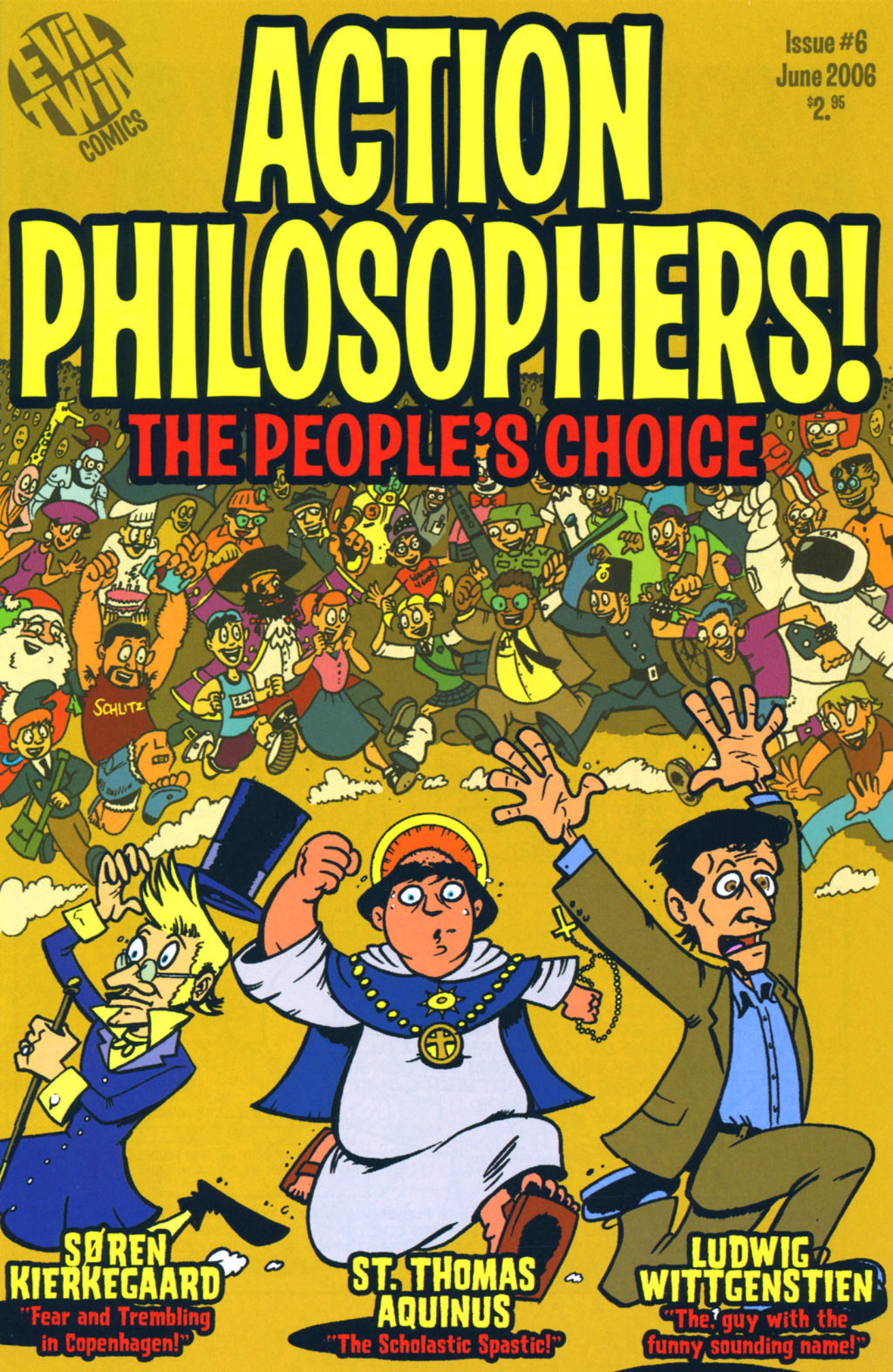
EVIL TWIN COMICS

Issue #6
June 2006
$2.95

ACTION PHILOSOPHERS!

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE



COMPLETE PEOPLE'S CHOICE VOTING RESULTS

THIS ISSUE CONTAINS STORIES ABOUT PHILOSOPHERS THAT WERE NOMINATED BY AND VOTED ON BY ***YOU***, OUR BELOVED READERS, AS CONDUCTED AT ***WWW.ACTIONPHILOSOPHERS.COM***. VOTING BEGAN AROUND THE TIME THE THIRD ISSUE CAME OUT (SEPTEMBER '05) AND CONCLUDED AT MIDNIGHT ON DECEMBER 31, 2005.

FOR YOU LUDDITES UNABLE TO GO TO OUR WEB SITE AND SEE THE RESULTS ON OUR MESSAGE BOARD, HERE'S HOW THEY BROKE DOWN:

