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*“Does an agnostic do whatever he pleases? In one sense, no; in another sense, everyone does whatever he pleases. Suppose, for example, you hate someone so much that you would like to murder him. Why do you not do so? You may reply: ‘Because religion tells me that murder is a sin.’ But as a statistical fact, agnostics are not more prone to murder than other people, in fact, rather less so. They have the same motives for abstaining from murder as other people have. Far and away the most powerful of these motives is the fear of punishment. In lawless conditions, such as a gold rush, all sorts of people will commit crimes, although in ordinary circumstances they would have been law-abiding.*

*There is not only actual legal punishment; there is the discomfort of dreading discovery, and the loneliness of knowing that, to avoid being hated, you must wear a mask with even your closest intimates. And there is also what may be called ‘conscience’: If you ever contemplated a murder, you would dread the horrible memory of your victim’s last moments or lifeless corpse. All this, it is true, depends upon your living in a law-abiding community, but there are abundant secular reasons for creating and preserving such a community.*

*I said that there is another sense in which every man does as he pleases. No one but a fool indulges every impulse, but what holds a desire in check is always some other desire. A man’s anti-social wishes may be restrained by a wish to please God, but they may also be restrained by a wish to please his friends, or to win the respect of his community, or to be able to contemplate himself without disgust. But if he has no such wishes, the mere abstract concepts of morality will not keep him straight.”*

– Bertrand Russell, “What is an Agnostic” (1953) <sup>1</sup>

**THE AXIOM AND THEORY OF OPPOSITES:** Humans naturally look for opposites; we understand best when presented with clear opposites. Our entire cognitive structure is built on opposite ideas and identities in our world and degrees more or less by which they are opposite. ‘Oppositeness’ is the first quality a child understands – hungry, not hungry, mom, not mom, cry loudly.

- ❖ “Anyone with a child knows that children learn about the world through binary options: up or down, hot or cold, big or little, inside or outside, wet or dry, good or bad, boy or girl, man or woman.” – Phyllis Schlafly.
  - The venerable children’s program Sesame Street uses this frequently.

The major component of sapience is our ability – not to judge moral right and wrong – but to judge degrees of oppositeness.

- ❖ “Time and again in this book I have placed the cat and ourselves in analogous positions although I vowed to avoid that pitfall whenever I could. As it turns out, that was not possible *because nothing could be quantified without some kind of comparison*. Using a dog, ape, or crocodile would not have worked well in any but very few instances cause those animals, all animals, are as little understood as the cat is. No sense comparing apples to oranges for someone who doesn’t know either fruit.” – Roger Caras, A Cat is Watching (1989), p. 219 (emphasis added).

The easiest opposite is two: Male and female, child and adult, younger and older, good and bad, doing or not doing, me-not-me, us and them. As a third thing, fourth thing, more things are added to the group, each thing tends to become *less opposite* in relation to all other things in the group until it all gets quite fuzzy. Complexity then, *can be defined as the process by which the*

*relationships between things become less and less clearly opposite* through the addition of new things to the group (complexity of numbers) and/or the discovery of new relationships and dynamics between previously existing parts that make their relationships less starkly opposite (complexity of depth). Both occur regularly in every part of our lives and complexity can grow exponentially. Tainter describes ‘layers of complexity’ in societies trying to solve problems.

- ❖ The ‘theory’ arose out of considerations of the cognitive structure of human knowledge, early child learning, and complexity of groups – and rules writing; ‘opposites’ sits at the base of the many asymmetrical relationships of parts in GGDM.

So, when Carl Sagan complains that the ancient philosophers separated the mind from the body, the heavens from the Earth (Cosmos, Episode 7), he is complaining (unfairly) in part about the basic human tendency to learn and frame in opposites.<sup>2</sup> Empirical science considers itself the opposite of religion and nearly the opposite of philosophy (on whom it keeps a wary eye to make sure it doesn’t cross the boundary fence); whilst philosophy I don’t think considers itself exactly the opposite of either, but recognizes the militant tendencies in the other two.

- ❖ Philosophy and religion were for much of history the masters of civilization; not quite opposites, not quite the same. Science is the newcomer that makes modern civilization truly complex compared to what came before.
- ❖ Is there anything that prevents something from being both an axiom and a theory?

It is true that such tendency from our infancy, propagated through the epistemology we absorbed growing up, does retard a holistic view of things, until at some point it can be established an underlying unity between holistic and non-holistic worldviews. Holism serves as both the closure of the ends of the opposites and a pull against increasing specialization and compartmentalization (i.e. nexialism) that has been noted both in current Western professions, and as a general trend of urbanized and complex civilizations through history, who suffer the most in collapse.

- ❖ Paradoxes are usually presented as two things that are both true, but cannot both be true. *That is, they are presented in pairs of truths.* Because that is what we can readily comprehend. What if there were paradoxes where three things were true that could not all be true, but are not quite opposite? Like, uh, quantum mechanics?
- ✚ UNITY OF OPPOSITES: The concept of opposites has a long intellectual history; ancient pre-Socratic philosophers debated about what it meant in terms of the universe (i.e. what it told us about the nature of reality), and came to the conclusion that it was both a duality and a continuum of change or underlying principle (Heraclitus of Ephesus). Despite all that we ‘know’ now, the concept is still relevant and debatable:
  - ❖ “Dialecticians claim that unity or identity of opposites can exist in reality or in thought. If the opposites were completely balanced, the result would be stasis, but often it is implied that one of the pairs of opposites is larger, stronger or more powerful than the other, such that over time, one of the opposed conditions prevails over the other. Yet rather than ‘stasis’ the identity of opposites, there being unity within their duality, is taken to be the instance of their very manifestation, the unity between them being the essential principle of making any particular opposite in question extant as either opposing force.

For example ‘upward’ cannot exist unless there is a ‘downward’, they are opposites but they co-substantiate one another, their unity is that either one exists because the

opposite is necessary for the existence of the other, one manifests immediately with the other. Hot would not be hot without cold, due to there being no contrast by which to define it as ‘hot’ relative to any other condition, it would not and could not have identity whatsoever if not for its very opposite that makes the necessary prerequisite existence for the opposing condition to be. This is the oneness, unity, principle to the very existence of any opposite. Either one’s identity is the contra-posing principle itself, necessitating the other. The criteria for what is opposite is therefore something *a priori*.” – from Wikipedia article, “Unity of Opposites,” October 1, 2019 (emphasis in original).

Some philosophers or religious thinkers have suggested that everything in the universe has an opposite, implying that the universe is always in ‘balance’ despite constant changes. This is a sort of statement that is neither provable nor falsifiable to humanity; one would need to understand every possible opposite condition or existence, what time frames are involved, and also be able to *grok* the entire universe in a given moment to test the truth of the proposition.

Although direct ‘oppositeness’ is presented above as *a priori*, humans are able to recognize ‘sorta opposite’ and ‘mostly opposite’ conditions which allows us to grasp more complex relationships. It creates a situation where a hot thing might be balanced by a cool (not cold) thing and a wet thing that is at room temperature; the hot thing is the ‘more powerful’ and will eventually dry the wet thing and warm the cool thing, but will lose much of its hotness in the process through the laws of thermodynamics which will eventually average the energy in the system (as the common example goes, why your cup of coffee gets cold), i.e. a high entropy state.

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*“Well, most folks seem to think they’re right and you’re wrong ...”*

*“They’re certainly entitled to think that, and they’re entitled to full respect for their opinions,” said Atticus, “but before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” – Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird (1960), p. 101*

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**RIGHT AND WRONG:** Most arguments about what is right and wrong are really arguments about what behaviors are *useful and not useful to society as a whole*, and are much better framed in that way. Conscience is quite another thing.

- ❖ For example, once it was decided that individuals own chattels, it immediately becomes apparent that there must exist socially recognized procedures for the transfer of chattels, that the chattels of the deceased must be passed on in an orderly manner, and that behaviors such as taking chattels by force or surreptitiously, must be discouraged or prohibited by the group. Chattels were the first things that people owned, even in groups where ownership of real property was unknown or communally held, people had things they thought belonged to them. The necessity of ownership of chattels begins with food and clothing, tools, and hunting implements, and the skill and labor required to make them and enables specialization and the beginning of trade.
- ❖ For example, once it was decided to create public office as a necessity of civilization, it became immediately apparent that the power of the office was tempting, could be exploited as property, and that for the concept to work properly, it was necessary to

criminally prohibit certain non-useful behaviors and results, such as bribery, kick-backs, illegal seizure, embezzlement and official oppression and official dishonesty.

