

Bob and Linda were slouching comfortably on the couch. Looking up from her knitting, Linda smiled as Bob said, "I'm sure glad that we went to the Good Book to look up that word 'occlude' prior to finishing the last chapter." Having just finished reading aloud "Occlumancy", a chapter in the fifth book of the Harry Potter series, he continued, "Rowling is one hellava word-smith."

"Yes, to block or shut in or out – and that's certainly what Harry is learning how to do," she agreed. "Stand up hon; I want to check out the back."

Bob stood up with his back towards her and Linda held up the vest she was making for him. "Here, let me hold the sides," he said, holding the bottom of the garment while Linda straightened the top.

"Just another inch or so and the back is done."

As they sat back down, Linda placed her legs on top of his. Bob resumed, "Rowling's not only hit the mark in popularity among kids, she's educating then in the fine art and craft of the written word."

"Indeed," she continued, "Rowling sent you and me to the Good Book to check out meaning and maybe even some notes on derivation. Her characters live – breath", she added, inhaling deeply, while spreading her arms, wide.

"I'm amazed that most of Rowling's critics remain clueless as to what she's really getting away with. Potter's more than just witches, witchcraft, wizards – stuff that goes bump in the night. She subversively presents situations wherein responding submissively to authority for authority's sake is crazy making."

"Those critics probably haven't actually read the Potter series."

"Not personally read, although they have certainly read and heard *about* the Potter series – they 'know' about someone else's opinion – and form an opinion of an opinion...."

"So when these non-readers get together to talk about Potter," she gestured with her hands as though holding a sphere, "they form another collective opinion of each of their respective opinions about someone else's opinion."

"And this may continue *ad infinitum* – *ad ridiculum*, as Rowling could put it."

"And the world gets larger," she moved her hands apart to hold a bigger and heavier sphere.

"And turns! – gossip, pure gossip – 'Pick a little, talk a little.' In fairness though, writers also only write opinions. Writing tends to differentiate classes, thus written gossip becomes elevated over spoken gossip – sometimes even elevated to a position of being "Holy".

"So you say. You thought that you could slip that one by, didn't you," she asked.

"Hold on, this is an important pattern. Both written and spoken language use symbols and a great deal of what folk know – is because they use symbols to gain that knowledge. But, symbols may also find usage in gossip – for entertainment – even serious entertainment – poetry, drama, literature. Gossip, Knowledge, and Control – Epistemology and Propaganda intertwined through Symbolic Form...."

"Whoa fella – you better explain a few things first. I think that I hear you using capital letters every now and again – am I hearing this right?"

"Yes, I tend to fall back on an Olde English custom where capitalization is used for emphasis – combining this with the orientation of capitalizing a Platonic Ideal, juxtaposing both against common usage...."

"Platonic Ideal?" she interrupted.

"Ya, kinda like the difference between Reality and reality – with the former being an idealized construct (akin to a physicist's Ideal Gas, or Black Box for radiation) and the later being the common every day sense of the world," he explained.

“Oh, sorta like Human and human?” she asked.

“Yes, that too – the generalized collective and the more specific individualized occurrence.”

“So Epistemology and Propaganda are each generalized collectives and Platonic Ideals?”

“Yes.”

“And similar to each other?”

“Yes, as far as Symbolic Form goes....”

“Symbolic Form?”

“Words, mathematic symbols, music, dance, art, religious rituals, etc.”

“Sounds like,” she began, “most human activity falls within the framework of Symbolic Form.”

“For better or worse, the human, oh so human. There’s a whole school of anthropology that holds that the three fold increase in the size of the human skull from proto-*Homo sapiens* to *Homo sapiens* some three million years ago or so, came about through the usage of tools and Symbolic Form.”

“So, returning to what you were saying about Epistemology and Propaganda – they both use Symbolic Form, but you obviously see a difference between the two,” she said as she moved her legs into a sitting position, while placing her knitting in her lap. Linda then leaned forward saying, “Would you like a re-heat on tea?” while she filled both cups from the new teapot with a candled warmer, that her daughter had just given to her.

“Sure. The Basic Question for both Epistemology and Propaganda is ‘How does one Know What one Knows?’ This is not an easy question to answer and frequently is confused with sloppy thinking and sloppy word usage. Many a time, propagandists attempt and succeed in passing Propaganda off as Epistemology. Add to this the human trait of rarely thinking much about the ‘How does one Know?’ aspect of Epistemology. There’s even a more subtle separate occurrence that frequently comes into play between Epistemology and Propaganda – that what is Epistemology for one is Propaganda for another, and vice versa.”

“So, how does one know?” she asked.

“Let’s start with the more subtle occurrence between the two first and then we’ll bring in the more blatant as needed. As you and I are both aware, you and I have a deep spiritual connection with each other – in play, in work, in love-making, and in just being with each other.”

“I agree with that. That’s one reason I like you,” she smiled.

“Yet,” he continued, ignoring the smile, “there’s a profoundly deep Epistemological difference here, between you and I. I clearly see myself as a non-Theist while you clearly see yourself as a Theist. As I understand your Theistic perspective, you perceive me as acting out of my Free Will, the belief and action that God does not exist – but through your core personhood, believe concurrently that my orientation doesn’t make any difference regarding the existence of God in that God is bigger than my ‘puny’ personal exercise of Free Will.”

“Kinda – that’s not exactly how I would put it, though. You realize, of course, that I and other Theists always act out of Free Will which is a gift from God – but go on,” she said.

“And deep down at the very base, I hold that all Theism, by definition – and I use a broad definition that lumps Christianity, Nazism, Stalinist Communism, Native American spiritualism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and a host of other Theisms together – is Propaganda. There’s little doubt in my mind that you view this broad definition as stretching things a tad.”

“Definitely stretching things,” she added.

“Stretching is a polite label for Propaganda. In short, what’s Epistemology for me is Propaganda for you – and what’s Epistemology for you is Propaganda for me.”

“For the sake of argument, I’ll let this fly for now, but I’ll think about it for awhile before I’ll totally agree with you.”

“That’s as it should be. The ‘Knowing of What one Knows’ is rarely an ‘ah ha’ experience – yet, a shift in Epistemological perspective, when brought about through the resolution of an Existential Crisis, frequently is an ‘ah ha’ experience. In Theistic terms, these phenomena would be the ‘enlightenment’ brought about through the awakening facilitated through a Zen koan; or using a Christian metaphor, the ‘born again’ experience....”

“That’s only true for the evangelical branch of Christianity,” she interrupted. “The concept of being ‘born again’, for most of the Christians that I know, is merely a metaphor, not an ‘ah ha’ experience. In the Episcopal tradition, an ‘ah ha’ is just an ‘ah ha’ ”.

“That’s similar to how non-Theists view an ‘ah ha’ phenomenon. A non-Theistic ‘ah ha’ is merely the resolution of a given Existential Crisis – with a realization that other Existential Crisis will soon follow this particular resolution. Granted, over a series of non-Theistic Existential Crisis resolutions, an epistemology of non-Theism emerges; however, there is never a sense of finality in the process. Certainly, there is never a sense of “salvation”.

“You frequently return,” she said, “to your parents’ conservative evangelical fundamentalism whenever you speak about Theists. I certainly understand why you have such a knee-jerk reaction to their brand Christianity – it’s very limited, at best. However, for most of the Christians that I know and for me, it’s much deeper than that. The Spirit of God is everywhere and within everything. Theists have Existential Crisis on a regular basis too, ya know. When a Theist resolves a particular crisis, that’s certainly not the end of it, far from it. ‘Salvation’, as you use the term, is something that I never think about because it implies a ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’ and an ‘eternity’ that is certainly impossible to conceptualize. True, as a girl, I probably believed in those things, but then, I was surrounded at home and by the Nuns at school – by people who talked about those things as if they really existed....”

