

A Reply to Professor Kuzmanovich's Random Late-Night Thoughts

Akiko Nakata

Zoran, thank you very much for your illuminating comment. I am deeply grateful to you for generously sharing your thoughts though you were not in good condition.

Your comprehensible explanations so helpfully make up for deficiencies in my discussion that all the participants, including those who might not be familiar with Moore's Paradox and Wittgenstein's arguments regarding the paradox, will be able to grasp the points of them. "I am female, but I don't believe that I am female" is the best variation of "p and I don't believe that p" I have ever seen!

The fictional "versioning" of the slowly revealed the difference between belief and assertion, which you indicated as a possibility that Moore's paradox opens up and its examples you found in "That In Aleppo Once" are really amazing. I have never thought about that. And Iago's belief and disbelief of Emilia's betrayal is a telling example of Moore's Paradox.

I only thought about the doubling of the characters in the last line of Othello:

And say besides that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus. [He stabs himself] (5.2.354-358)

In the scene in Aleppo are a Turk, a Venetian and Othello involved, and Othello helps the Venetian by killing the Turk who has beaten the Venetian. In the last scene, Othello

commits suicide to punish himself for murdering Desdemona, where Othello is himself and the Turk he punished in Aleppo. Desdemona is the Venetian beaten by the Turk [Othello], and also the Turk who was strangled by Othello in Aleppo. It did not occur to me that I could relate these doublings or amalgams to Moore's paradox.

As for Alexander Chernyshevsky's last words, I compared it with Wittgenstein's last words in my note ¹ and discussed it as an example of the hereafter paradoxically revealed in a Japanese essay "Death and Concealment: *Transparent Things* and Other Works."² However, I did not discuss his words as related to Moore's Paradox.

Thank you very much for reminding me of another Nabokov version of Moore's Paradox in *The Gift*. I had completely forgotten it. What Fyodor's father experiences at the base of a rainbow, which follows the description, seems to have pushed it aside in my memory.

For your information, I add an image of the first folio of *Othello*. The page shows *The Tragedie of Othello, the Moore of Venice*.

THE TRAGEDIE OF
Othello, the Moore of Venice.

Actus Primus. Scœna Prima.

Enter Rodarigo, and Iago.

Rodarigo.

Enter tell me, I take it much unkindly
That thou (Iago) who hast had my purse,
As if y^e strings were thine, should'st know of this.
But you'l not heare me. If euer I did dream
Of such a matter, abhorre me.

Rods. Thou'ld'it me,
Thou didst hold him in thy hate.

Iago. Despise me

If I do not. Three Great-ones of the Cittie,
(In personall suite to make me his Lieutenant)
Off-capt to him: and by the faith of man
I know my price, I am worth no worlfe a place,
But he (as louing his owne pride, and purposes)
Euaues them, with a bumbast Circumstance,
Horribly flufft with Epithires of warre,
Non-lytes my Mediators. For certes, iates he,
I haue already chose my Officer. And what was he?
For-looth, a great Arithmatician,
One *Michael Cassio, a Florentine,*
(A Fellow almost damn'd in a faire Wife)
That neuer let a Squadron in the Field,
Nor the deuision of a Battaile knowes
More then a Spinster. Vnlesse the Bookish Theoricke:
Wherein the Tongued Confuls can propole
As Masterly as he. Meere prale (without practise)
Is all his Souldierhip. But he (Sir) had th' elections
And I of whom his eyes had seene the prooffe
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on others grounds
Christen'd, and Heathen) must be leed, and calu'd
By Debitor, and Creditor. This Counter-caster,
He (in good time) must his Leiuenant be,
And I (bless the marke) his Mooreships Auntient.

Rods. By heauen I rather would haue bin his hangman.
Iago. Why, there's no remedie.

'Tis the custie of Service;
Preferment goes by Letter, and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood Heire to th' first. Now Sir, be iudge your selfe,
Whether I in any iust terme am Affia'd
To loue the Moore?

Rods. I would not follow him then.

Iago. O Sir content you.

I follow him, to serue my turne vpon him,
We cannot all be Masters, nor all Masters

Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall marke
Many a durions and knee-crooking knaue;
That (doting on his owne obsequious bondage)
Weares out his time, much like his Masters Aile,
For naught but Prouender, & when he's old, Callicee'd,
Whip me such honest knaues. Others there are
Who trym'd in Forme, and vestiges of Dutie,
Keepe yet their hearts attending on themselues,
And throwing but shewes of Service on their Lords
Doe well thine by them.

And when they haue in'd their Coates
Doe themselues Homage.

These Fellowes haue some shew,
And such a one do I professe my selfe. For (Sir)

It is as sure as you are *Rodarigo,*

Were I the Moore, I would not be Iago:

In following him, I follow but my selfe.

Heauen is my Iudge, not I for loue and dutie,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:

For when my outward Action doth demonstrate
The native act, and figure of my heart

In Complement exterie, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart vpon my sleuee

For Dawes to pecke at; I am not what I am.

Rods. What a fall Fortune do's the Thicks-lips owe
If he can carry't thus?

Iago. Call vp her Father:

Rowle him, make asiet him, poyson his delight,
Proclaime him in the Streets. Incense her kinsmen,
And though he in a fertile Clymate dwell,
Plague him with Fleas: though that his Ioy be Ioy,
Yet throw such chances of vexation on,
As it may loose some colour.

Rods. Heere is her Fathers house, Ile call aloud.

Iago. Doe with like timorous accent, and dire yell,
As when (by Night and Negligence) the Fire
Is spied in populous Citties.

Rods. What hoa: *Brabantio,* Signior *Brabantio* hoa.

Iago. Awake: what hoa, *Brabantio*: Theeues, Theeues,
Looke to your house, your daughter, and your Bags,
Theeues, Theeues.

Era. Above. What is the reason of this terrible
Summons? What is the matter there?

Rods. Signior is all your Familie within?

Iago. Are your Doores lock'd?

Era. Why? Wherefore ask you this?

Iago. Sir, y^e are rob'd, for shame pitt on your Gowne,
Your

Notes

¹ “Lastly, I would like to cite Wittgenstein's last sentences, which could suggest another example of similarity between Nabokov and Wittgenstein in treating rain in the matter of recognition. Two days before his death, Wittgenstein wrote his last note: ‘Someone who, dreaming, says ‘I am dreaming,’ even if he speaks audibly in doing so, is no more right than if he said in his dream ‘it is raining,’ while it was in fact raining. Even if his dream were actually connected with the noise of the rain’ (*On Certainty* 1969; trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, para 676). Wittgenstein of course wrote it long after *The Gift*, and there is no record that he had read Nabokov at all. We know that this is nothing but a coincidence; however, it still allures us to read it as if it paraphrased the last paradoxical words by Alexander Chernyshevsky, who, on his deathbed, is deceived by the sound of dropping water from the flower pots on the upstairs balcony under the cloudless sky. ‘Of course there is nothing afterwards.’ He sighed, listened to the trickling and drumming outside the window and repeated with extreme distinctness: ‘There is nothing. It is as clear as the fact that it is raining’ (*The Gift*, 312).” Akiko Nakata, “Wittgenstein Echoes in *Transparent Things*,” *The Nabokovian* 45 (2000): 48-53, 53.

² Akiko, Nakata. “Shi to Inpei—*Transparent Things* o Chûshin ni” [Death and Concealment in *Transparent Things* and Other Works], *The Rising Generation*, vol. 145, no. 8, November 1999, 20-22, 20.