Humans do not really have the capacity for recognizing right and wrong in any absolutely objective sense outside of ourselves (if such even exists); *our civilization* is the one place where we are *the actual center of the universe in every sense*, just as we used to believe we were the center of the physical universe until science disabused us of that notion.

- ❖ Prior to empiricism, we projected ourselves upon the universe through mythopoeic and increasingly complex religions. We were the center of the universe, both literally and religiously (e.g., David Coppedge). Empiricism separated us from the universe.

To recognize what is morally right objectively, we need to see what is morally wrong objectively, and we have neither; we have only ourselves and what happens to prove useful or not useful to gauge our actions. Conscience then is not really related to wrong or right, but to mental satisfaction (or mental utility).

- ❖ The question and measure of ‘usefulness’ applies not only to behaviors and right and wrong, but to every intellectual endeavor, social or public policy decision, every part of every system devised by humanity. Scientific theories and philosophical arguments go through predictable cycles; that is, when first articulated, they seem to be useful at solving a particular problem or shedding light on an area of intellect. Later, under critique and expansion, their limitations become apparent, but the idea remains as a useful approach for discussion and education.

The extent that you believe that my right and wrong analysis of morality is correct, is the extent to which morality has been unable to make itself objective reality and to separate itself from specific social situations. In the *objective morality view*, morality is lessened, diluted and derailed by implementation of ethical codes in the same way that some felt that Catholicism was damaged by being reduced to catechisms in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century or the way that education was squashed by the Lancastrian method of mechanical factual recitals modeled on the catechisms.

It has been suggested that the human capacity to reason is an evolutionary survival adaptation and that reasoning is best accomplished in groups; groups that could solve complex problems together through civil argument and cooperation had a better survival chance than groups that could not reason together. See Mo-Jo, 2 Beginnings, p. 34, *supra*. It is natural then that such groups must decide what behaviors are to be encouraged and what behaviors are to be discouraged. Expulsion from the group into the wild was the ultimate punishment short of death (but was also useful). Later, when awareness of the universe beyond ourselves developed, the rules of the group were codified into religions to be passed on, their origins forgotten in the lost past.

- ❖ “Institutions get the behaviors they reward.” – Gen. Jim Mattis (USMC Ret.) op-ed, “Jim Mattis: Duty, Democracy and the Threat of Tribalism,” Wall Street Journal, August 28, 2019.<sup>3</sup>

GGDM does not discuss or address in any way, right or wrong, ethics or morals (excepting the discussion of explicitly cheating in the game). There simply was no place for it within the structure of civilizations presented in the game, this is perhaps a shortcoming of the simulation; tangentially, it is or could be a part of government legitimacy and interstellar diplomacy. Probably, players will develop some rules of interstellar diplomacy and order that include the players’ pregame concepts of right and wrong (“bust the deal, face the wheel!” or “two men enter, one

man leaves.” – Mad Max, *Beyond the Thunderdome* (1985)). How will such rules be enforced in the game and who will enforce them? I think you already know the answer.

❖ **Thug:** [returning to consciousness after being knocked out finds himself in a stranglehold from behind] Come on, give me a break! **Marcus Cole:** Certainly, what would you like? An arm? A leg? We’re fresh out of broken hearts. We just had a run on those. How about we start with your fingers and work our way up? – Babylon 5, “Ceremonies of Light and Dark” (1996).<sup>4</sup>

➤ **Marcus Cole:** You see? It’s like I’ve always said. You can get more with a kind word and a two-by-four than you can with just a kind word. *Id.*

❖ **Rhetorical Question:** Is it more useful for a work to be technically correct in an objective sense, or to be not completely objectively correct while significantly advancing our understanding of a subject? This would be a great debate question and how you answer the question says much about perception of truth and worth.

✚ **VISCERAL REACTIONS:** Human sexual conduct has long been the most intense example of ‘morality’ in terms of what is useful or not useful to society (e.g., *To Kill a Mockingbird*). Right and wrong are about acts and consequences, any discussion of morality and ethics without acts and consequences is pure æther and about as useful.

Society has decided that sexual acts for the purpose of oppression, control, gain, exploitation, and for most of our history, recreation, are wrong acts because of various consequences, not the least of which is unwanted *or illegitimate* pregnancies (e.g., *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)). From this base then extended prohibition of sexual conduct between siblings and parents and their children (this, long before inbreeding genetic problems were understood), sexual relations between or with minors, and adultery or pre- or extra-marital sexual relations.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, however, modern birth- and STD-control has mitigated the risks of bad consequences, temporarily moving the dial toward libertine sex.

❖ “Rose [Elizabeth ‘Libby’ Cleveland] struggled to name their relationship – ‘I cannot find the words to talk about it,’ ‘the right word will not be spoken.’ Indeed, there was not a word for a same-sex relationship between women at the time. The word ‘lesbian’ existed, but only in reference to the Greek poet Sappho. ‘This was before there was a concept of sexual orientation the way that we know it today,’ said Lizzie Ehrenhalt, co-editor of the book. ‘That was really being invented right at the time they were writing letters in the 1890s, because that’s when sexology as a field gets going.’ The concept of ‘romantic friendship’ was popular among women of the day, which were emotionally and intellectually intimate friendships, though not necessarily sexual, Ehrenhalt said. ‘That created a sort of bubble of freedom’ for women, particularly wealthy white women, to have ‘more or less open relationships with each other,’ she said. Rose and Evangeline’s relationship was undoubtedly sexual, in addition to loving and intimate, Ehrenhalt said. One letter describes ‘long rapturous embraces’ that ‘carry us both in one to the summit of joy, the end of search, the goal of love!’ ... They vacationed together in Europe and the Middle East. They bought property together in Florida. They didn’t hide their relationship from family, and it appears to have been accepted. Rose even wrote to Evangeline’s [Evangeline Simpson Whipple’s] mother about her love for her daughter.” – Gillian Brockell, “A gay first lady?”

Yes, we've already had one, and here are her love letters," Washington Post, June 20, 2019.

- ❖ "Contemporary accounts described [Frances E.] Willard's friendships and her pattern of long-term domestic assistance from women. She formed the strongest friendships with co-workers. It is difficult to redefine Willard's 19<sup>th</sup>-century life in terms of the culture and norms of later centuries, but some scholars describe her inclinations and actions as aligned with same-sex emotional alliance (what historian Judith M. Bennett calls 'lesbian-like')." – from Wikipedia article, "Frances E. Willard," captured August 8, 2019.
- ❖ "I still can't figure out sexuality; I mean it's such a big mystery to us all. It's like violence and aggression, it's something we try to understand with our heads, our intellect, but they're really to do much more with the instinctual side of us. It's old brain versus new brain, you know.

So dealing with something like sexuality and women... If you're talking about it in conventional mythology, being nothing fancy, just simple storytelling, if you look at stories like Beauty and the Beast, which is a myth that was very common – you know, King Kong, right up to the fifties – and then I guess they invented the pill and abortion and a freer sexuality, and a certain liberation of women, which most of us agree was long overdue.

The Beauty and the Beast story is no longer a viable one in society, because women aren't as mystified – they're much more people than they are mystical. Yet women are still sex objects, yet they're not demystified sex objects. And yet we have more women artists, women this and there are women that, so it seems clear that you can have a female hero. [But] historically there haven't been very many." – George Miller as quoted by Anne Billson, "George Miller Talks about Mad Max, Heroes & Tina Turner: The 1985 Interview," previously unpublished interview published on Multi-gloom: The Anne Billson Blog, May 12, 2015.

Homosexuality has been at the tip of this discussion for a very long time. Visceral reaction against homosexual relations – especially in males against male homosexual relations, behavior, personality and lifestyle struggle against intellectual reasons prohibiting certain sexual acts as wrong or immoral due to possible consequences; e.g., it is very difficult to state that homosexual relations might result in unwanted pregnancies! Visceral reactions also notably produce *inconsistent results*, e.g., lesbian sex and female bisexuality is common and normal in *mainstream pornography* made for *heterosexual males*, but male homosexuality or bisexuality is never shown.

- ❖ The first rule you learn in philosophy is consistency; inconsistent application of beliefs or philosophical principles is hypocrisy. The Romans were experts in political and philosophical convenience which colored their post-Empire reputation.

Thus, philosophers have usually ruled out visceral reaction as a or even the *measure of what is right or wrong*, but this dismissal is also problematic on its own, for example, visceral reaction to the horrors of war, especially the images of the aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which the U.S. government tried to suppress for a short time) were key in preventing the Cold War from ending in World War III. Is there any argument against this? History

strongly suggests that whatever temporary restraint occurred as a result of WWII and Hiroshima prevented us from going down the nobody-wins, everyone-loses path to WWIII long enough for the ridiculousness of the situation and the systemic inefficiencies to work themselves out to a useful ending (i.e. we are still here, you are reading this now).