“Exactly, people talking about things as though *what* they are talking about really exist,” he interrupted. “That, my friend is what epistemologists call Reified Constructs. Reified Constructs are always a dead give-away that Propaganda is present. The key here is the difference between what really *does* exist and what finds treatment *as though* it exists.

“So an issue between Epistemology and Propaganda is actually – what is Reality?” she asked.

“Yes and no. A sense of reality certainly applies to propaganda – particularly in the sense that the closer to reality that Propaganda comes, the more believable the Propaganda becomes. In many cases, the real may serve to further a Propaganda end. The ‘How does one Know’ aspect of Epistemology certainly effects one’s sense of the real – but one of the additional rather subtle features within Epistemology goes much deeper than just having a sense of what’s real. Within this subtlety, reality is frequently only a surface manifestation of a far deeper phenomena of allowing Symbols to actually construct Reality within any number of given frameworks – the more, the merrier.”

“Are you saying that reality doesn’t exist onto itself, but needs a Symbol prior to existing? And what’s so real about a symbol anyway, which in a sense, is variable at best and transitory at the least. What about the reality of volcanoes and tsunamis?” she asked.

“Of course, volcanoes and tsunamis are real – in the concrete sense of the term. I’m speaking of a subtlety that Epistemology affords to reality by constructing reality through Symbols. Propaganda certainly is able to construct a sense of ‘reality’ through using Symbols also; however, Epistemology constructs reality through Symbols far differently than does Propaganda.”

“This all sounds rather like a Reified Construct for both Epistemology and for Propaganda,” she observed.

“Not actually, due both to a sense of direction, and to the way that Epistemology constructs Reality through using Symbols. With Propaganda, the use of Symbols to construct a sense of Reality has a sense of direction from the outside to the inside. The Propaganda sense of direction also shapes the way

that Symbols construct Reality – from the generalized to the specific. Epistemology on the other hand, has a sense of direction from the inside to the outside. This Epistemological sense of direction also shapes the way that Symbols construct Reality – from the specific to the generalized.”

“You’ll need to give me a number of examples here.”

“Let’s start,” he began, “by looking at the sense of direction first – this tends to be the easiest to understand. In reality though, both aspects, direction and construction, occur concurrently, thus, an attempt to separate them loses a great deal through the separation.”

“I’ll settle for an initial loss just to be able to follow the discussion. Go for it, Bob – hit the trail with a good sense of direction,” she chuckled.

“Hum.... A very good example for the sense of direction found in Epistemology is the addition function for digital computers. You may remember that roughly 98% of all of the computers in the whole world are digital computers – the others are analogical computers. A curious thing about digital computers is that at any given moment in time, a digital computer is only doing one of three different things at any given time – and generally doing this one thing, followed by another thing, sequentially. A small exception to this sequential processing falls within the realm of parallel processing; however, this realm is not germane to this example. Anyhow, the only three different things that any digital computer ever does are add one number to another number and store the result somewhere, or compare something to something else and determine if this something is less than, equal to, or greater than the other thing, or move something from one place to some place else.”

“Yes,” she agreed, “I remember this and also remember that those moments in time are measured in nanoseconds.”

“One one-billionth of a second – and that’s just for micros like your PC. Picoseconds, or one one-thousandths of a nanosecond, or one one-trillionth of a second is the norm for mainframes. Anyhow, even a dumb machine that can only do one of three things, one thing at a time, during moments of time measured in nanoseconds, can do many of those simple things over and over again in just one second. Think of all of the complex things that digital computers do today – GPS, the Internet and instant coding and decoding of banking transactions, space travel – but all through nothing more than doing one of three simple things, over and over again.”

“GPS?”

“Global Positioning Satellites.”

“So what about the addition function – and more importantly – the direction of flow from the inside to the outside for your example?” she asked. “Come to think about it – why only addition? What about subtraction, multiplication, squared and cubed roots, or advanced calculus for space travel?”

“It’s all done only with addition, nothing else, over and over again! The key resides in base two addition with the on and off nature of electricity – the ones and zeros. The magic happens with what’s referred to as the one’s compliment – the compliment of one is zero and the compliment of zero is one.”

“I’m afraid that this might just go well over my head,” she said, rolling her eyes towards the ceiling.”

“Let’s make it more familiar. We’ll use base ten – which is the common system that you and I learned in grade school – and the nine’s compliment, which I didn’t learn about until I learned about computer programming. The nine’s compliment is the difference between a single number and the value of nine. For example the nine’s compliment of 6 is 3, the nine’s compliment of 2 is 7.”

“And for 9 it would be 0 and for 0 it would be 9.”

“Yup. By using the nine’s compliment in base ten, we are able to calculate subtraction, by only performing addition. For example, take two four digit numbers with the first being larger than the second, write the numbers down and subtract the smaller number from the larger number.”

“OK,” she wrote the numbers down on a piece of paper lying on the table in front of them. “I’ll subtract 1899 from 2766, and I’ll get, let’s see, 867.”

“Now, we’ll do it using the nine’s compliment. I’ll state the rule first, and you write down the numbers. Since we want to subtract 1899 from 2766, we’ll take the nine’s compliment of 1899, add that to 2766, add 1 to the result, and then drop the left-most significant digit. Ready?” She nodded her head. “Write down 2766 first. Now, from, left to right, the nine’s compliment of 1 is 8, so place the 8 under the 2. The nine’s compliment of 8 is 1, so place a 1 under the 7. The nine’s compliment of each 9 is 0, so place a 0 under each 6. Now add 2766 to 8100, and add 1 to that result. Fine. We now have 10867. Drop the left-most significant digit and we have 0867, or 867.”

“That’s cool. Does it always work?”

“Yup.”

“But we needed to subtract to get the nine’s compliment.”

“That’s where the one’s compliment comes into play for digit computers. Remember, we’re only working with 1s and 0s in base two, so the one’s compliment of the binary number of 1101001 is 0010110. Electronically we get this one’s compliment by reversing the polarity of the electricity so that a 1 becomes a 0 and a 0 becomes a 1. We then follow the same process that we followed using the nine’s compliment – and we have electronic representation of addition and calculated subtraction.”

“And multiplication is addition, over and over again. And division is subtraction, over and over.”

“And all other mathematical functions are merely a combination of simple addition and subtraction – even the advanced calculus for space travel! Much too tedious for humans, but easy for a machine that can only do one of three things, over and over again – very quickly.”

“So, what about the direction from the inside to the outside?” she asked.

“The inside of the epistemology of the logic for digital computers is the simple doing of the one of three things, over and over. And the flow of direction is from the simple to the complex over time, outwardly, away from the simple. However, the most important key to this direction of flow is that the simple always remains identifiable, so that one may follow the logic from the simple to the complex – and retrace the logic back to the simple, should one desire to do so. This retracing of the logic from the complex back to the simple is roughly what debugging a computer program is all about.”

“How’s that?”

“Back when I was first learning how to write programs for computers,” he said, “I occasional went to my instructor for help when things weren’t working right. Paul’s response was along the lines of, ‘Bob, although your program isn’t doing what you want it to do, it IS doing exactly what you are telling it to do. You need to figure out what you are telling it to do, and then figure out how to tell it what you want it to do.’ “

“And would he help you figure it out?”