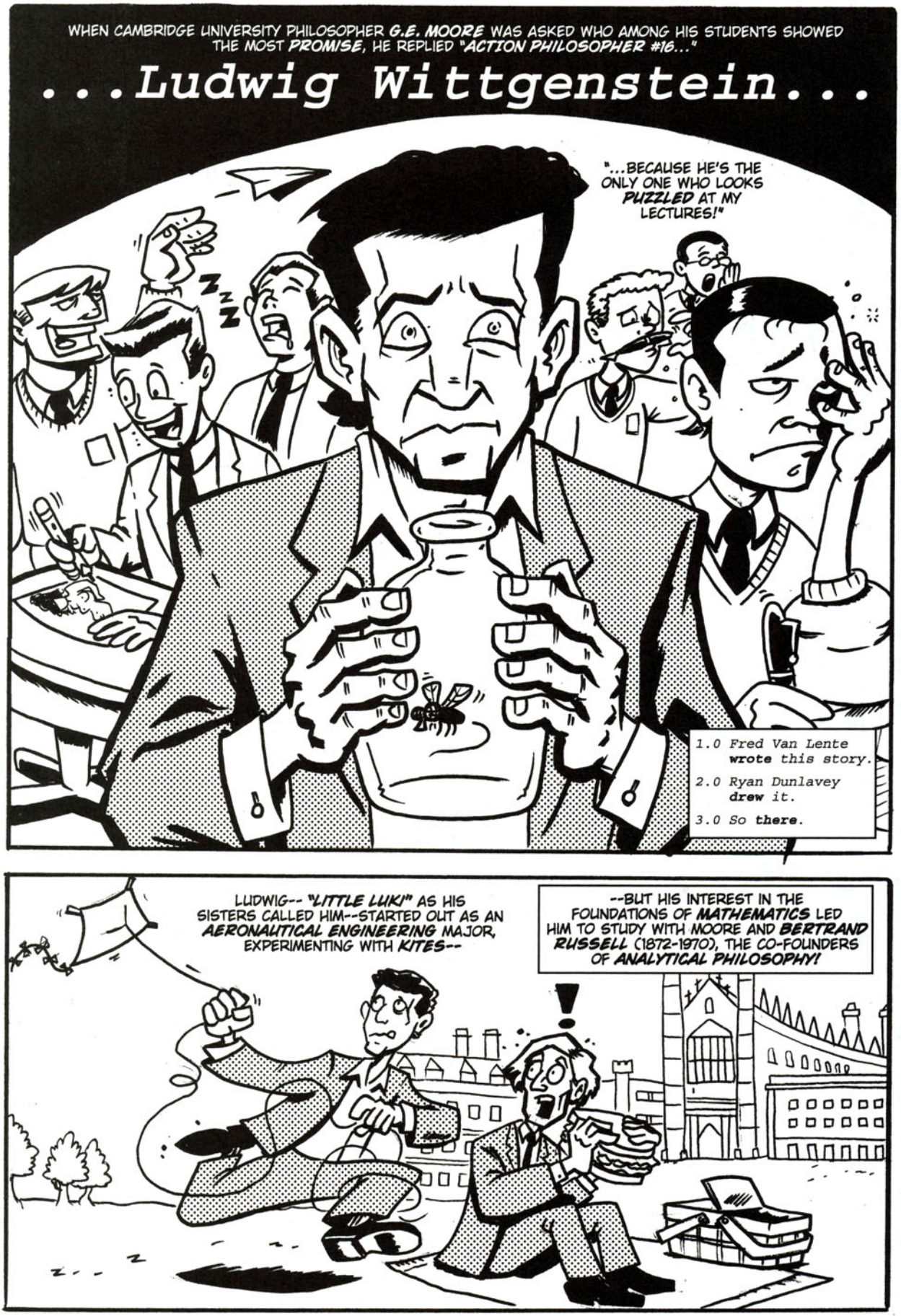


AND FOR THOSE OF YOU TECHNOLOGICALLY ***ABLE*** TO GO TO OUR WEB SITE AND CHECK OUT THE LATEST ***A.P. NEWS***, ***EXCLUSIVE*** ON-LINE-ONLY ***MERCHANDISE***, OUR UTTERLY SOCRATIC ***MESSAGE BOARD***, AND ALL SORTS OF OTHER ***AWESOME STUFF***: ***SHAME ON YOU.*** SHAME. AFTER ALL, EVERY WEEK YOU DON'T VISIT OUR WEB SITE, THE WORLD SLIDES THAT MUCH CLOSER INTO CHAOS.

*: SLATED FOR FUTURE ISSUES. TO FIND OUT WHICH ONES, GO TO - ALL TOGETHER NOW - ***WWW.ACTIONPHILOSOPHERS.COM!***

**: TECHNICALLY, WE DID HEIDEGGER AS PART OF THE "SARTRE" STORY LAST ISSUE, WE'D JUST LIKE TO POINT THAT OUT...

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WHEN CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHER G.E. MOORE WAS ASKED WHO AMONG HIS STUDENTS SHOWED THE MOST PROMISE, HE REPLIED "ACTION PHILOSOPHER #16..."
...Ludwig Wittgenstein...
"...BECAUSE HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO LOOKS PUZZLED AT MY LECTURES!"
ZZZ
1.0 Fred Van Lente wrote this story.
2.0 Ryan Dunlavey drew it.
3.0 So there.
LUDWIG-- "LITTLE LUKI" AS HIS SISTERS CALLED HIM--STARTED OUT AS AN AERONAUTICAL ENGINEERING MAJOR, EXPERIMENTING WITH KITES--
--BUT HIS INTEREST IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS LED HIM TO STUDY WITH MOORE AND BERTRAND RUSSELL (1872-1970), THE CO-FOUNDERS OF ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY!
!
Z-- Z

ALREADY A LEGEND AS CO-AUTHOR OF THE *PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA* (1910), WHICH PRECISELY DEFINED THE ***AXIOMS*** AND ***INFERENCE RULES*** THAT UNDERLIE MATH...

-:TSK!:- A TAD ***MUDDLED***, WOT?

words

words

words

...RUSSELL FELT PHILOSOPHY (PARTICULARLY HEGELIAN-STYLE ***METAPHYSICAL IDEALISM***) COULD BENEFIT FROM THE SAME PRECISION!

RUSSELL WAS AN ADVOCATE OF ***OCCAM'S RAZOR***, A DICTUM ATTRIBUTED TO THE FRANCISCAN FRIAR ***WILLIAM OF OCKHAM*** (C. 1285-1349) WHICH GOES:

OCCAM'S

METAPHYSICS

"Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem."

*"ENTITIES SHOULD NOT BE **MULTIPLIED** BEYOND **NECESSITY**."*

SHAVE!

SLASH!

HACK!

CUT!

FOR ***WILLIAM***, HIS RAZOR SEVERED PHILOSOPHY FROM THE (IN HIS VIEW) UNNECESSARY ***UNIVERSALS*** THAT LIE BEYOND ***PERSONAL EXPERIENCE***.

IN ***SCIENCE***, THE RAZOR IS WIELDED TO POSE HYPOTHESES AS ***SIMPLY*** AS POSSIBLE.

FOR ***RUSSELL***, THE RAZOR MEANT:

THE ***TRUE ROLE*** OF PHILOSOPHY IS THE ERADICATION OF ***ERROR*** THROUGH THE CLARIFICATION OF ***LANGUAGE***!

yip, yip!

LOGICAL ATOMISM

RUSSELL DEMANDED THAT PHILOSOPHY TAKE THE FORM OF ***PROPOSITIONS*** THAT PRECISELY REFLECT ***REALITY***.

HIS ***LOGICALLY PERFECT LANGUAGE*** WOULD REMOVE ALL ***AMBIGUITY*** BY REDUCING FACTS TO THEIR ***SIMPLEST COMPONENTS***.

