

That Frail and Fickle Fate

(A Train of Thoughts about Life)

At times I get the haunting vision,
that what we think is our decision
was pre-decided, ere we've known,
by something else - as has been shown.^[1]

Enzymes and gravity and other
constraints, that often we don't bother
to think of, set the scene for plants,
amoebas, mankind, sheep and ants; -
as if there were a magic Loop
within the gently simmering soup
of energy-and-time-and-space,
where weird phenomena take place,
far off the balanced thermal state,
where we can't peer into the fate.^[2]

Where structures vanish and emerge
and sometimes show a sudden urge
to branch in unexpected dashes
just like a Phoenix from the ashes,
as if to cleverly outsmart
the Second Law by arcane art.

The Law takes care that you, tomorrow,
return what you today might borrow;
that heat flow, motion and diffusion
establish equidistribution.^[3]

The Loop, instead, promotes a greed
to heap up more than one would need:
Thermodynamics, what the heck,
take what you can, don't give it back.

Alas, the competition 's rough!
So, if you dawdle or ain't tough,
somebody else will squat your niche,
will snatch your plate and eat your quiche.

But what you grasp with strain and wile
is just a transitory file
recycled in the Loop's next round,
for nothing's lost that can't be found.
Except for what, by dissipation,
got moved into a dump location
of thermal chaos (what a pity,
that's not exactly Emerald City)^[4].
And yet, maybe as times advance,
Emergence gets a second chance.^[5]

But who will in the end succeed?
The Second Law or Loopy Greed?
Will destiny bring cosmic glare
or utter blackness - with no hair?^[6]
It begs the question, as a twist:
Is Nature art- or commun-ist?

We all are part of this exotic
and irreversibly entropic
procedure which the Loop has brought,
and queerer is than we had thought.
But if this Loop had never been,
there'd be no life, no time we're in,
no football, bible, art, blue sky,
and no-one who would wonder why . . .

Ernst H. Jager

^[1] G. Roth: *"Fühlen, Denken, Handeln"*, Suhrkamp (2001); ^[2] I. R. Prigogine: *"From Being to Becoming"*, Freeman (1980);

^[3] Ch. Gerthsen et al.: *"Physik"*, Springer (1989); ^[4] L. F. Baum: *"The Wonderful Wizard of Oz"*, G. M. Hill (1900);

^[5] R. B. Laughlin: *"A Different Universe"*, Basic Books (2005); ^[6] Ch. W. Misner et al.: *"Gravitation"*, Freeman (1973).