

Toast for the Saturday Night Celebration

Remarks by David Perkins

(This is an approximate reconstruction from sketchy notes, but the essence is right.)

This toast is to the PZ community – not just those who work at PZ but the extended family...including many who are not here today. To celebrate the thoughtful and passionate enterprise PZ represents, let me introduce a poem by Richard Wilbur.

MIND

Richard Wilbur

Mind in its purest play is like some bat
That beats about in caverns all alone,
Contriving by a kind of senseless wit
Not to conclude against a wall of stone.

It has no need to falter or explore;
Darkly it knows what obstacles are there,
And so may weave and flitter, dip and soar
In perfect courses through the blackest air.

And has this simile a like perfection?
The mind is like a bat. Precisely. Save
That in the very happiest intellection
A graceful error may correct the cave.

A favorite line: a graceful error may correct the cave.

A puzzle though: One bat in the cave. How often is there only one bat in a cave, more like 500?

When I think back on PZ, so much has depended on collegueship, not just on site at HGSE but in working with many others in many parts of the world.

A recent book, *The Enigma of Reason*, by Hugo Mercier, Dan Sperber, Harvard university press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2017, argues in fact that human reason functions at its best in groups where the people share common broad goals but not exactly the same ideas about how to get there. This configuration, very characteristic of Project Zero, avoids the narrow self-serving character of individual reason, the groupthink of groups of individuals that align to easily with an authority figure or in other ways, and the logjam of groups with very different goals.

So here's to the extended family of Project Zero -- Batmen and Batwomen for a better world!