“That WAS the help – and I always managed to figure it out. I learned how to trace the logic from the complex to the simple – because the bug always existed at a simple level, usually an assumption or group of assumptions – or sometimes the expectation of some kind of magic. The problem with a dumb digital machine is that it is too dumb to do anything other than one of three things, over and over again.”

“I think that I get the idea of a direction of flow for Epistemology,” she said. “Now, what about an example of a direction of flow, from the outside to the inside – the flow of Propaganda, as you put it?”

“An easy example is the notion of Nationalism. First off, without a construct of Nationhood, the construct of Nationalism could not exist – and this sets off Nationalism as having a qualitative difference from, say Regionalism. A person resides in a certain region and often develops a sense of place and a sense of self as being part of this region. The sense of place-ness may find identification within the

construct of Nationalism; however, place-ness finds restriction to a specific location, having specific boundaries.”

“So,” she added, “physical location, like even a neighborhood, has a boundary that I can identify with, feel a part of.”

“But does that feeling come from within or without?” he asked.

“What do you mean, from within or without?”

“Did you start from the position of feeling ‘I am me and am going to expand me to something larger’ or start from the position of ‘I am me and see something larger that I want to be a part of’ ?”

“The latter, I think.”

“I’d agree that that’s how it works. The ‘larger’ already has an identity. We have to move away from this personal example though to be able to see the larger picture of how this works in groups. The larger whatever, be it neighborhood, region, or nation, has a reified sense of identity. This sense of reified identity moves from the larger grouping to incorporate the individual self within a collective sense of identity. This group identity also serves as a normative force, shaping the values that hold the group together. Interestingly, when an individual violates significant elements of the normative values, the group tends to banish the individual with expulsion.”

“And the threat of expulsion can be strong enough,” she added, “for the person to both feel the strength of the threat and ponder the possibilities of aloneness and abandonment.”

“Exactly – or in any number of cases, actual sanctions find imposition upon those violating the normative forces when the forces find codification into law.”

“So, are you saying that the larger group exists prior to the individual and that the group moves towards the individual rather than the individual moving toward the group?” she asked.

“In a sense. Picture the larger group as a gigantic amoeba that moves towards the individual and then surrounds the individual within the flow of the amoeba. At this point, the individual becomes a part of the amoeba and moves with the flow of the amoeba. In this sense, the group moves to the individual and incorporates the individual. Most importantly though, when the individual becomes a part of the amoeba, the individual ceases being individual, becoming rather part of the group.”

“Kinda like a herd mentality?”

“That’s a good way of putting it,” he added. “It’s group-think in the broadest sense of the word – and the spooky thing about this group mentality is that the normative values tend to drive the group to do things that one individual would not necessarily think of doing.”

“In the extreme mode of this happening,” she continued, “one ends up with mob rule – where no one is generally responsible for what the mob does. It’s very hard for an individual within the mob to stop the mob once the mob starts going.”

“Exactly.”

“I follow that. It sounds as if both Nationalism and Regionalism would work in this way, so, how is Nationalism qualitatively different from Regionalism?”

“There are quite a few elements of Nationalism that far exceed any sense of place. The history of any given nation shapes the development of the particular Nationalism involved. This history includes geographical location, economics, social and cultural values, wars, disease, political structures – the broad swath of the human, oh so human. The ‘movement of the outside to the inside’ is that of Nationalism towards the individual.”

“So, all these elements comprise Nationalism – but that doesn’t necessarily make any of them bad, or Propagandistic, though.”

“I’m using the word ‘Propaganda’ descriptively here, not pejoratively. Besides, this example deals primarily with the direction of flow – from the outside to the inside.”

“I can see now what you are saying about the direction of flow. It sounds though that you are also saying that when the flow moves from the outside to the inside, that the outside tends to engulf the inside individual into the larger flow of the larger group.”

“Exactly – so that the whole becomes a large undifferentiated ego-mass – where the individual gets lost within the mass of the whole.”

“So, Epistemology has a flow from the inside to the outside and Propaganda has a flow from the outside to the inside. Is it ever possible to combine both of these flows together?” she asked.

“Both flows together? I believe,” he began, “that it might even be possible to talk about the epistemology of a given Propaganda, in both the sense of the internal construction of a given Propaganda and in the sense of the effectiveness of a given Propaganda. I don’t believe that the converse is correct though – speaking about the propaganda of an Epistemology. Although this phrase is interesting, I believe that a more common expression would be that of examining the parameters for a given paradigm.”

“Is this important?” she asked.

“No – no I don’t think so – I was just musing a tad.”

“That’s good because there are times in which you go tripping around in your head and I just lose interest in that particular train of thought,” she observed. “I have a much better picture of the movement from the inside out as opposed to the movement from the outside in.”

“I guess the only really important point that I’m attempting to make is that the movement from the inside out is that of moving from the particular to the complex, where the particular always remains clearly differentiated from the complex. In the movement from the outside in, the movement is that of the complex to the particular, however, at the moment when the particular is surrounded by the complex, the particular loses the boundaries of being particular, making differentiation between the outside and the inside, difficult.”

“I think that I get the pictures of the flows. You indicated that the other important distinction between Epistemology and Propaganda has to do with the construction of Reality through the use of Symbols and that this construction is also related to the direction of flow from the inside out for Epistemology and from the outside in for Propaganda. I’m assuming that you’ll want some fresh tea”, Linda said, getting up from the couch and taking the tea pot into the kitchen.

“Yes, and how about some cheese and crackers while you’re out there.”

“OK hon. Come out here and continue what you were saying.”

“The construction of Reality,” he began walking to the kitchen, “by using Symbols to do the constructing, is far more complex than the direction of flow. I guess an easy way to begin this area is that of recognizing that this construction deals in large part with the grouping of things.”

“A grouping of things?”

“Yes, groupings – and groupings of groups into more and more groups.”

“But doesn’t this imply that there are levels, different levels for each group – and that a group on one level may hold a collection of other groups at another level.”

“Yes, and of course, the tricky part is that of being aware of what level a given Symbol resides within,” he said, helping himself to a piece of cheese.

“It sounds as though it’s pretty easy to move from one grouping to another grouping – all within the spontaneity of speaking or writing,” she observed.

“Indeed, indeed. What’s really important though throughout this array of groups and groups within groups is that of never confusing a member Symbol, or label, within a given level with the Symbol that represents the group as a whole. For example, apples, oranges and tomatoes are all fruit – with ‘Fruit’ serving as a label for the group. This label may find usage collectively to represent all members (and

potential, even hypothetical members) of the group, but in itself, is not a member of the group. The label may of course be far greater than just serving as a ‘placeholder’ name for a group of stuff. The label may also be a ‘short-handed’ symbol for an entire diagnostic process or collection of processes – and may even serve as a ‘foundation’ layer for even greater abstractions that critically ‘need’ the formative ‘nature’ of the foundation to drive further thought.”

“For example?”

“Mathematical Symbols are the easiest to picture within this context. However, the key here is that mathematical symbols all reside within a context of shared and derived meanings for the Symbol Set. A great deal of education in using the symbol set is what all mathematicians must learn prior to being able to use the symbol set within the framework of what I am calling ‘Epistemological Thinking’. Once the symbols are learned, one then begins using Symbols to aid the process of learning to Know How we Know, What we Know.”

“I’ve always had problems with advanced mathematical symbols.”