Thus, to the extent that visceral reactions (see Aspects and active/inactive Constructural Elements) lead to useful acts and consequences, they are equally potent as a measure of right and wrong.

- ❖ Visceral reactions are also why most people think that the major crimes – rape, murder, robbery (i.e. theft, burglary, corruption), kidnapping – are wrong. Are they wrong in thinking this, or do visceral reactions serve useful social purposes (e.g., see *The Future is Coming*, 7 Beginnings, p. 69, *Losing My Religion*, 1 The Sidereal Stage, p. 111, regarding ‘cheating’; *The Other Hole In Your Head*, 1 Order, p. 520, and *Homo reciprocans* discussion, Big Endian, Little Endian, 6 Diplomacy, p. 1174, *supra*) as many or more times than not? Of course, there are also very convincing utilitarian reasons why these acts are wrong based on consequences to society, which is why they are considered *the major crimes* in all nations and times.
  - “Metaphysics, said the late nineteenth-century idealist philosopher Bradley, is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct; but metaphysics has changed in the meantime, and is now the finding of bad reasons for what we cannot possibly believe however hard we try.” – Theodore Dalrymple, *Admirable Evasions: How Psychology Undermines Morality* (2015).
  - Many years back in Texas during a school field trip, a young schoolgirl went missing. Her father looked for her and discovered a man molesting his daughter on the ground, he was on top of her with his pants down around his ankles. The father grabbed the perp by the collar to yank him off his daughter, there was a struggle, the perp hit his head on a rock and died. The District Attorney investigated and wisely decided not to charge the father with the death: No jury would have convicted a man for accidentally killing another man molesting his grade-school daughter.
- ❖ I must also acknowledge that visceral reactions, especially those manipulated for ideological reasons and by leaders of nations, have also led to very bad consequences, even to the extent of making systematic commission of major crimes (theft, murder, rape) part of the national policy; this is both Plato’s criticism of rhetoric and the sophists (e.g., Gorgias) and the lesson of WWII and the events leading to it. Thus, neither reason nor visceral reactions alone are sufficient guides for humanity, both must be present and applied carefully. It is the tightrope act, the path we tread.

✚ BEING RIGHT VS. RIGHT BEING: The Christian end of the world is \*yawn\* material, it’s all been seen, heard and done before:

- ❖ “But my serious advice is to please ignore people like [Alexander] Cain who are in my opinion ends times hucksters. We’ve seen it all before folks. It’s always been wrong before. How many times do these people have to be wrong before we finally stop taking them seriously?” – Nick Peters, “A Brief Look At Alexander Cain,” May 6, 2015 (forum post, TheologyWeb).



- Now, that is an odd question, considering the religion is built on prophets... might the Biblical prophets have been called hucksters in their time? Because it is organic to the religion, should we be surprised; isn't lack of evidence and "wild conclusions from flimsy evidence" (*Id.*) the very definition of faith?

I have watched with amusement the passage, one after another, of millennialist and end-of-the-world-now religious groups whose overt and fondest wish is to witness the religious, divine, prophesied ending of the world during their lifetime (in my youth, I watched the similar near glee of some who thought the Cold War would end in the world nuclear holocaust). It doesn't really matter what religion they claim, though in our time mostly they are apocalyptic Christian groups; why would anyone be in such a hurry for the end of the world? Simply, because they believe when the divine end of the world occurs, they and their usually small, closed group will be right and everyone else will be wrong and suffer various degrees of divine judgment and damnation. So basically, it comes down to their need to be right and everyone else is wrong, and you can hear that in their words if you are listening. It's a full feature, not a bug as they say, of Western religion.<sup>6</sup>

This is religion that is simply not useful; why not instead, fight to hold off the end of the world and save everyone from divine damnation? Isn't that what the holy books teach? Because, then everyone else wouldn't be wrong. *Capisce?*

- ❖ In the movie *March or Die* (1977), both Maj. Foster and the Moroccan rebel leader El Krim were correct in their comments, but still, hundreds of men had to die in battle.
- ❖ See also Prophecy discussion, *2 Wheels in the Sky* generally, *supra*.

✚ NO CHATTELS, NO REALTY: Could some civilization exist that has no concept at all of ownership of property, even of chattels? I suppose it could, but it is difficult to mentally embrace the vision of such a place, evidence of how deeply the concept of property ownership is embedded in our civilization. Players in GGDM may attempt such a civilization within the game, and while the idea may at first evoke Shangri-La visions (or maybe leftist utopias), removal of the concept of ownership of any sort of property from civilization (it simply never occurred to their ancestors, for example) would have a profound effect and produce a civilization, coming into the game, radically different and alien to us. I don't think you could even really sidestep the issue by substituting the concept of possession without ownership; the possessor of the chattel or real property would have a certain bundle of rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities while in possession and rules would have to exist for transfer of possession, abandonment of possession and failure to adhere to communal duties and responsibilities of possession. This is ownership by another name.

- ❖ Rhetorical Question: Could 'sovereignty' be construed as a sort of 'group ownership' of a geographical area, even though individuals (both nationals and extra-nationals) may own parcels within the area? Consider that legal enforcement of individual ownership rights to individual parcels is only possible through the sovereign judicial systems who have the exclusive right to the use of legitimized physical force? Thus, as frequently occurs in history, when sovereignty is forcefully changed, individuals lose ownership of real property, frequently fleeing, and even sometimes chattels (through looting, seizure). The property and titles are then redistributed to the victors, e.g., the Norman Conquest of England and Ireland, the Ottoman Turks system of conquest,

various monarchical changes in England (e.g., the family of Elizabeth Woodville, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick).

*“And do you think that unto such as you  
A maggot-minded, starved, fanatic crew  
God gave the secret, and denied it to me?  
Well, well – what matters it? Believe that, too!”*

– Richard Le Gallienne’s translation of Omar Khayyám as quoted by Richard Hitchens in his 2007 book

**SOMEWHERE A TRUTH:** Everyone who takes the time to write or do, asserting an opinion or argument, whether intended or not, has an ‘agenda.’ Science and science-fiction are not immune.

- ❖ Merriam-Webster online dictionary at *agenda*: **2:** an underlying often ideological plan or program.
- ❖ “Back in Sudan he struggled to find a cinematic language that could reach people on an emotional level, that could be political without being owned by any particular government or movement. ‘We must open our eyes and develop a means of resistance,’ he told one interviewer. ‘All films are political. They carry a message. Cinema is a language. If you make a good film, you are understood by society.’” – Nadja Kornith (quoting Gadalla Gubara), “The Omega Man – Gadalla Gubara and the half-life of Sudanese cinema,” *Bidoun* (bidoun.org), Issue 20, Spring 2010.

During the Cold War, anthropology was particularly subjected to various agendas. The ‘nature vs. nurture’ argument about whether war is natural or learned seemed urgently important, feminism arguments about whether men or women led the way to civilization, and claims – desperately seeking proof – that early Cro-Magnons caused the extinction of Neanderthal populations through genocide (they did not) seemed to portend the inevitable catastrophe.

- ❖ Carl Sagan in the *Cosmos* series, certainly had an agenda. Sometimes the accuracy of historical fact was the sacrificial victim in the presentation.

Any television or movie series that has a story arc – and a story arc requires dramatically presenting and resolving competing agendas – will eventually wander into a chosen set of philosophical questions. *Babylon 5* stated its questions most clearly, the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* did a very good job, eventually getting to the point; *Matrix* was pretty good if also pretty much *out there*. *Andromeda*, sidetracked by direction disputes, wandered off into trippy sci-fantasy.<sup>7</sup> When a series wanders around and loses coherence or its story arc, it becomes *Lost*.

- ❖ Somewhere between conflicting agendas are little gems of truth that we can mine and hold. It is the basis of our *adversarial legal system*, dialectic argument, and of knowledge formation since the beginning of civilization.

I grew up during the Cold War, undoubtedly, some witty crank will comment that I caught a bad case of the Cold (War) and never got over it. I have no doubt that my thoughts expressed here reflect that background. And the astute reader can probably pick out my political views and what news I read, from whom I choose to quote. I am equally sure that I have an ‘agenda.’<sup>8</sup>

*“In 1867, George Campbell, Duke of Argyll, had published The Reign of Law, a book that Darwin found deeply annoying. A supporter of Richard Owen, Campbell argued that while evolution (or ‘Development’) might be observable in the fossil record, it was merely evidence of God’s purpose. God, for example, would cause horses and oxen to evolve in time to meet human needs. The brightly colored plumage of birds, Campbell went on, were simply God’s decorations of nature for humanity’s enjoyment.”*

– Jonathan Clements, Darwin’s Notebook: The Life, Times, and Discoveries of Charles Robert Darwin (2009) <sup>9</sup>

**THINKING AS RECREATION:** My maternal grandmother, born in 1926, has a special place in my youth, a green suburban refuge of kindness, calm, and fun in a youth of chaos, malnutrition, cultural confusion, senseless violence, crime, animal death, fear and *appalling adult stupidity*.