The King of France is bald.

THIS STATEMENT MIGHT ***SEEM*** SIMPLE ON ITS ***FACE***...

...BUT ***ACTUALLY*** IT CAN BE BROKEN DOWN INTO ITS COMPONENT "***ATOMIC FACTS!***"

1.0 There **is** a King of France.
2.0 There is only **one** King of France.
3.0 Whatever is King of France is **bald**.

RUSSELL BELIEVED ***ALL*** LOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS SHOULD BE EXPRESSED IN CHAINS OF ***ATOMIC FACTS*** -- OR "***MOLECULAR PROPOSITIONS!***"

EVER THE EFFICIENT ***MATHEMATICIAN***, RUSSELL EVEN DEVELOPED ***LOGICAL NOTATION*** STILL USED TODAY; THE PROPOSITION IN THE PREVIOUS PANEL CAN ALSO BE EXPRESSED AS:

$$(\exists x)\,[Fx \;\&\; (y)\,(Fy \rightarrow y=x) \;\&\; Gx]$$

(UH... JUST DON'T ASK US ***WHY.***)

LUKI ***EMBODIED*** THE SUCCINCT CLARITY OF HIS TEACHER. ONCE, AT A 1912 MEETING OF CAMBRIDGE'S ***MORAL SCIENCE CLUB:***

THIS EVENING, ***LUDWIG***, HERE, WILL PRESENT A PAPER ON "***WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?***"

LUDWIG?

-:HURM.:-

"WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?"

"PHILOSOPHY IS ALL THOSE PRIMITIVE PROPOSITIONS WHICH ARE ASSUMED WITHOUT PROOF BY THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES."

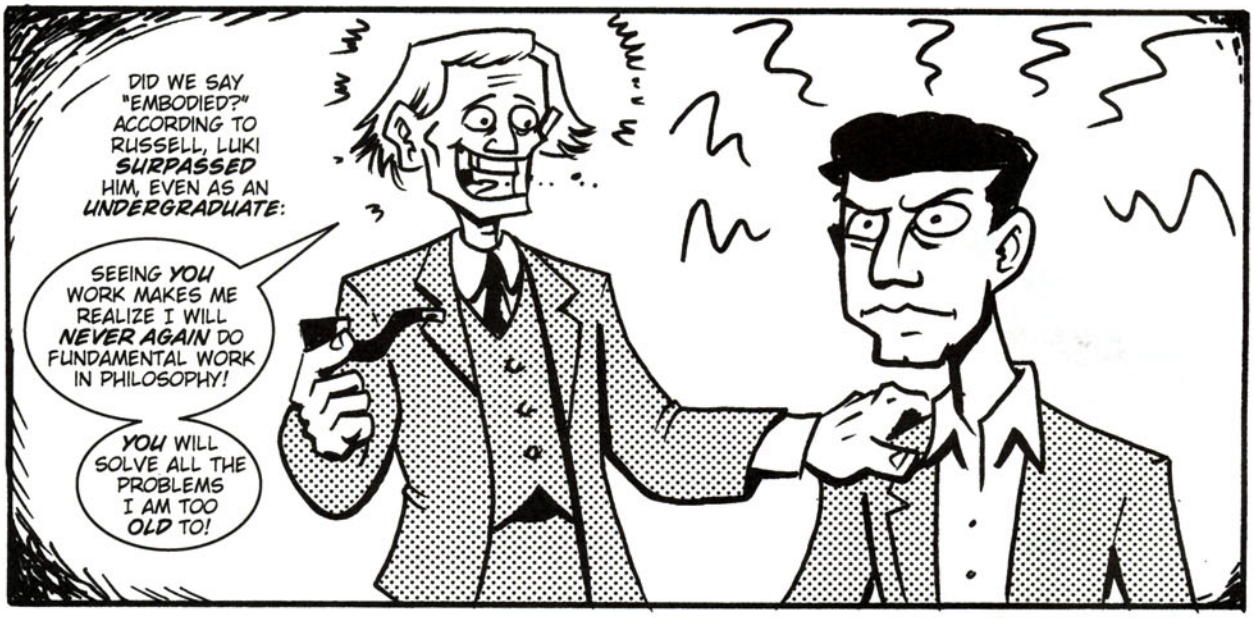
SIT!

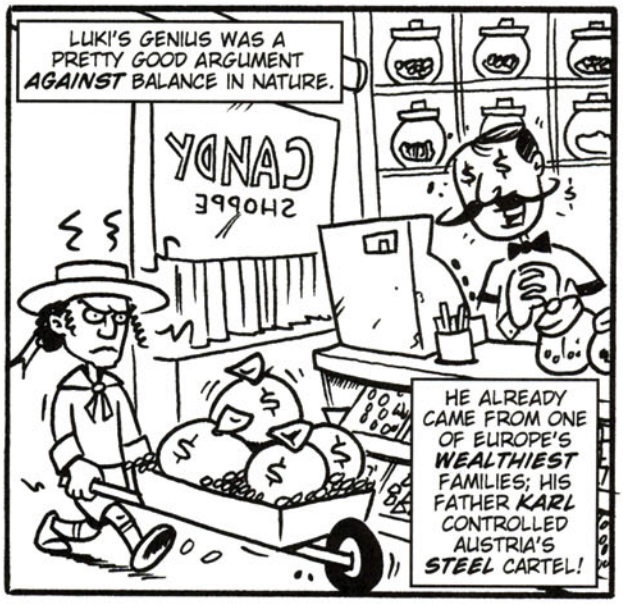
UH... ***THANK YOU***, LUDWIG.

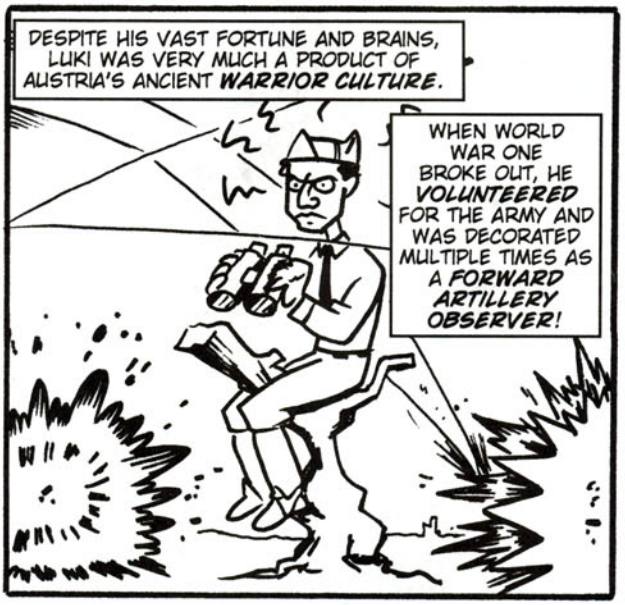
NOW, WHO WOULD LIKE TO OPEN ***DISCUSSION*** ON LUDWIG'S...

