about my remark about your Cage proposal: the Fool in my and in any esoteric tarot pack usually represents that site in a mystical system where distinctions have shaded away and being or the ground of being or ultimate reality is indicated as being beyond duality and beyond the possibility of making distinctions. Yet given the multiplicity of seemingly parallel systems of this sort, there seem to be different possible emphases in the albeit illicit symbolization of that ultimate a-topos. In my "calculus" this situation itself appears by a set of variations on the theme of that which is outside all representations: I give as the Fool card in the calculus an empty card, empty everted brackets, the totality of all ultimates (dark star), the bleeding of an entity with its background, the slight dissonance between an entity that is one with its ground and the ground, the back ground itself. Your suggestion that an internal multiplication of the "silence" in Cage's piece seemed to me to parallel my interest here. I once performed in a memorial for Cage on Cage's birthday in a performance of 4'33" where different people did it on different instruments: I did it on a recorder, as I remember. But your suggestion is inherently more interesting and from the point of view of my idea more rich.

Michael replied:

When asked how he came up with the idea of the tetrahedron as a primary geometric ordering mechanism for the universe, Bucky Fuller said that as a small child he and his classmates were given some peas and toothpicks and told to make something with them. So he made something that was the same no matter which way he turned it and didn't fall apart. He said he did it mostly by feel because no one yet knew (including his parents) just how bad his eyesight was. I had a similar experience in childhood. It is one of my strongest memories. I was standing in my backyard early one morning, about 3-4 years old, wearing only a pair of khaki shorts, with the moon still in the sky behind me and the sun rising behind a row of trees on the horizon. I was staring into the dark and shadowed limbs and leaves of an oak tree several hundred feet away as the sun hit came up behind it and

its dark mass of limbs and leaves broke into a thousand tiny, brilliant stars, or suns, or mirrors of nothing but themselves. My mind was empty - without words. Yet, in a single moment, I was instantly aware that the grass was cold and wet around my ankles, that I could smell the grass and the trees and a bird's nest nearby and many other things I could not identify. I could feel every inch of my skin and the cool air entering my nose and touching the palms of my hands and my fingertips. And all of these things were one and the same. I could hear the light from the sun in the limbs and leaves of the trees. I could smell the coldness of the grass on my ankles. I could see the cacophony/euphony of music rising all around me like an aurora.

Regarding the 4'33" piece. I was actually sitting on a bench waiting for a bus and I thought, "While I'm sitting here, I'll do 4'33". The question was, was I really doing 4'33" or was I just sitting on a bench waiting for a bus?" Then I thought, "It's 4'33" if you're sitting on a bench in an auditorium of art savvy people. And if you record yourself sitting there and then do it again are you really doing it or are you just sitting on a bench? What if you record yourself sitting on a bench waiting for a bus and then sit on a bench in an auditorium and play that recording?" That's when I realized that all art is artifactual or must be made so to be recognized as art by the larger community. But the artifact is not only the physicality of the art in time, but the artifactuality of the art in the minds of the people who recognize it as such. And that is always an infinitely recursive act, no matter where or when or under what circumstances it occurs. There's no escaping the simple fact of being and the multiplicity that results from trying to poke it with your finger. Which brings us back to Parmenides.

7.4.2005 1:34am

[\(link\)](#)

William Breeze:

[Perdurabo's Two Shillings](#)

7.4.2005 12:40pm

[\(link\)](#)

bialy:

[Bracket The Terrible Eye in the Sky](#)

the reconfiguration above is derived, in part, from [this one](#).

more than one year ago, mikhail horowitz sent me the image in that url, and i forwarded it to dr. stein thinking he too might enjoy it. not exactly. he wrote me back to say it was the twin of the cover of a science fiction paperback that was in his house as a child and that had given him nightmares for months when he first saw it more than 50 years ago.

(as harry might have said..."i had *nooooo* idea".)

this morning i got it in mind (so to speak) to see if i could red(r)eam  
the cosmic eye for my friend.

(the final image has many connections to the reconfigured eye [here](#),  
*in the piece, Yom Kippur, 2005.*

10.25.2005 1:36pm

([link](#))

CStein ([mail](#)):

Vis a vis The Terrible Eye:

JUSTICE (Trump 11)

From the beginning

The Style Master Mask

Intolerable?

From the beginning

the Terrible Eye.

At the heart

of purple stone

that Leper Master

tries to keep the ledger straight?

A certain impertinent vigor

claps the head shut.

This is from my poems for Rachel Pollack's Shining Woman Tarot. (The entire deck and its commentaries under the title of [Tarot and Counter-Tarot: The Thinking Person's Prescription for Happenstance, Cartomancy, and The Configurative Sublime](#), will post eventually.)

The point is, the terrible eye that is not in or of time, renders everywhere. It belongs to your face before your mother was born, as the saying goes. Sorry about "before." It's the best they could do given the CIRCUMSTANCE.

11.22.2005 9:43pm