One day when I was about 15-years old, I was happily telling my grandmother about Dungeons & Dragons and talking about player-character creation. At some point after about the 15 minute mark, my grandmother said, “That seems like a lot of work to play a game!” It suddenly occurred to me at that point how much things had changed in two generations; here I was happily engaging in intellectual activities for a game, whereas, for my grandmother’s generation (as my mother explained), thinking was something that was work, that you did at work and for raising a family and keeping house, recreation was non-thinking.<sup>10</sup>

- ❖ Some of the confusion on this point seems to be reflected in the dialogue of the movie *The Whole Wide World* (1996) about the life of Robert E. Howard through the eyes of his part-time girlfriend, schoolteacher and writer Novalyne Price. He expresses that he has felt pressure to get a job, get ‘real work’ by his cohorts of townfolk, but then says that writing *is* work. His father was the town doctor and that perhaps protected him socially from some of the pressure; I would guess that his father thought, well, if some guy in New York City is paying him real money to publish whatever he writes, he has a job.

A brief look at the games that would have been popular in the 1930s and 40s when my grandmother was growing up shows games that involve high luck and minimal thinking; as opposed to the analysis paralysis feature of modern board games.

I have seen dozens of definitions of an “intellectual person” (i.e. ‘intellectuals’) over the years; most of them focus on sociology and professions related to intellectual persons. Most of them range from snarky to vaguely critical,<sup>11</sup> the best that can seemingly be hoped for in any definition of an intellectual person is careful neutrality. I do not believe I have seen a definition of an intellectual person that includes primarily thinking and learning as a recreational activity.

Tabletop gaming hobby, in its current state, is an intellectual activity, though tabletop gaming as a hobby and activity does not make gamers intellectuals – far from it. But still, there must be a base quality of recreation to learning and thinking that makes some people grow and evolve into intellectuals; it would be difficult to be an ‘intellectual’ when thinking is work, when doing so feels like pushing a boulder up a hill every day.

- ❖ This is parallel to but also goes beyond the assertion of Erasmus regarding learning as a game.

✚ VOID PILOTS: One of my frequent mental recreations in younger years was to imagine having a conversation with someone from the past, trying to explain to them what has happened in the world since their time, or some particular event, development or nuance of our times. Such imaginary conversations can be very instructive. What would Martin Luther think of nuclear weapons? Can you introduce Isaac Newton to Hypatia of Alexandria at a telescope viewing party? Even though they are both exceptional intellects in the same or similar areas of study, would there be any personal, overcoming sexual-romantic attraction?

In the last ten or fifteen years, I have spent far more time playing FreeCell, Kyodai Mahjongg 2006 and the Race for the Galaxy PC game, than in tabletop gaming. I never seem to tire permanently of FreeCell or Kyodai Mahjongg – I have played thousands of games of each (often while musing about other things), I am probably no better than any other player – but I have come to think that what keeps me playing these games is that I like – am addicted to – the interlocking complexities of unraveling (or ‘solving’) the game boards. More than I enjoy human company, I’ve never been addicted to humanity (and isn’t that what we really mean by ‘well adjusted’? – a term that almost makes me cringe like a backache). Like Spinrad’s Void Pilots, GGDM is a vast extension of my ‘addiction’... not to humanity. My understanding of great thinkers such as Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes, Friedrich Nietzsche and others suggests it was true for them too.

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*“I’m not a fan of simulations where, ‘Oh, we’ll go play a simulation of world peace and figure out how to make peace’ and then somehow magically that will get translated into the real world. No, that’s not the kind of games that I make.” – Jane McGonigal*

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**SIMULATING A LIFE:** From the time I was young, I was obsessed with simulation games. My first hobby games were crunchy commercial wargames (historical/sci-fi military simulations) from Avalon Hill, Yaquinto, SPI, Metagaming, GDW, and later, Victory Games; I also picked up my first D&D box set when I was about 13 or 14 years old. To me, at that age, game and simulation were synonymous, I viewed all games as basically simulations. This is still common today, I receive regular spam emails advertising ‘airplane flying games’ which are flight simulators; there is no game to it, it’s a flight simulation! They are even less a ‘game’ than solitaire.

I played solitaire, I didn’t play wargames with people (or at least, normal, competent opponents) until I arrived at artillery school in October 1985 and didn’t play D&D with people (other than my mother two or three times, once with the first dungeon I created) until I arrived in Okinawa, Japan, in early 1986.<sup>12</sup>

- ❖ Later, as a battlefield intelligence analyst, I experienced real military ‘map-ex’ training, such as ARTBASS. A most memorable line was the Lt. Col. yelling, “Capt. Campbell, where are my HEMTTS!?” during a precision attack maneuver. Uh oh.

I began designing games when I was 13; my first design was, laughably, a clone of a proprietorship board game that I was fascinated with at the time, The American Dream, and had played numerous times with my family (mother, aunt and uncle). I had, of course, played Easy Money, Payday and Monopoly many times with other people, and Life once or twice, and many, many games of Aggravation on my grandmother’s homemade game board. In the days before home PCs (I programmed Trash 80s in 11<sup>th</sup> grade), I handwrote the rules for my first game on college

ruled paper in blue pen, and taped together a dozen sheets of paper to hand draw the game board with pen and ruler. I think I played it once with my mother – the things mothers have to endure! The game design project quickly dissipated as I discovered Avalon Hill games and D&D.

Sometime when I was about 14 years old, I read Brian Aldiss' Galactic Empires anthologies (Vols. 1 and 2), and especially liked Alfred Coppel's "The Rebel of Valkyr" and Gardner F. Fox's "Tonight the Stars Revolt." Also in that time, I read Roger Zelazny's Chronicles of Amber (The Corwin Cycle, 1970-1978) and Robert Holdstock's Where Time Winds Blow (1981). I still have all of those same book-club edition books (and a lot of other books!).

- ❖ I reread both of these stories again 35 years later. "Rebel of Valkyr" still holds up well enough, "Tonight the Stars Revolt" less so. The *latter* feels thin, like if you think about it too hard, the story will fall apart; it lacks memorable insights, it feels lacking in substance, depth and cohesion: Ok, so the pirate guy uses the Elders' black energy pool to defeat the evil government (aka *dues ex machina*), kills the leader, wins the sexy courtesan, Moana (and we get a glimpse of a future utopian Earth too!). I can see why I liked the story when I was 14 – it fits perfectly in every respect Spinrad's "Emperor of Everything" pulp formula, a wank fantasy – and why it was published in Planet Stories (the entire issue is available to read online for free), and it was definitely an image influence that fed into the Machines & Mercenaries project (*ut infra*). "Rebel of Valkyr" was also available on ePub for free.

Somehow, all of this combined with wargaming into a sprawling idea that I called "Machines & Mercenaries," a strategic and tactical wargame set in a world where the time winds blow, and armies from many periods co-exist as mercenary units. Sort of Heroscape before Heroscape.

I wrote and rewrote the rules by hand maybe a dozen times, then later started using my mother's old typewriter by kerosene lamp. I bought a big sheet of one inch blocks paper and drew a world map. I started thinking about things like, well, how high can you build a medieval tower? How would a Macedonian phalanx fare against the British thin red line?

- ❖ You see hundreds of these sorts of (increasingly ridiculous) game simulation videos on YouTube now with titles such as "5,000 German soldiers vs. 60,000 Spartans," "1,000 Jedi vs. 25,000 Spartans" or "300 U.S. Marines vs. 25,000 Spartans." For the record, Sparta never fielded an army that was much more than 8,000 hoplites.

I started thinking about fuel and ammo consumption, how many practice rounds does it take to improve the quality of a unit? The game got really detailed, logistical, with military engineering and civilizations tossed in. I invented two sapient alien species that inhabited the world, High Spidera – undoubtedly inspired by Tolkien's spiders of Mirkwood, because at that age, what you think is your genius creativity is actually self-deluded, purblind, thinly veiled imitation – and another race that I cannot now recall. I worked on it until I went to boot camp the summer I was 17 years old, and then picked it up and fiddled with it some more when I was 19 years old (there was also another game, called "Again!" that I started when I was about 16, inspired a bit by Avalon Hill's Starship Troopers, and worked on again when I was 19). It was never transferred to a computer file, so all I have left is the memory and the big rolled map I created.