“Me too. The important aspects of the mathematical symbol set is that this symbol set tends to be primarily of the Epistemological variety – with very little room for Propaganda – unless, one treats the mathematical symbol set as foundation for Reified Constructs.”

“Such as,” she asked with a quizzical expression?”

“Such as Reifying the Euclidian Geometry Symbol Set to actually being applicable to reality upon the earth.”

“How’s that?”

“For example, let’s say that I’m on the equator with a ten foot rod. Now, I’m perfectly able to construct a line AB using this rod that is both perpendicular to the equator and twenty feet long. Then, at point A, I can construct another line AC that is both perpendicular to line AB and that is twenty feet long. At point B, I can construct another line BD that is both perpendicular to line AB and that is twenty feet long. Finally, I can connect the points C and D such that the line CD is both twenty feet long and is parallel to line AB.”

“You’ve just lost me again. Show me what you are talking about. Here, take this plate of cheeses and crackers in with you.”

“I’ll need some more paper and a ruler.”

“They’re in the junk drawer,” she said. “The water will get hot in just a bit.”

Both returned to the living room. “Here, take the ruler and mark off a five inch line. Now, one inch along the line place a point and label the point ‘A’. We’ll let the five inch line represent the equator. OK, now, let’s pretend that one inch represents the ten foot rod that I was talking about. At point ‘A’, we’ll draw a two inch line that is perpendicular to the five inch line by using the markings on both sides of the ruler so that we know that the line is parallel. At the end of the 2 inch line, place a point and mark that point ‘B’. Now we have line AB. At point A, we’ll mark off 2 inches along the 5-inch line representing the equator and place a point ‘C’ there. Now, line AC is perpendicular to line AB. Now, we’ll extend the line AB just long enough so that at point ‘B’, we can use the ruler again to make a perpendicular two inch line and make a point ‘D’.”

“Oh, I see what you mean now. At point ‘B’, I’ll make another perpendicular line to line AB for two inches and label a point ‘D’ there. Then, I’ll connect points ‘C’ and ‘D’ – and have a square, ABCD – with every side being two inches long to represent the twenty feet that you were talking about and lines AB and CD and lines AC and BD parallel to each other.”

“Right,” he said, “just as we learned in school – the quintessential Euclidian square. Now, comes an interesting part. Let’s bring your globe over here and find Greenwich, England, which is on the Prime

Meridian, which is zero degrees longitude.” Linda was the only person he knew who had a globe in her living room – a custom that died out nearly three-quarters of a century ago.

“Why,” she asked, “is Greenwich on the Prime Meridian?”

“Because the Brits used to be king shit at one time in terms of sea power. Anyway, you’ll notice that all of the lines of meridian, or lines of longitude, appear to be perpendicular to the equator – and if we had a protractor, we could actually prove that this is the case.”

“It sure looks like that’s true.”

“But, you’ll also notice that all of the lines of longitude meet at both the North and South poles. This means that if I actually construct a Euclidian square ABCD on the equator such that lines AB and CD were perpendicular to the equator and in such a way that lines AB, BC, CD, and BD were all twenty feet long....”

“Lines AB and CD would actually be lines of meridian and cross each other at the North and South poles.”

“Exactly – which violates the Euclidian axiom that parallel lines never meet and certainly don’t cross each other. The Plane Geometry of Euclid just doesn’t work on curved surfaces – any more than does the Plane Geometry of a Newtonian universe work on the curvature of the space-time continuum, introduced as an Explanatory Principle by Einstein. Riemannian Geometry, one of the non-Euclidian geometries, provides a non-anomalous solution to the problems presented when the Plane Geometry Euclidian mathematical symbol set and set of axioms attempts an application upon a curved surface – which certainly is not a plane.”

“This is interesting, particularly the example of a Reified Construct, in action. But how does this fit into the discussion of Epistemology and Propaganda,” she asked? The tea kettle began whistling, and Bob got up from the couch, fetched the water and poured it into the pot on the table.

“One way of looking at the epistemology of Euclidian Geometry, is to realize that the epistemological question of “How we Know What we Know”, is limited to hypothetical and imaginary planes – that have absolutely no reality upon the earth. When attempts are made to actually apply the these imaginary planes to the reality of the curved earth, we have in fact violated the boundaries of several of those groupings that you and I were speaking of earlier. The grouping of the imaginary plane of Euclidian Geometry can only be ‘applied’ to the grouping of the curvature of the earth through the proposition of a Reified Construct that states ‘I am able to treat the hypothesis of Euclidian planes as fitting the ‘reality’ of the earth.’ This Reified Construct no longer serves the purpose of Epistemology – but certainly could serve a purpose within a Propaganda orientation. A similar analogy is correct about the flat-universe Propaganda limitations for a Newtonian perspective of the universe, rather than the more epistemologically sound curvature of the space-time orientation for the universe introduced by Einstein.

“So is Newton’s universe incorrect?” she asked.

“Limited to a time and place, is a sounder orientation. In Newton’s time, the epistemological concept of ‘universe’ consisted of the solar system and at most, the Milky Way as the one and only galaxy within the entire universe! In Newton’s time, and even today, the curvature of the space-time continuum within our solar system, is so small, that Newton’s system works pretty well – except for the path of the planet Mercury around the Sun. This exception of Mercury’s path allowed Einstein to provide a better interpretation of Reality than could Newton’s system. Another way of saying this is that the epistemology of an Einsteinian Universe interprets Reality better than does the propaganda of Newton’s system.”

“I’ve heard of that exception of Mercury, but only that it existed – not why it was important.”

“Since the epistemological introduction of the curvature of the space-time continuum, the epistemological concept of the ‘universe’ now includes well over a hundred, billion galaxies and a time span of roughly fifteen billion light years from the known ‘start’ of the universe (the Big Bang) to the present.”

“I have no problem with the Big Bang being that far back in time, so what’s the big deal about this as far as Epistemology and Propaganda are concerned,” she asked?

“For you, not a problem. However, for a great number of Theists, there are problems with both the current known size of the universe and the current time frame for the known universe. Within the Christian tradition, even the sun-centered solar system for the Newtonian perspective was heresy in that the Christian tradition originally posited that God created the ‘universe’ and the earth, as an earth-centric ‘divinely revealed’ system. Even today, there are a large number of Christian Theists who believe in what I call out and out Propaganda – the ‘Young Earth’ theory of creation. This ‘Young Earth’ orientation posits that the age of the earth is roughly 6,000 years old, give or take a thousand years of so. This so-called ‘epistemology’ of the ‘Young Earth’ finds an identical base of ‘divine revelation’ that sponsored the historical Christian earth-centric perspective.

“Again, you’re returning to your family roots of conservative fundamental Christianity. I certainly accept the Big Bang and most of the Christians that I know do too. I do though know a few that would resonate to a ‘Young Earth’ orientation.

“My conservative fundamental family of origin gave lip service to a belief in evolution and probably the Big Bang also. That’s not the issue though. The issue is that of differences between Epistemology and Propaganda. Clearly, the observable evidence supports a universe of hundreds of billions of galaxies and a time frame of roughly fifteen billion light years. Yet, the ‘divine revelation’ of a so-called ‘Young Earth’ finds presentation to and by a sizable swath of the American populace as ‘epistemology’. For me, the ‘epistemology’ of a ‘Young Earth’ is out and out Propaganda.

“I agree that the ‘Young Earth’ theory is propaganda,” she said, “but so what? What’s the big deal?”