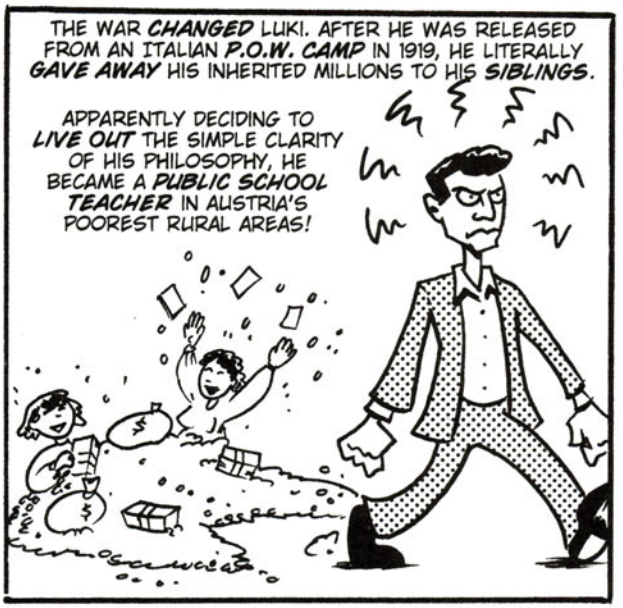
...ER...

..."PAPER?"

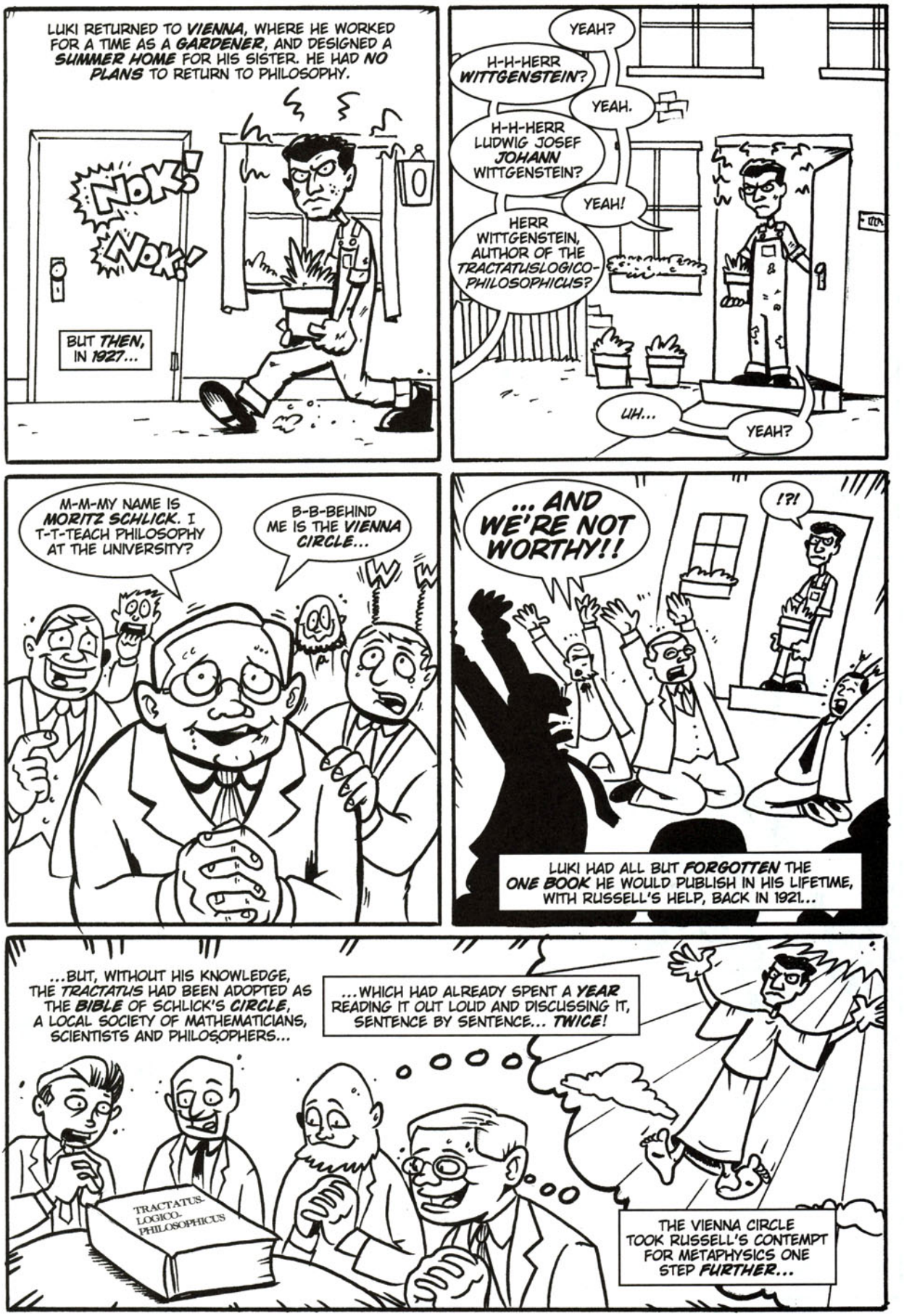

DID WE SAY "EMBODIED?" ACCORDING TO RUSSELL, LUKI *SURPASSED* HIM, EVEN AS AN *UNDERGRADUATE*:
SEEING *YOU* WORK MAKES ME REALIZE I WILL *NEVER AGAIN* DO FUNDAMENTAL WORK IN PHILOSOPHY!
YOU WILL SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS I AM TOO *OLD* TO!


