

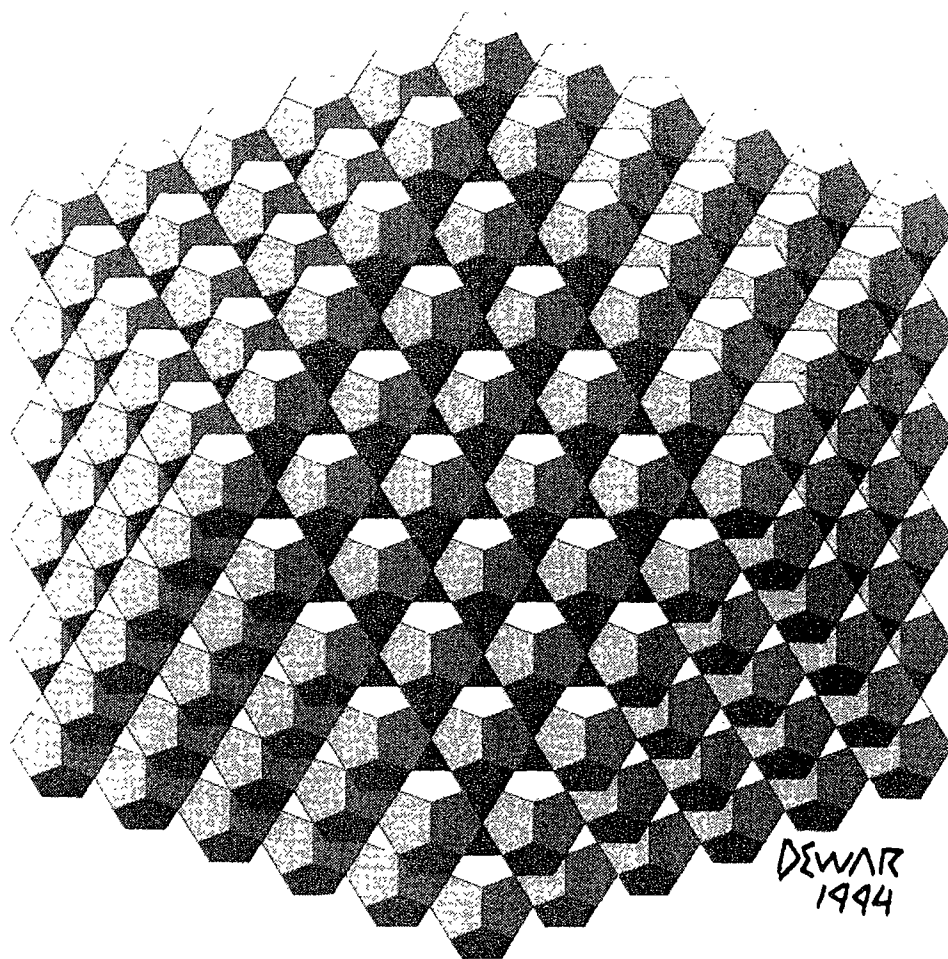
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Symmetry as a Concept in the Thinking and Writings of John Dryden

Prof. Dr. habil. Christiane Bimberg
Institute of Anglistics and Americanistics, University of Dortmund
Im Grund 25, D - 58313 Herdecke, Germany Tel. 0049 . 2330 - 84268
Fax 0049 - 231 - 755-5450 E-mail: bimberg@mail.fb15.uni-dortmund.de

Along with the Restoration in England went a difficult yet at the same time thrilling process of rethinking as to poetics, literary and theatre practice and criticism. This was accompanied by a trend towards rationalism in the arts, that is to be seen in the context of the challenging development that the natural sciences took at that time.

The paper investigates the life, thinking and writing of John Dryden, the leading literary representative of the second half of the seventeenth century in England, as to the phenomenon of symmetry as a concept and mental attitude.

This 'symmetrical attitude' is to be seen in his openmindedness, tolerance and scepticism his way of rethinking and redefining important issues of literature and the theatre as well as recreating literary models in translations and dramatic adaptations by adapting them to the special needs of his own time and nation.

This continuous qualifying, modifying, and balancing can be proved in his concept of poetry as a creative form of imitation of nature, his striving for order and harmony in poetry, his attempt to formulate priorities for the creation of an interesting contemporary English theatre and drama, at the same time challenging the neoclassicist rules.

It is also visible in his fighting against ancient and contemporary dogmas, his attitude towards dramatic models of the past and present, his ideas about the relationship between practice, theory and criticism, his concept of criticism and patronage and last but not least in his own characteristic position between tradition and innovation.

Though Dryden in his works never completely submitted to rationalism, it cannot be denied that he was influenced by it also through his contacts with the Royal Society. One of the most fascinating examples that the paper refers to is his essay *Of Dramatick Poesy* (1668).

The 'sceptical method' of this dialogue of four speakers demonstrates in an exemplary way the symmetrical attitude of thinking in Dryden, his characteristic way of always being able to see "the other side of things", and, though trying to exert a certain kind of influence, to let the reader and spectator have his own opinion on the issues raised.