

wot they shoulda bin dun learned me in SKule

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A Thursday Extra presentation for April 25
Refreshments at 4:15 in the CS Commons Noyce 3817
Talk at 4:30 in Noyce 3821



A talk about λ -calculus and Combinators for anybody who's enjoyed 2 weeks of CSC151.

Raymond Smullyan wrote:

This remarkable subject is currently playing an important role in computer science and artificial intelligence. Despite the profundity of the subject, it is no more difficult to learn than high school algebra or geometry.*

It's all very well our schools filling the heads of children with spelling, grammar and multiplication tables, and foisting on them ridiculous algorithms for doing in minutes what any decent calculator can do in microseconds. While not devoid of frivolity nor facetiousness, my talk will question the wisdom of teaching the three Rs. Neither berating, disparaging nor maligning mainstream opinions on appropriate content for school curricula, it will be my Cimmerian duty to note the tragic omission of Alonzo Church's λ -calculus and Moses Schönfinkel's and Haskell Curry's combinators from most elementary school offerings.

It is hard to imagine real-world circumstances under which students will be able to apply what they have learned of Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic; but the prevalence of the λ -calculus and the importance of combinators impact[†] every moment of their lives.

Not to be modest, but the talk includes an overview of how combinators epitomize **all** of the complex interactions of the living world, **every single** atom in the universe and **absolutely everything else** we care about. We'll show how just two of these combinators encompass all of creation. And finally, we'll recommend a change in the direction of computer design and manufacture to properly recognize and leverage[‡] these amazing birds.

*Preface to "To Mock a Mockingbird", Raymond Smullyan, Knopf 1985

[†]When did "impact" become a verb?

[‡]Seriously, how well is Writing taught if otherwise intelligent people verbify words like "leverage" and "impact"?