LUKI'S GENIUS WAS A PRETTY GOOD ARGUMENT *AGAINST* BALANCE IN NATURE.
CANDY
SHOPPE
HE ALREADY CAME FROM ONE OF EUROPE'S *WEALTHIEST* FAMILIES; HIS FATHER *KARL* CONTROLLED AUSTRIA'S *STEEL* CARTEL!

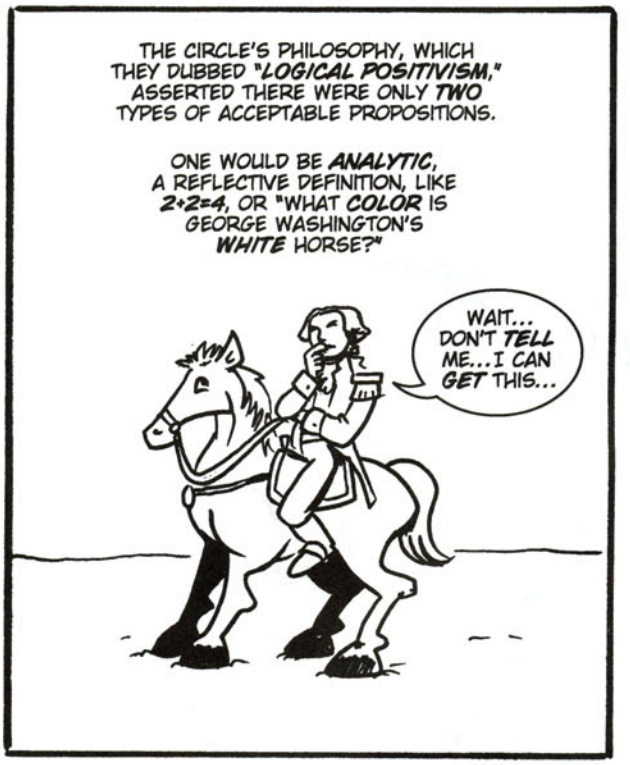

DESPITE HIS VAST FORTUNE AND BRAINS, LUKI WAS VERY MUCH A PRODUCT OF AUSTRIA'S ANCIENT *WARRIOR CULTURE*.
WHEN WORLD WAR ONE BROKE OUT, HE *VOLUNTEERED* FOR THE ARMY AND WAS DECORATED MULTIPLE TIMES AS A *FORWARD ARTILLERY OBSERVER*!

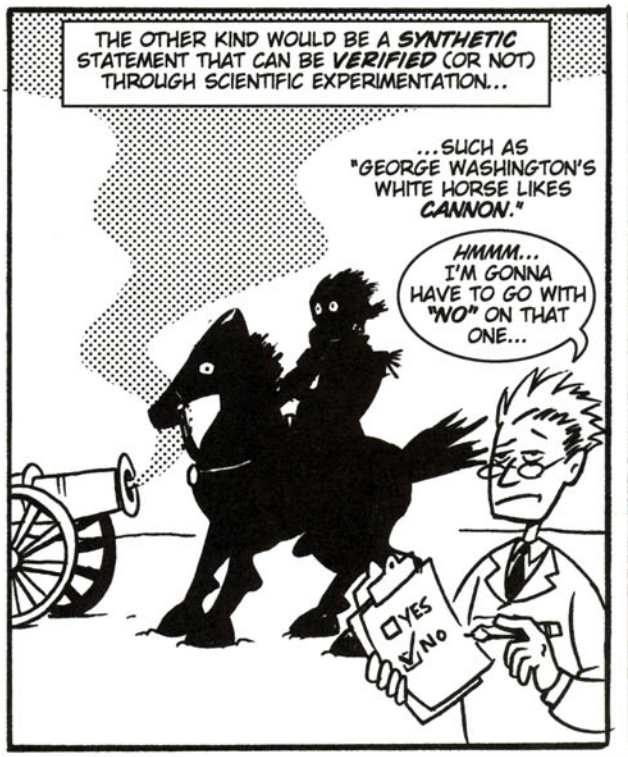

THE WAR *CHANGED* LUKI. AFTER HE WAS RELEASED FROM AN ITALIAN *P.O.W. CAMP* IN 1919, HE LITERALLY *GAVE AWAY* HIS INHERITED MILLIONS TO HIS *SIBLINGS*.
APPARENTLY DECIDING TO *LIVE OUT* THE SIMPLE CLARITY OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, HE BECAME A *PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER* IN AUSTRIA'S POOREST RURAL AREAS!


THIS MAYBE WASN'T THE WISEST *CAREER CHOICE* FOR SOMEONE WITH LUKI'S *TEMPERAMENT*.
SCHOOL
HE HAD TO *QUIT* IN 1926 AFTER GETTING HAULED INTO *COURT* FOR SMACKING ONE OF HIS *SICKLIER* STUDENTS *UNCONSCIOUS*!


LUKI RETURNED TO VIENNA, WHERE HE WORKED FOR A TIME AS A GARDENER, AND DESIGNED A SUMMER HOME FOR HIS SISTER. HE HAD NO PLANS TO RETURN TO PHILOSOPHY.
NOK! NOK!
BUT THEN, IN 1927...
YEAH?
H-H-HERR WITTGENSTEIN?
YEAH.
H-H-HERR LUDWIG JOSEF JOHANN WITTGENSTEIN?
YEAH!
HERR WITTGENSTEIN, AUTHOR OF THE TRACTATUSLOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS?
UH...
YEAH?
M-M-MY NAME IS MORITZ SCHLICK. I T-T-TEACH PHILOSOPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY?
B-B-BEHIND ME IS THE VIENNA CIRCLE...
...AND WE'RE NOT WORTHY!!
!?!
LUKI HAD ALL BUT FORGOTTEN THE ONE BOOK HE WOULD PUBLISH IN HIS LIFETIME, WITH RUSSELL'S HELP, BACK IN 1921...
...BUT, WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE, THE TRACTATUS HAD BEEN ADOPTED AS THE BIBLE OF SCHLICK'S CIRCLE, A LOCAL SOCIETY OF MATHEMATICIANS, SCIENTISTS AND PHILOSOPHERS...
...WHICH HAD ALREADY SPENT A YEAR READING IT OUT LOUD AND DISCUSSING IT, SENTENCE BY SENTENCE... TWICE!
TRACTATUS-LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS
THE VIENNA CIRCLE TOOK RUSSELL'S CONTEMPT FOR METAPHYSICS ONE STEP FURTHER...