“The big deal is that right now today, the U.S. government is supporting a ‘Young Earth’ perspective as ‘truth’ rather than calling this theory, a religious belief. In the government sponsored information center located at the Grand Canyon, a book is being sold ‘explaining’ the ‘epistemology’ of how the canyon was formed through the processes of a ‘Young Earth’, created by God, rather than through the epistemology, spanning hundreds of millions of years, of the actual geological formation of the canyon. The government is certainly not obligated to label this book as Propaganda, but at minimal, is obligated to label the book as religious interpretation.”

“And the government is not doing this?”

“No. And attempts to compel the government to do so finds significant political pressure in resisting this label and resisting requests to have the book removed from the information center. But this is only one example of thousands upon thousands in which the federal or local government is condoning the ‘epistemology’ of religious interpretation as ‘truth’ or tradition or custom – in clear violation of the First Amendment protections for the individual from religion and Religious Propaganda.”

“You’ll go much further in dealing with these issues by referring to them as Religious Interpretation as opposed to Religious Propaganda,” she interjected.

“But Propaganda it is – always has been – and always will be in the future.”

“I know what you’re talking about, but others may take offense. You know – the bit about attracting more flies with honey.”

“I bet one could get just as many flies with horse shit,” he chuckled.

“That’s a good one. But getting back to the beginning of where you and I started, you still haven’t convinced me that *my* personal Theism is any less real than *your* brand of non-Theism,” she said while stretching her arms high above her head, then re-arranging her sitting upon the couch.

”OK. Back to some real issues of differentiation. One of the biggies in examining the notion of the Big Bang is that of Purpose. Non-Theists have an easy time with the notion that there is no purpose in the Big Bang, no purpose in evolution, no purpose in anything other than what a given self-interested individual attributes as a personal self-defined purpose.

“What do you mean by capital ‘P’ Purpose?”

“Roughly, Purpose is the notion that there is both a Meaning and a Goal, generally outside of and generally larger than an event. Although many Theists are able to pay lip service in accepting an epistemology of the Big Bang, they then tend to view the event as having a purpose – of finding plan and design by a God-figure outside of and separate from the Big Bang itself. This of course begs the question of ‘Why the Big Bang’ and for what purpose.”

“Not necessarily,” she interposed. “What about the idea that God is in Nature, the Universe, the Cosmos – in short, in everything? From this perspective, the ‘purpose’ of everything is that of unity, oneness, and just being natural.”

“A Non-Theist,” he contributed, “would see this as decreasing entropy – pattern derived from chaos. Nature, the Universe, Life itself – happens quite by chance, randomly – without purpose – from formlessness to form, or pattern. However, an awareness of this increasing and decreasing state of entropy generally demands a conscious sense of Self – Self differentiated from non-Self. Self as an epistemological Individual.”

“Entropy? Now there’s a word that I’ve always been confused about. Clarify this a tad for me,” she asked.

“Entropy is not the easiest concept to grasp, but let’s start with a little experiment – can you spare just a tad of that wonderful perfume that I love when you wear it on special occasions?”

“I suppose so,” she said, getting up and going into the other room to fetch the perfume. “Here it is,” she commented as she returned with the bottle.

“OK, now take the top off of the bottle and place the bottle about seven feet away over there.”

“But, I don’t want all of this to evaporate.”

“It won’t, ‘cuz we’ll stop the experiment rather quickly. Now, when you take the cap off, set the bottle down and come over here quickly.”

“OK.”

When she again sat down, he asked, “Can you smell the perfume yet?”

“No not yet, but I should be able to soon.” They both waited in silence. “Now I can smell it.”

“I can too. That’s the end of the experiment. You may now put the cap back on,” he said, as she got up, capped the bottle, and returned the bottle to the other room.

“OK,” she said returning. “Now what was that experiment all about?”

“It had to do with entropy, the direction of time, and non-reversibility. When you first brought the bottle of perfume into the room with the cap on, this bottle of perfume was a closed, isolated system. The perfume was in a low entropy state – because it was concentrated and the cap closed the system. When you removed the cap from the bottle, the gaseous molecules of the perfume, in their random motions within the bottle, began to escape from the bottle and mix with the air molecules. I recently read somewhere that a teaspoon of air contains about 10^{23} molecules (that’s 1 followed by 23 zeros) and that Oxygen molecules in still air, travel about 1030 miles per hour.”

“That’s a lot of molecules and they certainly move about quickly.”

“Move quickly and violently collide with neighboring molecules,” he observed. “And this all occurs randomly – without form or pattern. It didn’t take long for you and me to smell the perfume seven feet away. The gaseous perfume molecules within the capped bottle were highly concentrated, so concentrated in fact that very few additional molecules from the liquid state could escape the liquid – until you removed the cap from the bottle. At that point, some of the gaseous perfume molecules escaped from the bottle and began mixing with the air molecules in this room. Some of the liquid perfume molecules now had a chance to evaporate into gaseous perfume molecules, replacing those gaseous molecules from the bottle that escaped into the room. In short, the highly concentrated liquid and gaseous perfume molecules moved from a state of low entropy within the bottle to a state of higher entropy, for the perfume, within this room – from tight form, to loose form – from concentrated pattern within the bottle to random diffusion within this room.”

“OK, I understand that,” she commented, “but you also indicated that the experiment dealt with the direction of time and non-reversibility. I’m aware that time has duration but I don’t know what you mean by time having a direction.”

“When we indicate that time is moving forward, this is the direction of time. Poetically, we may refer to time moving backwards, but in the entropy experiment that you and I just witnessed, time only moves forward, not backwards. This forward movement totally prevents reversibility. In this experiment, we know from experience that the perfume will not leave the air and go back into the bottle as a concentrated liquid. This brings up another key aspect of this experiment in entropy – the aspect that entropy and probability are roughly the same thing when speaking of the direction of time and non-reversibility.”

“You’ve momentarily lost me again when you bring probability into the picture.”

“For example, you knew from your own experience with this wonderful perfume, that by taking the cap off of the bottle, that there was a high probability that the perfume would evaporate and diffuse into the room. You were so sure of your prediction that you actually expressed a concern about the issue.”

“This is true.”

“I venture to predict that there is a rather low probability that the diffuse perfume in the air – perfume in a high state of entropy – would spontaneously return to a concentrated form of perfume within the bottle.”

“Well, dah – that’s obvious!”

“Obvious,” he chuckled, “but also important. It’s important though always to remember that the probability distributions involved with entropy always deals with the laws of large numbers. In our experiment, I referred to the number of molecules within just a teaspoon of air being roughly 10^{23} molecules. Just try to imagine how many teaspoons of air are within this room.”

“More than two,” she laughed.

“And then the random mixing of the gaseous perfume molecules with this roomful of air allowed us to smell the perfume rather quickly. The mixing of the perfume was that of moving from a low entropy state to a high entropy state for the perfume.”

“With a direction of time and non-reversibility for not being able to get the perfume back in the bottle.”

“There’s actually a mechanical law involved here that states that the probability of a system spontaneously moving from a state of high entropy to a state of low entropy – that the probability of this happening is exceeding low, so low that it’s next to impossible. This law also imparts a direction in time and non-reversibility.”

“Oh, come on, a law?”

“Yes, it’s called the second law of thermodynamics – the law that heat does not flow spontaneously from a colder to a hotter body. A colder body has higher entropy – closer to the equilibrium of the non-motion of absolute zero – roughly -273° Centigrade – that’s 273 degrees below the point where water freezes. About one one-hundred of a second after the Big Bang started, the temperature of the Universe was about 100 billion degrees Centigrade and about three minutes later, this temperature dropped to about one billion degrees Centigrade. Over the past fifteen billion light years, the Universe has been expanding and cooling down ever since.”