- ❖ "During the 1950s, I decided, as did many others, that many practical problems were beyond analytic solution and that simulation techniques were required. At RAND, I

participated in the building of large logistics simulation models; at General Electric, I helped build models of manufacturing plants.” – Harry Markowitz.

There is not much simulation value in modern mainstream tabletop hobby games. There are still a few small hex-and-counter wargame and block-wargame companies – and wargames must always be simulations – but they don’t produce enough to get into the main distribution channels (and tend to detest the modern gaming industry generally, with good reason); board historical wargaming has been sidelined from the tabletop gaming mainstream to a niche hobby. The modern tabletop game market has moved to dumbed-down mass appeal<sup>13</sup> and instant playability, gloss, color and plastic; modern tabletop games – following the German model – are abstractions, not simulations, with rules built for absolute fairness, balance, playability, and ‘gamey mechanics’ (e.g., the last place player getting an extra resource by virtue of being in last place) *that don’t make sense in any reality test*. Unsurprisingly then, modern tabletop gaming has moved away from real history into fantasy and science-fiction themes, and vague sorts of pseudohistory where the designer can control the setting and rules don’t have to answer to simulation value.

- ❖ You may, if you like, conclude that GGDM and much of my commentary is in some significant part, a reaction or revolt against ‘dumbing down’ and that I am a symptom or product of the system described by New York City school teacher John Taylor Gatto in his books. In Gatto’s terms, I struggle to rise above the “diminishment” of my public schooling, to think.<sup>14</sup>

Starting from the conflict simulation games of my youth, GGDM has travelled in the opposite direction as far from those games as modern tabletop gaming has; GGDM is about as directly *opposite* as possible in relation to modern tabletop gaming. They say that the surface of the universe may be some sort of a hypersphere however.

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*“I never said, ‘I want to be alone.’ I only said, ‘I want to be let alone!’ There is all the difference.” – Greta Garbo<sup>15</sup>*

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**GRETA & GATTICA:** I identify with Greta Garbo. No, I don’t cross-dress, she and I don’t have the same tastes in clothing.

- ❖ “Garbo is lonely. She always has been and she always will be. She lives in the core of a vast aching aloneness. She is a great artist, but it is both her supreme glory and her supreme tragedy that art is to her the only reality. The figures of living men and women, the events of everyday existence, move about her, shadowy, unsubstantial. It is only when she breathes the breath of life into a part, clothes with her own flesh and blood the concept of a playwright, that she herself is fully awake, fully alive.” – Marie Dressler.
- ❖ “I think an artist who abandons his art is the saddest thing in the world, sadder than death. There must have been something about Garbo’s film career that profoundly revolted her.” – Tennessee Williams.

We are born alone, we die alone, even if surrounded by people. In between is an eyes-averted, head-down trip through the Void while our two feet remain firmly on Earth. I am not, however, advocating for a ‘hive mind’ (e.g., Ender’s Game (1985), Starship Troopers (1959), or Star Trek TNG’s Borg) – no human wants that, to the extent we can think about it, the idea is (strangely) one of our worst horrors. But we may be heading toward a ‘sort of’ collective intelligence with

global communication, expedient air travel, virtual reality settings (*a la* Second Life, though Linden has done a very poor job with it), and acculturation – this concept is expanded to its natural final state by the New Commonality/Mindscape in Mindjammer RPG (2009), a trans-human RPG that combines elements of Traveller RPG, Eclipse Phase RPG and a little Cordwainer Smith (from TV Tropes, “Mindjammer,” December 25, 2018).

I also fancy that the decision I made at 50 years old to spend a year or more finishing GGDM (as in a *sabbatical* – err self-employed, unemployed, I am a little too old to use a ‘gap year’ excuse, eh?) is similar to Vincent’s (natural born, not engineered) decision in the movie Gattaca (1997) when he finally beat his younger, genetically-engineered brother Anton in a game of chicken that involved swimming as far out to sea as possible before turning back:

❖ **Vincent:** You wanna know how I did it? This is how I did it Anton: I never saved anything for the swim back.

I often feel that I am swimming in the deep, but I don’t know if it is toward or away from land. The only reason I know that there must be land is that I am not a sea creature. I’ll end up someplace, probably in Davy Jones locker.

❖ “The ocean is a desert with its life underground and the perfect disguise above.” – America, “Horse with No Name” (1971).

If I may flatter myself, I feel like my life is moving in a direction that most people cannot point, it feels like a tesseract. Don’t ask me which direction that is because ... it’s a tesseract.

❖ “It was said of Abba John the Dwarf, that one day he said to his elder brother, ‘I should like to be free of all care, like the angels, who do not work, but ceaselessly offer worship to God.’ So he took off his cloak and went away into the desert. After a week he came back to his brother. When he knocked on the door, he heard his brother say, before he opened it ‘Who are you?’ He said, ‘I am John, your brother.’ But he replied, ‘John has become an angel, and henceforth he is no longer among men.’ Then the other begged him saying, ‘It is I.’ However, his brother did not let him in, but left him there in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said to him, ‘You are a man and you must once again work in order to eat.’ Then John made a prostration before him, saying, ‘Forgive me.’” – from Wikipedia article, “Desert Fathers” quoting The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, p. 86, trans. by Benedicta Ward, SLG, available for free online (<http://www.g4er.tk/books/sayings-of-the-desert-fathers.pdf>).

➤ I think there is a bit of dishonesty when religious adherents claim to have no material possessions in the world, or desires, and are living in poverty as a pious example to all, but are living off the donations and support of others. This includes that crazy guy who wandered around Palestine spreading his delusions while being financially supported by his wealthy convert and possible lover, Mary of Magdalene. But we have been trained and reflexively accept without question that religiously inspired poverty is *de facto* evidence of purity and holiness – and the financial support of others considered evidence of rightness and religious conversion – rather than the whole charade being understood as stupidity, delusion and laziness, for some would rather live a lie than do honest work.

It is thus that with 5 Fallen to Earth, my ‘sabbatical’ comes to an end, this part of the GGDM project is crossed off my ‘bucket list’ and I must now fall to the Earth, descend again into the profane, and once again work in order to eat (or more properly, so that my cats can eat).

- ❖ “[Gertrude ‘Trudle’] Junge died from cancer in Munich on 10 February 2002 at the age of 81, reportedly having said shortly before her death, ‘Now that I’ve let go of my story, I can let go of my life.’” – Gertrude “Trudle” Junge, after the publication of her memoirs Until the Final Hour (2002), as quoted in Wikipedia biographical article about her, captured May 27, 2019.

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*“Carry on, you will always remember,  
Carry on, nothing equals the splendor!”*

– Kansas, “Carry On Our Wayward Son”

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**WHAT A FOOL BELIEVES:** When I was a young teenager, in the early 1980s, filled with the lust for everything that was possible, I knew a 30-something man, who was a UFO believer and belonged to local UFO social gatherings. We had many conversations about UFOs, ghosts, the occult, and rock ‘n roll music. UFOs were exciting and made sense to my young mind,<sup>16</sup> I read all of the UFO and Bermuda Triangle books (I love that BT pink bunny commercial) of the day.

- ❖ When I was young, from my teens into my twenties, one of my favorite songs was Styx “Come Sail Away” (1977). I especially liked the final lyric. Now, decades later, I think that the final lyric was unnecessary and even kind of cheapens the song. “Come Sail Away” was Styx’ attempt to create a song like Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven,” but didn’t quite work as well overall in duplicating the effect and the addition of the final lyric is a transparent appeal to a youth audience (like me), or just exasperation and a desperate attempt to give the song more cowbell.

Ten years later, after service and travel, and some college, he lived with us for a time (his wife kicked him out, I think, a regular occurrence in his life). Literally, nothing had changed in his life or his personality, except that he seemed a lot dumber than he was when I was younger.

- ❖ Empirical appreciation of evidence is usually lacking in youth. The true child prodigy is one who has a grasp of evidence and empirical method and reasoning at an age when the others (like me) are playing pretend.

At that point, his situation became transparent to me; he was a burnt-out drug user, hippie wannabe from the early 70s; he was still mentally living in the early 70s and the world had passed him by – nothing had changed for him since high school; he really didn’t understand much of what went on in the world or his own life. In a world where he felt dumb (and don’t we all?), *his belief in UFOs was the one thing that could never be falsified or argued away* (like God for most other people) – and he would smugly and willingly argue for hours about it with that stupid grin; that UFOs existed was the one *special thing* he knew that the rest of the world didn’t apparently. It made him feel wiser than the rest of us, similar to his apparent belief that he knew secret meanings to the lyrics of 70s rock songs.<sup>17</sup>

- ❖ “What a fool believes he sees, no wise man has the power to reason away.” – Doobie Brothers.