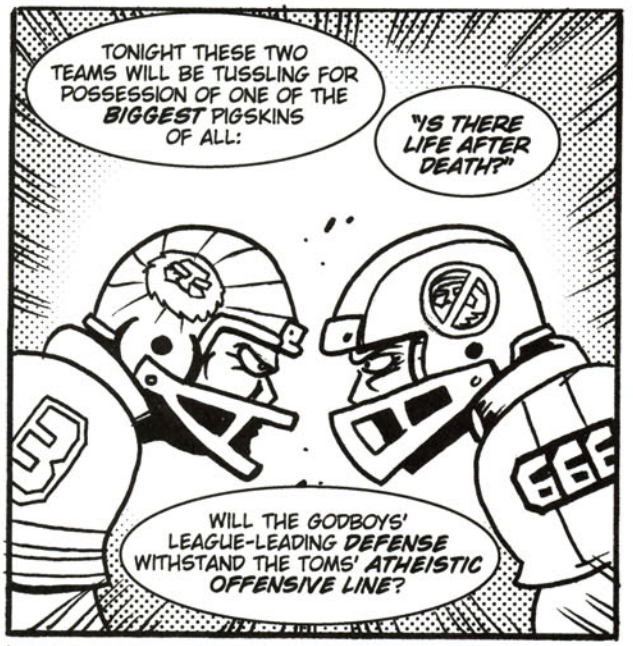


IN LUKI'S *TRACTATUS* THE VIENNA CIRCLE THOUGHT THEY FOUND THE PERFECT **RULEBOOK** TO GUIDE THEM THROUGH CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF THEIR **VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE.**

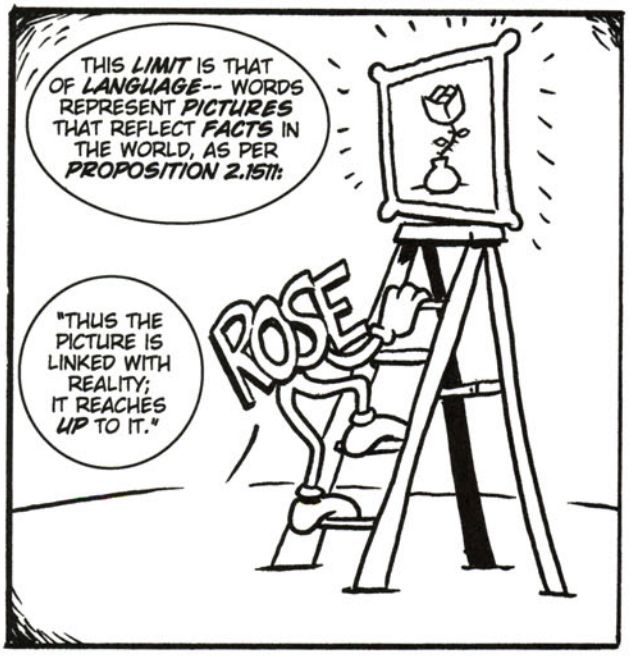
2 What is the case--a fact--is the existence of states of affairs.
2.1 We make to ourselves pictures of facts.
2.13 To the objects correspond in the picture the elements of the picture.
2.131 The elements of the picture stand, in the picture, for the objects.

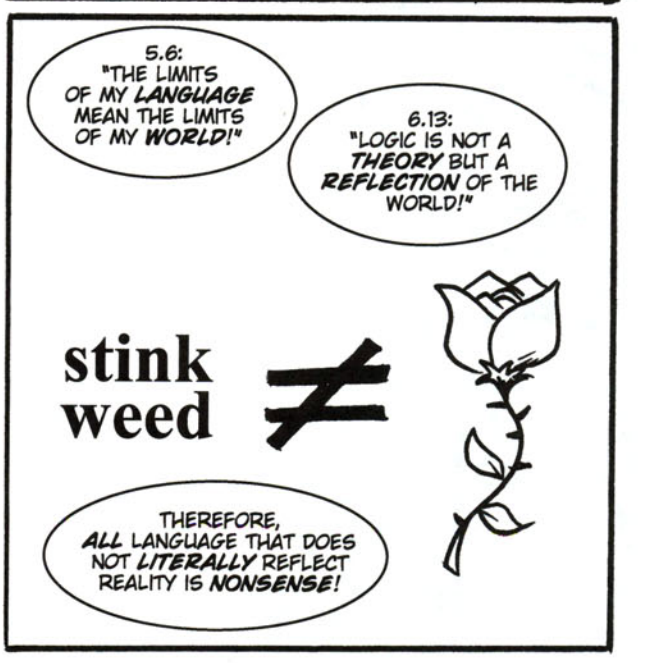
THE BOOK IS A ARRANGED IN A SERIES OF SIMPLE, HIERARCHICAL--**MOLECULAR**--PROPOSITIONS, NUMBERED IN THEIR ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO EACH OTHER.


WE HUMBLY SUGGEST THAT LUKI ENVISIONED THE T.L.P. BEING USED IN THIS WAY:
WELCOME TO MONDAY NIGHT PHILOSOPHY, COMING TO YOU LIVE FROM THANATOS STADIUM!
TONIGHT IT'S A METAPHYSICAL CONFERENCE GRUDGE MATCH BETWEEN TWO BITTER RIVALS...
...THE MIDWEST GODBOYS AND THE LEFT COAST'S DOUBTING TOMS!


TONIGHT THESE TWO TEAMS WILL BE TUSSLING FOR POSSESSION OF ONE OF THE BIGGEST PIGSKINS OF ALL:
"IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?"
666
WILL THE GODBOYS' LEAGUE-LEADING DEFENSE WITHSTAND THE TOMS' ATHEISTIC OFFENSIVE LINE?


AS ALWAYS, THE REFS WILL BE GUIDED BY WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS...
...THE BOOK THAT, AS ITS AUTHOR WROTE, "DRAWS A LIMIT... TO THE EXPRESSION OF THOUGHTS."