“So, the Universe is getting colder over time?” she asked.

“Both getting colder and also increasing in entropy – a state of equilibrium near absolute zero – but it’s going to take another few billion years for entropy to reach this high state of equilibrium.”

“You’re saying that the Big Bang started out at billions of degrees Centigrade – a state of low entropy – also a highly improbable state.”

“Yup.”

“Up till now, I’ve always thought that entropy and randomness are the opposite of form and pattern.”

“That’s another way of saying the same thing. Randomness has no form or pattern, thus is in a state of high entropy. Form and pattern, on the other hand, have a low state of entropy – and also have a low degree of probability of existing. High entropy – high probability. Low entropy – low probability.”

“Probability of what?” she asked.

“Of anything – everything – motion, pattern, existence.”

“In that case then,” she continued, “it’s highly improbable that form and pattern – low entropy as you put it – could ever happen from a high entropy state.”

“Within a closed isolated system without an input of energy, that certainly is the case. That’s what the second law of thermodynamics is all about.”

“Well then, at that moment right before the event of the Big Bang,” she said with a smile, “couldn’t one posit that the totality of the Universe was such that the entire Universe was in the highest state of entropy possible – totally without form – totally void.”

“You’re speculating about some rather tight parameters here – the few seconds prior to the Big Bang. Scientists,” he continued, “have a hard enough time dealing with the massive energy releases during the first few minutes after the Big Bang. Most scientists view the singularity of the Big Bang as the beginning of time. Little serious concern finds direction for the first few seconds prior to this beginning in time – before the bang of the Big Bang.”

“So what’s a Singularity?” she asked.

“A technical term indicating a place in the universe that has infinite denseness packed into a singular point having an infinitely small dimension within space-time. However, since you raise the issue, I guess one could posit a rather classic Deist position that prior to the bang of the Big Bang – the Universe *might* have been without form (high entropy) and that a God created a highly concentrated state of low entropy – that exploded into the Big Bang – an explosion from low entropy – into the expanding Universe of higher entropy and ultimate equilibrium.”

“Deism? Isn’t that what Thomas Jefferson and Tomas Paine advocated?”

“Yes. Deism is roughly the orientation that a God figure started everything, but once starting the creation, stayed out of everything else following the creation. In his day, I believe that folk vilified Jefferson as a libertine and an infidel – a person without morals and without God,” he commented. “In fact, shortly after the American Revolution, Thomas Paine moved to France, participated in the French Revolution – joined the interim French government – wrote *The Age Of Reason* – was arrested and placed in prison.”

“Arrested? Thomas Paine?”

“Yes, you see, *The Age of Reason* was a book about theology – from an enlightened Deist perspective. Paine as well as Jefferson was perceived as an infidel.”

“I never learned that in American History.”

“I didn’t either as a student in the public school system. I only learned this as an adult.”

“So, when discussion about the separation of church and state goes back to the Deism of Jefferson, is it the same Deism that Paine wrote about in *The Age of Reason*?” she asked.

“Well, it was the same Deism, but Jefferson wasn’t as outspoken as Paine – and Jefferson was not nearly as passionate in his writing as Paine. There were a great number of other political issues that kept Paine in prison in France beyond his Deism – but it was his *The Age of Reason* that started it all.”

“I’m not sure that I’m positing anything at this point, Deist or otherwise,” she said. “I was just attempting to follow the logic of a high state of entropy and a closed isolated system.”

“A far more common position taken by many Theists,” he continued, “particularly the Young Earth theorists, is that the second law of thermodynamics ‘proves’ that since the form and pattern of life is in such a low entropic state, that a ‘Creator’ is necessary to create the highly improbable (low entropy) pattern referred to as life.”

“How does that more common position go?” she asked.

“Generally along the lines that the earth is a closed, isolated system and that it’s highly improbable that life could spontaneously form from inorganic material. The argument goes that the improbability of life (a low entropy state) violates the second law of thermodynamics because low entropy can not spontaneously form from a higher entropy state of inorganic matter.”

“I guess I follow that Young Earth argument, so where’s the flaw?”

“The largest flaw is assuming that the earth is in a closed, isolated system. There is a tremendous amount of energy pouring into the system of the earth every moment – from the Sun! This input of energy from the Sun for over literally billions of years – is what the Young Earthers leave out of their thermodynamic argument! One would think that when it comes to thermodynamics, one only needs to think about a hot summer day to realize how much energy comes from the Sun.”

“And?” she asked.

“When energy is introduced into a system, the system is no longer closed and isolated. It took energy to concentrate the low entropy state of the perfume within the bottle. Likewise, the energy of the Sun upon the Earth over hundreds of millions of years is able to concentrate the high entropy state of non-organic matter into a lower entropy state of organic matter. Darwin merely began looking at organic matter hundreds of millions of years after the formation of organic matter.”

“You’re pretty free and easy with those long stretches of time – in the hundreds of millions of years – that you’re throwing around.”

“It’s all relative though, of course, with Homo Sapiens only being around for the last three million years or so. There was a time in the history of the human, oh so human, that the Sun was worshipped as the energy source for life – and even as the center of the Universe.”

“So, do you think that when humans gave up the idea that the Sun was the center of the Universe, that they also lost track of the belief that the Sun is the energy source for life?” She asked.

“Perhaps. Maybe that coupled with the centuries long move away from agriculture into industry and manufacturing has a lot to do with folk losing the sense of Sun energy. I wonder....” He paused.

“What?”

“I wonder if there might be a loose and rambling metaphor here around the idea of the Sun being an energy source – along with wind, which is heated air – that humans, not being farmers, have forgotten about – focusing energy needs instead upon oil and manufacturing, and such.”

“Sure, probably. But, like usual for you and I, this is getting away from the original discussion topic of Epistemology and Propaganda. I don’t think,” she continued, “that you and I have come anywhere near the end of this subject.”

“You’re right again, damn it. So head me back. Where were we?”

“I believe that before you helped me understand a little more about entropy, that you and I were talking about capital ‘P’ Purpose....”

“Right – and how entropy removes a sense of Purpose for a non-Theist.”

“I’m a Theist and certainly followed your discussion of high and low entropy states. So, where do you see the difference here?” she asked.

“Low states of entropy – life for instance – happen randomly due to massive amounts of energy poured into a system. However, even life – low entropy – dies and decays away from a low entropy state to a higher entropy state. The chemicals of life eventually flow from organic to inorganic form. As with the Universe at large – everything flows from a low entropy state to a high entropy state found within the equilibrium of true randomness. Randomness has no purpose – it’s random.”

“Sounds depressing.”

“But it happens over spans of billions and billions of years – so, from a human perspective of decades and centuries – not depressing at all, just real. But then, there may be a key here – there’s something of the human, all so human, that tends to define a Purpose that fits a human understanding.”

“This is too abstract. Give me an example.”

“Prior to Einstein’s time, light found general conceptualization as traveling in waves – sorta like the waves made by a stone thrown into a pond. At that time, light found perception as needing some kind of medium through which these waves propagated – on earth, through the solar system, and through the universe. Physicists at the time referred to this medium as the Aether. The Purpose of the Aether was that of providing a medium through which light waves could propagate. Much time and effort eventually determined that light travels as both a wave and as a particle; hence, there was no longer a need for the medium of the Aether – no need for the purpose ascribed to the Aether. Naturally, this change in perspective necessitated a change in the understanding of the epistemology of the way light travels – particularly in the presence of a gravitational field. This change in perspective – from the Aether to the non-Aether – was a change from the Propaganda of Purpose to an orientation of Epistemology for understanding. Originally the Aether was present ‘because’ light needed a medium through which a wave propagated. When the reason, or purpose, for the Aether ceased to exist, the Aether ceased to exist.”