When I was young, I believed in UFOs more than I believed in God. Others have had similar thoughts; there are fringe religions that believe that God sent UFOs, that UFOs are piloted by angels, and other such syncretisms. If you are a religion in search of a modern miracle to refresh the dusty old books, why not UFOs? Unprovable and unfalsifiable. Just like anyone's God.

Arguments about the existence of God and Love (and 'the love of God') have the same characteristics,<sup>18</sup> there is little practical difference between arguments about God and UFOs; the latter only seems more concrete and empirical for being modern. Note the rise of 'UFO religions' in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century (and from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Western Esotericism), countering the de-mystification of the world by empiricism. It seems to be an essential core or bedrock of human psychology that we must 'believe' in something that cannot be disproven directly, empirically or argued away.<sup>19</sup>

- ❖ There is an argument that the Robertson Panel's inquiry was perfunctory and that the conclusion was predetermined, and that the panel's report discouraged serious scientific or intellectual inquiry of UFOs and extraterrestrial life possibilities for decades. This is reflected in the movie Contact (1995), and also thus exported the whole subject into the realm of fiction, conspiracy theories, and fringe religion through the 60s, 70s, and 80s. However, the way the question was phrased and the way the panel went about answering the question they were asked to investigate and their conclusions and recommendations, clearly show that they were a creature of their time – 1953 – more concerned with how the enemy (you know who) might exploit UFO paranoia in an attack on the United States.<sup>20</sup> They were not interested in whether UFOs were real.
- ❖ In or about 1990 or 1991, I was reading some fringe book about UFOs or strange occurrences, and for some reason, I decided to look at the bibliography appendix. This was possibly the first time I had ever seriously glanced at the bibliography in any book I had read, and I possibly did so because I was going to Lycoming College at the time, my first attempt at college. What I saw in the bibliography shocked me, the author was mainly citing articles from the National Enquirer, Weekly World News, Globe and other supermarket checkout line tabloids that I knew well from working as an overnight janitor in a grocery store. I couldn't believe that anyone would seriously list those as bibliographic references; I remember that I literally tossed the book back over my shoulder and left it on the ground for some other fool.

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*“Keeping silence, I resigned  
My friends would think I was a nut  
Turning water into wine  
Open doors would soon be shut.”*

– Peter Gabriel, “Solsbury Hill” (1977)

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*“Do not be guilty of possessing a library of learned books while lacking learning yourself.” – Desiderius Erasmus*

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**THE LIBRARY:** Sometime in the last two months of 1996, I had a dream that I still remember. When I was a teenager, I had many vivid dreams and could remember many of them when I woke up. Some of those, I still remember vaguely, but by 1996, it was more unusual for me to remember anything when I awoke. In 1996, I was standing in some place; my mind interpreted it as a warehouse. It was dark there, except for one overhead light where I was standing. There was a small table, just a basic worktable, grey metal at the edge of the light. I was speaking to people I could not see, about something I don't remember clearly. What I did remember when I awoke was that we discussed the Library of Alexandria. I recalled being told that the Library of Alexandria was not lost; that it still existed and that we would find it when the time came.<sup>21</sup>

While it is true that I had seen Carl Sagan's Cosmos episode featuring his distorted story of the destruction of the Library of Alexandria and the death of Hypatia of Alexandria many times,<sup>22</sup> thinking about it immediately afterward, I determined that I had no reason to think about the Library at that time and certainly no reason to dream about it; I had not thought about it in a very long time before that dream, nor had I watched Cosmos in many years.

The destruction of the Library of Congress and the major world university libraries would be a comparable event to the loss of the Libraries of Alexandria, Pergamum, and Celsus, and is a factor and feature in any societal collapse following a worldwide catastrophic event.<sup>23</sup> This was especially true in our fears of nuclear holocaust prior to the internet and modern mass data storage; that the knowledge of civilization would be lost to those who survived.

- ❖ This account is stated matter-of-factly; I have no desire to follow the esotericism and/or channeled or received ancient knowledge ways of Crowley, Blavatsky, or John Smith or a thousand others of their ilk. It's not my business, it's not useful here. If you claim to be receiving knowledge and inspiration from extraterrestrial or extra-dimensional sources (both terms are used in the broadest sense), people will stop hearing you seriously, you will be heard from the kid's table with amusement – even if it is perfectly clear that you are correct in whatever you are saying. Humanity only currently accepts knowledge, suggestion and inspiration from humanity. Thus the Bible and other ancient holy books have fallen far in the public view as their ancient authors claimed to have inspiration and power from transcendent beings in the universe.

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*“No serious futurist deals in prediction. These are left for television oracles and newspaper astrologers.”*

– Alvin Toffler as quoted by Courtney Subramanian, “Alvin Toffler: What he got right – and wrong,” BBC, July 1, 2016, following his passing in June 2016

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**SUNRISE:** The Sun rises every morning. It has, as far as we can tell, risen every morning for billions of years; however long this spinning rock or its asteroid predecessors spun in orbit, the Sun has risen. The Sun was rising (and setting) long before humans or their ancestors or *any form of life on Earth*, were present to *look*.

There are only two possible results each day; either the sun rises or it does not. While there are arguably a lot of stellar mechanics involved, it basically comes down to heads or tails from the Earth point of view. Even if the sun rose, but barely cleared the horizon (as in some extreme latitudes), or rose on the wrong side of the bed, for most of the Earth (except the poles) the Sun rises or it does not. The cosmic coin-flip has come up heads every day for 4.6 billion years.

Who or what was or is *looking* such that the ghost probabilities continually collapse into ‘heads’ results, not only here, but across the trillions of planets of the expanding universe, each ‘day’? Of course, the suggested answer runs to all sorts of possibilities and ideas that science does not embrace, and thus belongs in the realms of philosophy and/or religion, but is not anywhere close to ‘proof’ of the existence of the Abrahamic God.

- ❖ For example, scientist have rejected generally and implicitly, the human consciousness explanation for the experiment with the two holes as untenable or unacceptable, and is thus an example of ‘quantum mysticism.’ However, they have generally failed to offer a better explanation. See Peek-a-Boo discussion, 2 Expansion, p. 893, *supra*.

Looking is the trait that life shares with the universe; evolution – at the risk of using teleological language – generally seems to drift toward greater sentience, sapience, all of which result in exponentially greater abilities to *look* at the universe, or at least, the environment in which the creature lives. The ‘purpose’ or ‘function’ of consciousness may be to ‘look’ at the universe.

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*“He who influences the thought of his times, influences all the times that follow. He has made his impression on eternity.”<sup>24</sup> – Hypatia of Alexandria <sup>25</sup>*

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**Prologue to Doggerel**

*Staring into the existential void as unblinking as I can<sup>26</sup>*

*I did not ask to be born, I did not ask to survive*

*I am not allowed to be un-born*

*My mother’s life would have been a lot better*

*had I not been born*

*If there was any ‘greater purpose’ to this living farce –  
and GGDM is not it –*

*50+ years onward, I am thoroughly unimpressed with the results*

*That may be incredibly shortsighted*

*But that is humanity <sup>27</sup>*

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**End Game**

*There were times when I thought I was great and leading the intellectual charge.*

*There were times when I thought I was delusional and wasting my time,*

*but at least I wasn’t wasting anyone else’s time or money.*

*In the end, I thought only that this was the one thing I had left that I could accomplish.<sup>28</sup>*

*It takes as long as it takes, but I don’t have even a fraction of forever.<sup>29</sup>*

*I am an evolutionary dead end.<sup>30</sup>*

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**Epilogue**

*Someday, GGDM will be a work attributed to an unknown ancient writer.<sup>31</sup>*

*Or probably not. What do we know about the best seller list of 1000 B.C.?*

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*“Doctor, my eyes cannot see the sky*

*Is this the price for having learned*

*How not to cry?”*

– Jackson Brown, “Doctor, My Eyes” (1972)

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## Endnotes.

<sup>1</sup> Commentary: Notice that Bertrand Russell is using the “what is an agnostic” discussion to answer the Why Not question independent of religion: “Why do you not do so?” is a long-winded version of the Why Not question. See Why Not discussion in 2 Disruption, p. 269, *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary: Male cats have no chivalric code; today I watched a young male suddenly attack another male from behind as he had turned to leave following an earlier stare-down confrontation over food dishes where the younger male had backed slightly away. There was no female present; the young male simply considers the heated cathouse, the food dish, and my porch as his territory and the other male was an intruder. Chivalric code is part of a worldview where heaven and earth, humans and animals were separated by divine sanction, it was an attempt to make humans not like animals – similar to religious promotion of the missionary position as the only proper, non-bestial sex for humans (because they thought that only humans copulate face to face, and all the other beasts do it the other way) – even though humans fight like animals, eat like animals, eliminate like animals, and breed like animals.