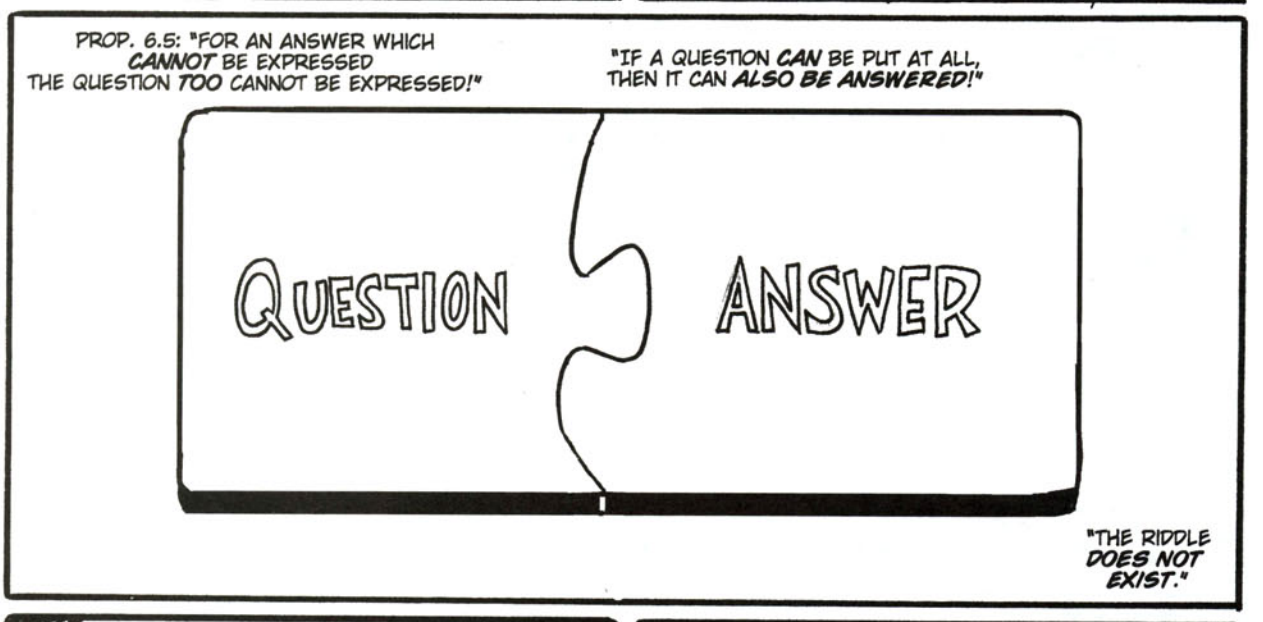

THIS LIMIT IS THAT OF LANGUAGE-- WORDS REPRESENT PICTURES THAT REFLECT FACTS IN THE WORLD, AS PER PROPOSITION 2.1511:
"THUS THE PICTURE IS LINKED WITH REALITY; IT REACHES UP TO IT."
ROSE

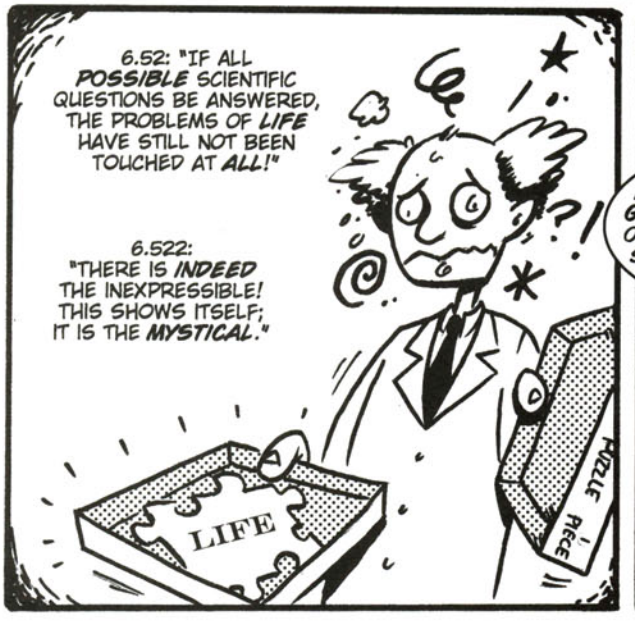

5.6: "THE LIMITS OF MY LANGUAGE MEAN THE LIMITS OF MY WORLD!"
6.13: "LOGIC IS NOT A THEORY BUT A REFLECTION OF THE WORLD!"
stink weed
≠
THEREFORE, ALL LANGUAGE THAT DOES NOT LITERALLY REFLECT REALITY IS NONSENSE!


TWEEE!!
WHOA NELLY!! GET A LOAD O' THIS!! THE REF IS ALREADY CALLING A NONSENSE PENALTY!!!
WELL, THIS I GOTTA HEAR...
GODBOY
VIOLATION. PROP. 6.4311:
DEATH IS NOT AN EVENT OF LIFE.
DEATH IS NOT LIVED THROUGH.
OUR LIFE IS ENDLESS IN THE WAY THAT OUR VISUAL FIELD IS WITHOUT LIMIT.
THEREFORE, ON ITS FACE, THE QUESTION "IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?" IS NONSENSE!
GAME OVER!
LUKI DECLARED THAT HIS TRACTATUS HAD SOLVED ALL THE PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY...
...IF BY "SOLVED" YOU MEAN HE DECLARED THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM NULL AND VOID.
PROP. 4.0031: "ALL PHILOSOPHY IS 'CRITIQUE OF LANGUAGE.'"
EXIT


THE LOGICAL POSITIVISTS TOOK LONG PHILOSOPHICAL WALKS WITH THEIR IDOL FOR THE BETTER PART OF A YEAR.
C-COULD YOU ELUCIDATE J-JUST A SMIDGE ON PROP. 7.0, IN WHICH YOU SAY ANYTHING THAT CANNOT BE SAID--WHICH WE UNDERSTAND TO MEAN THAT WHICH CANNOT BE VERIFIED--SHOULD BE DISMISSED AS NONSENSE--

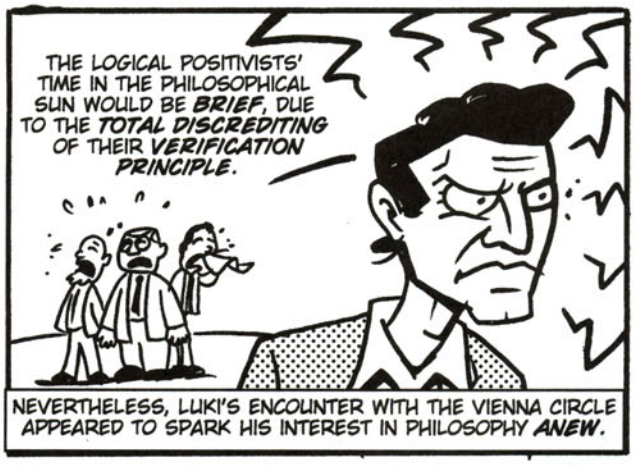

WHAAAAT?!
WHAT I WROTE WAS "WHAT CANNOT BE SAID MUST BE PASSED OVER IN SILENCE!"
BUT WHAT CANNOT BE SAID IS MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL!