“Are you trying to say that this analogy of Aether and non-Aether is akin to the distinction that you make between Theism and non-Theism,” she asked.

“I’m only using this analogy to illustrate an example where ‘purpose’ frequently mis-guides an understanding of Reality. I’m actually saying a great deal more. For me, the primary difference between Theism and non-Theism resides primarily within a personal sense of Self.”

“So then, my personal sense of Self has a Theistic base while your personal sense of Self has a non-Theistic base. So you and I are different. So big deal – we’re right back where we started at the beginning of this discussion.”

“Not quite at the same place – in fact in a quite different place. This is where the difference between a mathematical Symbol Set is not only radically different from a linguistic Symbol Set, but where grouping of groups and memberships within groups are radically different.”

“What do you mean by a linguistic Symbol Set being different from a mathematical Symbol Set?”

“Within a mathematical Symbol Set,” he began, “there is common understanding by the practitioners of what each symbol means and how the symbol may be used and what the limitations imposed upon the

symbol imply. A great deal of the early education of mathematical practitioners finds repetitive dedication in learning how to use correctly the various mathematical symbols. Additionally, different branches, such as Euclidian or Riemannian geometry, not only use different Symbol Sets, but also incorporate different, sometimes non-compatible axiomatic steps within various processes. However, each branch has an epistemological structure confined within the parameters of that branch – usually expressed through and with a given Symbol Set.”

“But language doesn’t appear all that cut and dried,” she observed. “Language practitioners certainly learn how to read and write in there early education, but then, I guess that the ‘meaning’ of things and maybe even the grouping of things tend to be done on more of an individual basis.”

“Indeed. And I assume that you’re aware that different language structures (English, French, German, Chinese, etc.) conceptualize ‘reality’ differently and group things differently.”

“Of course – that’s why translation can never be a word for word thing, but involves so much more.”

“Absolutely. On the other hand, English mathematicians, French mathematicians, and Chinese mathematicians use the same mathematical Symbol Sets across differing linguistic Symbol Sets.”

“I understand what you mean by there being a difference between mathematics and language.”

“But it’s even more involved than that – the differences I mean. One way of looking at philosophy is that different schools of philosophy group things in different ways. In fact, the ways of grouping things frequently is the way that one may differentiate one philosophy from a different philosophy. In addition, philosophy finds frequent influence from religious, cultural, social, or technological events within a given culture at a given time.”

“Don’t forget about the political,” she added.

“Yes, yes, the political, always the political – in both power and opposition to power. Thus, when one deals with the Basic Question of epistemology – How does one Know What one Knows – not only is the answer individual for each individual, but the answer finds flavor through these influences of religion, culture, society, technology, and political environment.”

“At different times and places – for different individuals and groupings of individuals,” she added. “I’m beginning to like this epistemological way of looking at things – it’s exciting. And I don’t feel at all intimidated by you and your knowledge because I too have a half century of experience, different experiences and learnings under my belt.”

“You do have better than a half century of experience under your belt – and I like a great deal of the experience that you share with me,” he said. “Nonetheless, it appears that you and I have reached a temporary impasse over the ways that non-Theists view and deal with Reality differently than Theists do.”

“That’s probably because you keep bringing so many different things into the picture,” she said. “Although you’ve been thinking about some of these issues for some time, a lot of the stuff is new to me and I just need some time to sort things out.”

“You’ve got a point there, so let’s try a different approach by exploring the ways that non-Theists group things from the ways that Theists group things. From your Theistic perspective, would it be fair to state that the largest grouping of groups is that God permeates everything, everywhere, and at every time?”

“Yes, of course.”

“To the far reaches of the known universe through a space-time continuum of roughly fifteen billion light years – from the Big Bang forward?”

“Naturally – maybe even into the unknown universe as well.”

“And through the entire life sequence throughout this time frame to the precursors of RNA - to RNA and then DNA – to single cell organisms to multi-celled organisms and the wide diversity of known life forms through the process referred to as evolution?”

“Of course – however, I am somewhat fuzzy in this area of RNA and DNA and their precursors,” she began. “You presented Deism in such a way that God begins it all and then totally removes himself from everything that subsequently happens.”

“I believe that this orientation of Deism fits the classic picture,” he replied. “Of course, one could always modify this classic Deism to posit a kind of Deism wherein a God starts it all, and then comes and goes as God’s whim strikes, but this then creates significant problems in viewing systems – particularly over long frames of time.”

“What kind of problems are you referring to,” she asked.

“Problems of system wide continuity across the gaps created by a ‘God whim’ acting on the system from outside of the system. Many of the problems would stem from attempts to discover when and how many ‘God whims’ occurred, creating gaps in the continuity. Other problems would stem from attempts to connect one side of a gap to the other side of a gap.”

“This is sounding too abstract again,” she commented.

“That’s probably true, but you realize from the get-go that this is not the largest grouping of groups for a non-Theist, far from it. There is a hell of a difference between the largest grouping of groups for an epistemology having a Theistic base versus the grouping of groups for an epistemology having a non-Theistic base.”

“All right, Mr. Smarty-pants,” she smiled. “What’s the largest grouping of groups for you as a non-Theist?”

“For me, as a Non-Theist, the largest grouping of groups is my own personal self awareness.”

“That’s it? Your personal self-awareness! That’s rather small, don’t ya think – for the largest grouping of groups?” she asked with a wry smile.

“Well, my self awareness is large enough to envision a universe containing well over a hundred, billion galaxies. And large enough to have an understanding that a light year is roughly 9,095,800,000,000 kilometers long and that our known universe is roughly fifteen billion times that length of just one light year – in radius! It’s large enough for me to be able to conceptualize moments of time in nanoseconds, having worked with computer programming for nearly two decades. It’s large enough to include the Reichian/Freudian training analysis I participated in while working in Human Services for nearly a decade. It’s large enough to include all of the reading that I have done of Freud, Reich, Cassirer, Kant....”

“Enough, all ready. Now you’re being a tad boastful, don’t you think?”

“Not boastful, rather, descriptive. You were the one to label my largest grouping of groups as ‘rather small’ I seem to remember,” he said smiling.

“But my groupings of groups include all of that too.”

“Not really,” he said. “Actually this largest grouping of groups is where the real differences between Theism and Non-Theism lie. Now you, and all Theists for that matter, hold that the largest grouping of groups is your own unique Theistic-something....”

“If you mean that God is everywhere and within everything, you’re right.”

“Not just a God construct, rather, a Theistic-something is more inclusive when we speak about Theists collectively. Not every Theist believes in one god, or even a god at all – using my rather wide definition of Theism....”

“For the sake of discussion, we’ll use your wide,” shaping her outstretched arms to again contain a sphere, “definition when speaking of Theists collectively. But my unique Theism is God and my largest grouping of groups is God – everywhere, at everytime, and in everything.”

“And that’s the key – your own unique individual sense of Theism. This individual sense is what makes up a large core of your personhood. This sense also contains the sense of what IS your largest grouping of groups.”

“Absolutely.”

“And you Know and experience the world *only*, through your core being – as does everyone else – through their own unique core of being.”