<sup>3</sup> Citation: “And even if the Astros receive the biggest punishment in baseball history, is it really going to stop teams from trying to cheat. There’s a reason why players privately believe that PED use is on a rise and the baseballs aren’t the only thing being juiced. ‘Why are the pitch stealing allegations a surprise to anyone?’ free agent infielder Trevor Plouffe tweeted. ‘Do you know the stakes involved? That’s why guys still get popped for PEDs. The reward outweighs the risk for many. That goes for organizations and players.’” – Bob Nightengale, “‘This tarnishes everything’: Astros cheating allegations have baseball world demanding punishment,” USA Today, November 14, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Commentary: *Normal people*, if they found anyone injured in a fight and knocked unconscious, would call emergency medical assistance and try to help. Unless they were the criminal who did it, or Hollywood action heroes, who instead complain that they have to wait for someone to wake up so that they can continue the ‘interrogation.’ ☺

<sup>5</sup> Commentary: I worked on a civil liability case involving sex between a high school teacher and students. Despite being a worn-out fiction sub-trope of the older-younger trope (e.g., *Lolita* (1955) which became a generic term by the 1970s) and the subject of a popular song (The Rolling Stones, “Don’t Stand So Close to Me” (1980)), it is strictly illegal and consent is irrelevant, both because of the age of consent and because of the public authority and responsibility of school teachers over students (even when the student is over the age of consent). The perp and his pal were sentenced to jail.

<sup>6</sup> Commentary: The fact that R.N. Smart’s “benevolent world exploder” – a euphemism for a moral supreme being (if not God or a Creator) – has not exploded this world, is only evidence of the fact that the benevolent world exploder has not exploded the world. It strongly suggests, however, that no such entity exists and/or that we have vastly misunderstood the whole premise on which our religion is based, that we have been making affirmative statements about things we cannot possibly know.

- ✓ “And this abdication of the responsibility to understand reality, this utter dismissal of reality in favor of pretty stories and profound-sounding deepities, this casual shrugging off of the question ‘What is real?’ as if it were irrelevant trivia, is probably the thing I find most maddening about religious belief.” – Greta Christina (blog), “Deepities On Parade: ‘Oh My God’ Reviewed” (movie review), November 27, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Commentary: How to lose an audience: I was an original fan of the Andromeda television series, I watched it every week for at least the first two seasons from when it began airing in the U.S. At some point early in the third season, the series went off the rails, the episodes became asinine, with unbearable attempts at slapstick comedy and the story arc seemed to fall into the black hole. I understood from reading online at the time that Kevin Sorbo wanted the series to be lighter, wanted it more comedic, wanted less doom and gloom, less serious story arc (more like his Hercules series, I guess). Some fans apparently disliked his character, Dylan Hunt; I did not dislike Dylan Hunt, but I did dislike Kevin Sorbo and thought that his action-hero ego was destroying the program. They lost me as a viewer in the middle of the third season.

- ✓ A television or film series, or even just a movie, has a contract with the audience. The people who became Andromeda fans were people who liked serious New Wave sci-fi, and doom and gloom, and a big story arc; switching to lighter, comedic, standalone episodes, and silliness in the third season lost the audience.
- ✓ The film *Passengers* (2016) made this mistake; critics called it a science-fiction story that turns into a rom-com that dodges all of the ethical issues it raises.
- ✓ I did later watch Andromeda sporadically in the last two seasons, but I had lost the thread and the series had evolved into a bizarre dark science-fantasy story.

<sup>8</sup> **Commentary:** Go ahead, call me an ‘east coast urban elitist globalist’ and ignore me. I wear that badge of honor like any red blooded hoop’n hollering American deplorable does. But I won’t share the basket space with you.

<sup>9</sup> **Commentary:** It is amazing how utterly self-centered humanity was in those Victorian days ... wait ... nothing has changed really in the last 150 years (e.g., see David Benatar feature quote, 3 Diplomacy, p. 1134, *supra*)! The arguments of Campbell are naught but a desperate attempt to maintain a human-centric universe where the Christian God is a doting parent and the Europeans are his favorite children. *Argument from design* that everything was made for humans is the ultimate expression of human conceit.

- ✓ Compare George Campbell’s argument in 1867 to Pangloss in Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759). This oddly demonstrates that Pangloss wasn’t an outlandish fictional character, but rather representative of an actual strain of thought in Europe.

<sup>10</sup> **Commentary:** Do you ever get tired of breathing? Ok, give your chest a rest for a few minutes. You can’t, of course. Thinking is almost as imperative for humans as breathing, the two are connected both through the rhythm of the most primitive part of your brain and the fact that it supplies the brain with blood and energy and carries off waste. It is thus that someone like myself can never understand not thinking which is akin to suicide.

<sup>11</sup> **Citation:** e.g., “Sociology is a cult based around the intellectual pseudoscience of studying society. Originally popular with old bearded men who smoke pipes whilst reclining in arm-chairs, it has now managed to find a younger generation of converts thanks to its curricular introduction into sixth-form colleges and universities. Synonymous with Scientology, Sociology uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop and refine a body of knowledge and theory about human social activity.” – from the Uncyclopedia.

- ✓ This was quoted in both the RationalWiki article, “Sociology” and by Rose Eveleth in “Whatever Happened to Sociologists?” SmartNews (on smithsonianmag.org), November 6, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> **Commentary:** My first gaming convention was OrcCon 12, about two months before I went to Origins ‘89 in LA. I was 20 years old, I was in gaming heaven for two three-day weekends. A group of 10 Marines and Sailors rented a hotel room for 3 people, had an extra bed rolled in, and slept and showered in shifts; everyone brought their own sleeping bag, the closets and corners were piled high with luggage and game stuff. Two years later, Origins ‘91 in Atlanta, run concurrently with ACE (Atlanta Comics Expo), felt dull and lifeless in comparison. Likewise, my first GenCon was two years before it moved from Milwaukee to Indianapolis, and it was fantastic; I went again the next year, the last year in Milwaukee, and GenCon then felt absurd, overblown, and a gigantic hassle, not fun.

<sup>13</sup> **Commentary:** There is an *interesting intersection* of ‘dumbing down’ and the Dunning-Kruger effect that shows the widespread effects of dumbing-down in politics, media, and schools: Everything is much larger and more complicated and grander or sublime than most people realize, and I have tried very much to emphasize this in GGDM. It is what I have spent my life figuring out when learning to see dynamics and wholisms. Part of the problem is the increase of dumbing-down proportional to the growing scale and complexity of our world; in the Dunning-Kruger effect on a mass scale, people do not know the incompetence of their understanding of the world, in fact, they don’t even know to ask the questions that would reveal to them their own incompetence of understanding the world.

<sup>14</sup> **Commentary:** As to Gatto’s theories, I have not read his books, but have secondary knowledge (not to mention that the concept of ‘dumbing down’ is his permanent mark on our culture, though the term was used by filmmakers in the 1930s), and I guess it comes down to what you think is the purpose of public education and the responsibility of parents? And that is exactly what he challenges. I have heard in the past that the purpose of public education (and colleges) is to create a universal level of life skills – basic literacy, knowledge of our culture, work problem solving, and math skills – in the population and to prepare people for the workforce.

On some level, this would be contrary to Gatto’s more radical proposals, as English 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century pedagogy which sought to standardize English (replacing rhetoric teaching with grammar and composition) and accommodate children of immigrants into English culture, required children to become used to authority and control, to memorize and be tested in retention of facts, to become empirical (again, I return to the opening paragraphs of Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times* (1854), see discussion of Lancastrian education, Gradgrind, 1 Colleges, p. 463, *supra*), to continue the nation and culture, and this pedagogy was inherited by the United States which had many of the same problems to solve. English pedagogy and Gatto’s objections represent opposite ends of the spectrum.

- ✓ Gatto takes a similar dim view of the purpose of the current state education systems that I take of the universe without intrinsic meaning, that I take of humanity, and that I take of the petty entropy we experience every day, as expressed here and there in GGDM, *supra*. Has anyone called him a wacko? Probably. But his publishers love him at least, because he has sold lots of copies of his books. I am not here selling.

<sup>15</sup> Commentary: Ultimately, in the end, in a reasonably free society, many or most people get what they really want (within existential limits); I wanted to be left alone, to think, to be in my own zone, to exit in my own time. That is what I got. I don't mind too much, but there are tradeoffs always.

