

6<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Analysis

**“The analytic method is not conclusive,  
unless all operations involved in it are known ...”**

Florian Cajori, *A History of Mathematics* (1893)

My wife and I celebrated our wedding anniversary yesterday. Given that it coincided with both Pentecost *and* the celebration of our Queen's Platinum Jubilee, I didn't mention it on the day as it might have appeared I wanted it to be higher up the pecking order. But, nonetheless, it was an important day for us as every wedding anniversary is bound to be.

What does it mean to be married for such a long time? Why does our marriage work? Do we understand what binds us together in love? That could be analysed in detail, of course. Those who know us well might have some useful observations to make. And, indeed, the nature of our relationship is something my wife and I discuss often. Good communication in a marriage is a crucial, sustaining ingredient. But would analysis help? Would dissecting the meaning of it all make a difference?

Last weekend saw the end of the football season in the UK. Saturday evening offers us the long-running BBC football analysis programme, *Match of the Day*. Well, it *used* to be “match” of the day, but now it's *every* match, from every angle, with dozens of cameras, slow-motion replays, graphics, voice-overs ... You know what I mean. And then there are the in-motion summarisers and the studio pundits, offering endless analysis. Of course this can add to our enjoyment and understanding. But if we analyse something to pieces, does it not threaten to remove a measure of mystery and personal pleasure from any event? If you take a flower and pull all the petals off to see how it's made, do you have a flower afterwards?

Florian Cajori is right. “The analytic method is *not* conclusive, unless all operations involved in it are known ...” And if that's true in mathematics, it's also true in *Match of the Day*. And if it applies to *that* match, it's even more applicable to the match that is our marriage. I don't know how it works. But I know it does. So I'm not going to dissect it, pull it apart or view it from every angle. I'll just say what I know. I love my wife more than I've ever done, and that doesn't need any detailed analysis.

### **A prayer for today**

*Living God, does your Love need analysed? No! I'm just happy it works well! Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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