“That’s true....”

“So then,” he interrupted, “how do two or more Theists ever have a desire to Worship together – let alone even having the ability to do so?”

“They just do, and it’s easy to do.”

“Back up just a tad. If your unique Theism is unique to you – and someone else’s unique Theism is unique to them – and you have a sense of your largest grouping of groups – and they have a sense of their largest grouping of groups – how do either one of you know (in your core being) what the actual largest of the grouping of groups, is? Maybe one largest group is larger or smaller than the other largest group.”

“It’s not like that. I know about my largest group just like I know about breathing – I just do it and it’s there – it’s natural.”

“I believe this – about you. But what about the other guy? How does a gathering of Theists ever know what the largest grouping of groups is?”

“We talk about it – and the Bible tells me so, to use one of your favorite phrases,” she said lightly laughing.”

“Exactly – Symbols in both cases – the spoken and the written word. Which brings us back to the beginning of this chat – the use of Symbolic Form and the differences between Epistemology and Propaganda. But now you and I need to add the further subtlety of how one not only shares meaning and definition through Symbolic Form, but also how consensus between folk finds agreement over meaning and definition.”

“Like Clinton’s depending upon what the meaning of the word *is*, is’?”

“Kinda the same, however, in addition to the direction of flow and the grouping of groups for the distinction between Epistemology and Propaganda – when discussion involves the human, all so human – one must also add the notion of ego boundaries.”

“You’ve helped me a great deal in understanding the importance of ego boundaries. I agree with your orientation that my own personal ego boundaries should only extend about a foot out from the physical boundary of my physical body,” she added smiling and patting his hand. “Obviously, I’m pleased when you come inside of my personal space, most of the time.”

“I like being personal with you too,” he said, leaning forward and kissing her gently. “So, when two or more Theists gather together and share each of their own unique largest grouping of groups through the use of Symbolic Form – do you think that they are in total agreement with each other.”

“Hardly. In fact, not even close to being possible – but close enough so that agreement on the large picture is possible.”

“And what about the disagreements?” he asked.

“Many times they remain unspoken. But the agreements are close enough so that this collection of Theists, through sharing and caring, achieve fellowship and, as you might put it, a sense of shared meaning and significance.”

“That makes sense to me – loosely – however;” he continued, “the clear element of loosely defined ego boundaries appears rife to overflowing within this collective example of a group of Theists. This is where the direction of flow is critically important. Remember, that for Epistemology, the direction of flow is from the inside out, from the specific to the complex – with the specific always remaining identifiable. And for Propaganda, the direction of flow is from the outside in, from the complex to the particular, but with the particular losing identity within the complex.”

“And the ego boundaries?” she asked.

“The ego boundaries within this context are also tied up with statements of relationship between the various members of the group.

“Statements of relationship?”

“Every communicated message between two people have two messages entwined around each other, although delivered concurrently.”

“How is that – and is it always *always* true?”

“Always true, but most folk tend to focus upon one or the other of the entwined messages – rarely both together. One message is that of content – what the words are and what the meaning of the words are. The other message is that of a statement of relationship between the two speakers. These two messages find entwinement together with usually rapid-fire concurrent delivery.

“For example?” she asked.

“Let’s take you and me. You and I are friends, lovers, playmates, professionals in our fields, fellow divorcees....

“I get the picture – but there are more relationships than just two relationships between you and I – and they may be combined into different combinations – and they may even shift – at a moments notice.”

“Exactly. And some are more ‘private’ than others,” he said making quote marks with his hands. “And some are even modified, suppressed or emphasized, depending upon context and environment – and depending upon the presence or absence of others.”

“All rather complicated, it sounds to me. But, it makes sense. So?”

“So, in the example of two or more Theists getting together within a group and sharing their own unique individual sense of a Theistic-something, there are both the loosely defined ego boundaries belonging to each individual and a plethora of various statements of relationships between these people. There may be agreement between members – there may be disagreement between members. Some may be more or less ‘Learned’ about a given Theistic something than others are. When three or more are gathered together (in the name of this Theistic something), there are in addition to the statements of relationship, also statements (usually non-vocalized) of alliances – further complicating the statements of relationship.”

“I’ve never looked at it like that before. It makes sense though. However,” she looked at him slyly, “where’s the catch? And how do I know that you aren’t trying to slip in some Propaganda here – at my expense?”

“Whoa (and I don’t get to say that very often). A couple of things here. First off, I don’t think that most folk, including myself most of the time, tend to look at groupings of people with the analytical magnifying glass that I find helpful when viewing this hypothetical grouping of Theists through the above example. Second, and this is critical, when I’m presenting differentiating materials between Epistemology and Propaganda, it is not in my best interest to confuse the two, especially by trying to ‘slip something in,’” he said making the quotation marks again.

“I believe you – when you’re consciously aware of speaking with me privately. But you’re not always consciously aware of everything that you say or do,” she said softly touching his arm.

“That’s true – I’m far from consciously aware of a great deal that I do – or that goes on around me. But in this situation, I find myself attempting to describe a picture as accurately as I am able to when constructing this hypothetical grouping of Theists and the communication patterns that find presence, just be definition.”

“So would what you are saying about Theists in a group, also be true for a group of Non-Theists getting together to talk about a Non-Theistic something?” she asked.

“Absolutely – always and everywhere! The above mentioned dynamics are true for both groupings and are descriptive rather than pejorative.”

“And how about a grouping of both Theists and Non-Theists?”

“Absolutely true there also. However, there are dynamics for this hybrid grouping, the least of which may be that what is Epistemology for one may be Propaganda for another - and vice versa.”

“So then I guess that Theists and Non-Theists don’t get together very often.”

“No, not very often.”

“So then, how does it really work for you and I?” she asked.

“Very well, on many levels and with many dynamics operating concurrently. There’s the soul connection of course, between you and I – and it doesn’t make any difference that you happen to see and experience your soul as Theistic and that I see and experience my soul as Non-Theistic. The soul connection is what is important. And in my book, the human soul, or Psyche as Freud would express it, is what makes every human unique and individual.”

“Freud?”

“Yes, Freud frequently spoke and wrote about the human soul – which frequently is mis-translated into English as the human mind. Freud additionally spoke of the conscious part of the human soul as ‘the I’ and the non-conscious part of the human soul as ‘the It’ (*Das Ich und das Es*) – again, mis-translated into English as *The Ego and the Id*. So when you and I were earlier speaking about ‘ego boundaries’, from a Freudian perspective, we were referring to ‘I boundaries’ – how far do I extend. A healthy ‘I boundary’ tends to be extended about a foot beyond the physical boundary of Self. But this way of thinking is grist for another conversation – and one may not properly speak of and about Freud without bringing Reich into the picture also. There I go – stop me – stop me....”

“Until I met you, I never conceptualized that Atheists actually Knew that they had a soul. In fact, I was raised to stay away from Atheists because they were s’posed to be a bad influence on me and would try to tempt me away from doing God’s will.”

“I suspect that many Theists were and are raised like that. I’m bothered a tad by what appears to be a Cultural bias that believes that souls and Theism go together. As a Non-Theist, I am deeply aware of my core, soul being – and what I consider great art, literature, dance, music – all deeply resonate within my core soul. This too is the human, all so human.”

“I hear ya, hun. So what other levels and dynamics were you referring to beyond the soul connection between you and me?”

“There’s the straightness in speaking and the trust and the neat play of friendship. I like you.”

“Yes, I like you, too.”