<sup>16</sup> Commentary: Dr. Turzanski (a Hungarian holocaust survivor), my high school astronomy teacher (his son Stanislaw, "Stan the Sun Man" was in my class) and the only one who could operate the school planetarium, whom I admired greatly in my youth, could easily have squashed my belief in UFOs but chose not to do so. We watched Carl Sagan Cosmos episodes on different occasions during the school year, and most certainly watched the ones where he references and discusses UFOs and the possibility of technological alien intelligences. Whatever his personal beliefs, having embraced Cosmos as teaching aids (and being trained in empiricism and science), Doc Turzanski could not and would not say directly to me or the class that UFOs don't exist. Whether UFOs exist or not, there was perhaps more value in letting youthful fancy run wild about such things (even as I look back with some embarrassment 35 years later), and I recall encountering a similar opinion in a rhetorical theory essay that I read much later at Duquesne University which criticized education of youth that emphasized memorization of facts, suggesting that youth being more prone to physical activity and imagination, should be taught dance, sport, music, rhetoric and oratory, art, literature and such as more appropriate to their interests.

<sup>17</sup> Commentary: I have no musical ability, but I *grok* the silence.

<sup>18</sup> Commentary: I was also a post-hippy wannabe Free Love anarchist in my youth, or thought I was and tried to be. It turned out to be irrelevant in the end – your opinion matters little if you weren't invited to the party. Now, I no longer care. Because if I did, I'd probably be angry about it. So you have a choice. To care or not care, to be angry or not (see also Programming Dilemma, 1 Culture, p. 352, *supra*). You eventually find out that it didn't matter in the end, that the things you argued about in your youth seem petty, pointless in hindsight. And when you grow too tired to be angry, you take your jagged little bitterness pills and no longer care.

<sup>19</sup> Commentary: Take for example the usual spam email that says something like, there is a cure for disease X and Big Pharma/Big Government is hiding it because they are making billions off selling medicines. Is it possible? Yes, it's also possible that the sun won't rise tomorrow; I can't imagine how, but it is possible that the sun won't rise tomorrow.

- ✓ It's also possible that the Earth has been visited by extraterrestrials and my stupid uncle – possibly the only thing on Earth dumber than a cow – might even have been abducted by one of them for study (I think he would have liked it).
- ✓ And it's also possible that the NFL is being destroyed by global liberals and that the Catholic Church needs illegal immigrants to survive. Both charges were made during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.

But this is the kernel of hype, paranoia and conspiracy theories (and even literal religious beliefs in any sort of supreme being(s)); the pitch is phrased in a way that because it's possible – because your mind cannot immediately dismiss the assertion as impossible, lacking evidence or commitment – then it must or might be true because they are saying so. When someone makes claims as such, the burden is on them to provide evidence; ask to see the evidence (see Hitchens' Razor: "What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence"). The really good cons will have some scant evidence (sort of like religious arguments), which should still be treated critically. The vast majority will be found to be making statements about things they cannot possibly know or defend.

<sup>20</sup> Commentary: The UFO community understood the television program Project Blue Book (aka Project UFO, 1978-1979) as an assault on their beliefs and an attempt to discredit and explain away UFOs (a logical extension of the recommendations of the Robertson Panel, using television programming to suppress the UFO groups). I remember the program, but I was not a regular TV viewer then, I saw perhaps half a dozen scattered episodes. But such is the nature of their beliefs that the UFO community reacted in generally the same way as fundamentalist Christianity did when presented with archeological evidence of the historical inaccuracy of the Bible or of their creation story.

- ✓ In my opinion, the best approach to UFOs is an agnostic one. No one can say with absolute certainty whether aliens have visited the Earth in previous decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century or whether humans have encountered or communicated with them. No one can, with seriousness, dismiss it with absolute certainty either, although there is plenty of room for suspicion in what UFO reports indicate about our inflated sense of self-importance in the universe. Simply put, whether the discussion is UFOs or God (either separately or if as some believe, they are the same or connected), the evidence is so frustratingly inconclusive, sporadic, and human-centric that it is hard to take the matter seriously and certainly does not raise to any level of fact (other than that people believe or have reported sightings, as a mystic reports encounters with the divine or visiting other planes of existence in dreams). It is difficult to find value in even discussing it.

<sup>21</sup> Commentary: The other great ancient Library at Pergamum may have been looted by Mark Anthony to restock the Library of Alexandria thus placing most of the written works of the classical ancient world in one place where they were destroyed. The Library also borrowed original works from the Athens Archive and never returned them.

<sup>22</sup> Commentary: The movie *Agora*, though it follows faithfully Sagan’s whole argument in *Cosmos* regarding the destruction of the Library and the death of Hypatia in 415 A.D., does mention that the Library in Hypatia’s time was but a remnant of the vast Library, which had suffered disasters and partial destruction in previous times and was not rebuilt. Sagan in *Cosmos* makes it seem like the destruction of the Library of Alexandria was done all at once following the death of Hypatia (in the movie, the destruction occurs and she is killed much later). The movie drives home the point when Hypatia calls her small improvised classroom in her quarters with the remaining scrolls, her Library. Critics of the movie however, claim that the “library” where Hypatia taught was not in any way related to the original Library of Alexandria, of which there is no record past 260 A.D. and that the massive shelves of scrolls that were burnt by the mobs in the movie probably weren’t present in 415 A.D.

In this film version of the story, the last repository of the pagan knowledge of the ancient world was sacrificed to the fanatical mob to retain control and loyalty of the major port city in Egypt to the Roman Empire. The repository of history was sacrificed by Emperor Theodosius I (ruled 379 to 395 A.D., last to rule both West and East) in 391, in line with his accommodationist policies, to the needs of the moment – desperately trying to keep the two halves of the Roman Empire together. The wobbly Roman Empire could not afford another rebellion led by fanatics.

<sup>23</sup> Commentary: The U.S. Copyright Office is a function of the Library of Congress. Filing for a copyright requires depositing a copy. Though I do not know statistically, I suspect that a large portion of works copyrighted are not published or have limited publication (like GGDM), thus the only copy of many works exists not in university libraries but at the U.S. Copyright Office, wherever they keep the copies.

✓ How many members of Congress visit the Library of Congress in a year?

<sup>24</sup> Commentary: In the end, it only matters what the next generation thinks.

<sup>25</sup> Commentary: Sir Isaac Newton and Dame Hypatia are probably happily married and living in a distant reality.

<sup>26</sup> Commentary: We have a tendency to squint and look away from certain parts of our civilization and history. We need to get over that in order to gain a complete (or better) understanding of our civilization. GGDM provides a framework in which the participants can avoid squinting and looking away from the uncomfortable.

<sup>27</sup> Commentary: I might actually be flattered that many will disagree with me (probably on faith) and some might actually consider me dangerous (those types should know as they are dangerous too). Label me a lunatic. Go ahead, make your arguments, prove me wrong. Come out into the cold. Look to those places where you dare not look.

<sup>28</sup> Commentary: Perhaps in the sense of an ‘intellectual William “Burro” Schmidt.’ What started as a two-page game expansion has become a *magnum opus* of human civilization, and, like Schmidt’s narrowing tunnel, I sense that I am running out of time – I can feel, for example, a cognitive decline already from my youth, a constriction of focus and possibilities. And without computers and the internet, this project may well have taken 42 years to ‘tunnel’ through civilization. William “Burro” Schmidt demonstrated that one can work on a project for a lifetime and produce only a curious, but useless and meaningless result, then just pack up and wander away into history.

<sup>29</sup> Commentary: Edward Gibbon’s famous *magnum opus*, took 17 years to write and the rest of his life to defend. A like argument could be made for Darwin’s major work. The literary enormity of *War and Peace* seems to have been written in a mere 6 or 7 years. Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997) apparently took 25 years to come to fruition – he offhandedly refers to the period between Yali’s question and the publication of the book as being 25 years. All are much greater works by much greater intellects than I. *Und so weiter.*

<sup>30</sup> Commentary: Karoshi is an honorable way to die. Unfortunately, I have not that kind of honor. Ants are honorable creatures. Living longer doesn’t mean I’ll get more done or do a better job. To die sooner from working too hard, and honestly, trying to do what needs done, is better than to live long and prosper. But I am a slave to evolution. I am the impediment to the things I need to accomplish. I need to overcome myself.

<sup>31</sup> Citation: “How could you possibly know that!” the alien exclaimed as meteors begin striking the ship. “Because I am an archaeologist from the future and I dug you up!” Riversong replied [ship shaking from impacts] “See you in 400 years!”