

with modern teachings about “purity.” *Alkestis* also has a very odd storyline, again with Herakles (Hercules) as a character, and seems to be a tragedy that fails to work as a tragedy. It reminded me strangely of the scene in the Wakefield First Shepherds’ Play when the shepherds are fed by a miraculous supply of food from an empty bag. I am humbled to read that Euripedes is thought to have written over ninety plays, but only eighteen or nineteen have survived.

Non-Fiction in Progress

In terms of numbers, that’s a little better than last month. I was hoping to spend more time on non-fiction. I did spend some time, but it was mostly with books like *Conceptual Mathematics: a First Introduction to Categories* by F. William Lawvere and Stephen H. Schanuel, and *Basic Category Theory for Computer Scientists* by Benjamin C. Pierce. In addition, I’ve been reading, or at least chipping away at, a variety of other papers on similar subjects.

I am hoping to improve my understanding of category theory to the point where the categorical-theoretic aspects for certain constructs implemented in the Haskell programming language — functors, monoids, and monads, specifically — are clear to me. I at least partially understand these constructs in terms of how they work for writing functional programs, and I’ve used a few of them in programs, but I would like to understand them a little more formally.

I’m not sure I can explain exactly why, except that I am fascinated by what Haskell can do with these tools, and by what some very smart people are doing with them. The future of Haskell and its role in the wider world of practical programming languages is a bigger topic, but maybe it would make sense to say that I am trying to upgrade my brain. I think in some sense I have Ph.D. envy, although at this stage of my life I think a Ph.D. in Computer Science or Mathematics is probably just not in the cards for me.

I am progressing through my shelf of New York Review Books Classics nicely. Four of the books I completed this month are from that series. The series remains really impressive and fascinating. Although I have quite a few of their titles, I really can’t hope to read them all. They are publishing them monthly. I could probably keep up with a subscription, reading one a month, but there are, I think, something like 350 books in the NYRB Classics back-catalog. I own 52 of these at the moment, and I’ve completed 14 (and read bits of a few others). As much as I love this series, I do like to mix them up with lighter, or maybe heavier, fare, and some of them will likely just never be to my taste — and that’s OK.

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