PROP. 6.5: "FOR AN ANSWER WHICH CANNOT BE EXPRESSED THE QUESTION TOO CANNOT BE EXPRESSED!"
"IF A QUESTION CAN BE PUT AT ALL, THEN IT CAN ALSO BE ANSWERED!"
QUESTION
ANSWER
"THE RIDDLE DOES NOT EXIST."


6.52: "IF ALL POSSIBLE SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS BE ANSWERED, THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE HAVE STILL NOT BEEN TOUCHED AT ALL!"
6.522: "THERE IS INDEED THE INEXPRESSIBLE! THIS SHOWS ITSELF; IT IS THE MYSTICAL."
LIFE
PUZZLE PIECE


YOU HAVE COMPLETELY MISCONSTRUED MY WORK!
IT'S YOUR "VERIFCATION PRINCIPLE" THAT'S NONSENSE!
"VERIFICATION" IS JUST AN EDUCATED GUESS FROM A SERIES OF OBSERVATIONS THAT SOMETHING PROBABLY WILL HAPPEN!
AND LAWS OF INFERENCE HAVE NO PLACE IN PURE LOGIC!


5.1361! "THE EVENTS OF THE FUTURE CANNOT BE INFERRED FROM THOSE OF THE PRESENT!"
6.36311! "THAT THE SUN WILL RISE TOMORROW IS AN HYPOTHESIS; AND THAT MEANS THAT WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER IT WILL RISE!"


THE LOGICAL POSITIVISTS' TIME IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL SUN WOULD BE BRIEF, DUE TO THE TOTAL DISCREDITING OF THEIR VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE.
NEVERTHELESS, LUKI'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE VIENNA CIRCLE APPEARED TO SPARK HIS INTEREST IN PHILOSOPHY ANEW.

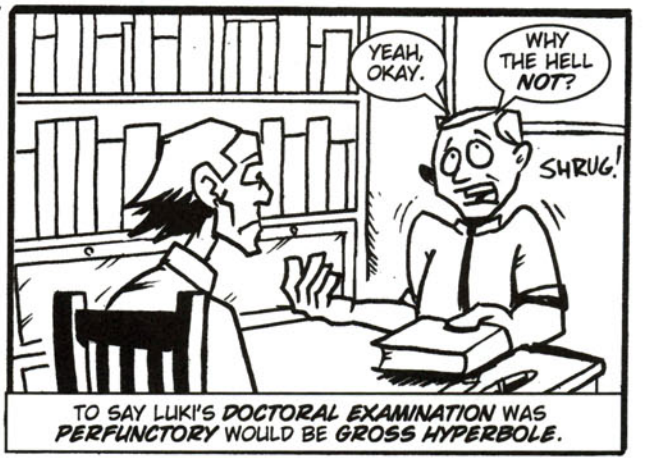

IN 1929 HE DECIDED TO RETURN TO CAMBRIDGE. HE CONTACTED HIS OLD PROFESSORS, RUSSELL AND MOORE.
HUH. WITTGENSTEIN WANTS A DOCTORATE.
WHAT'S HIS DISSERTATION?

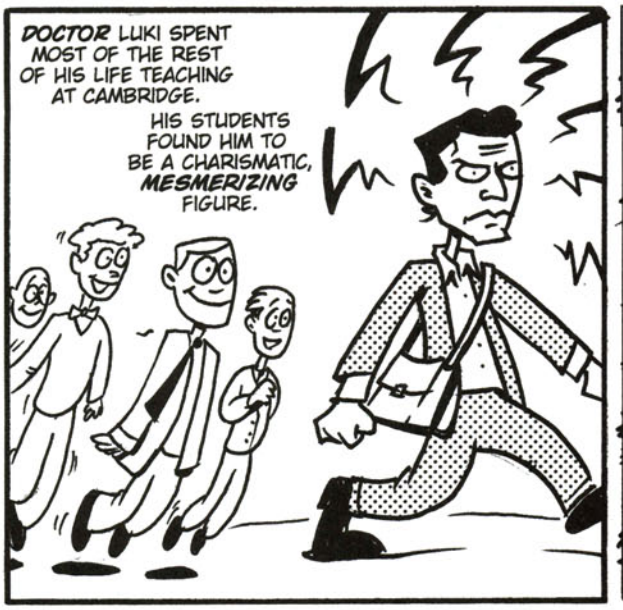

THE TRACTATUS-LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS...
...THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WORK OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

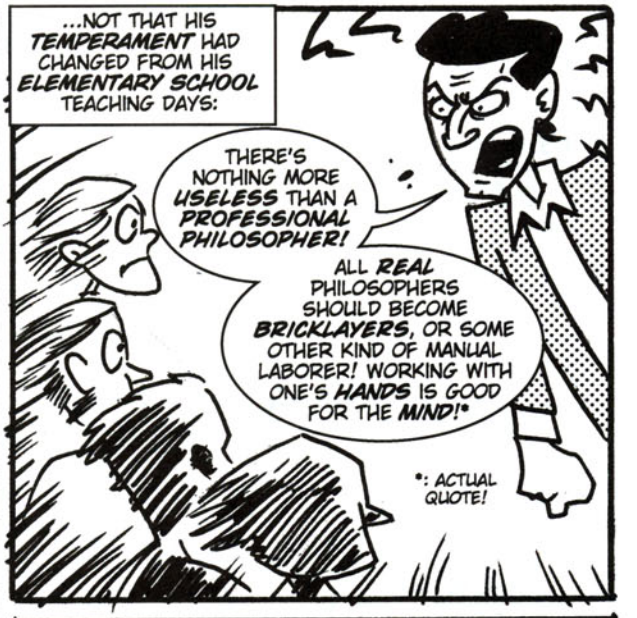

FLIP!

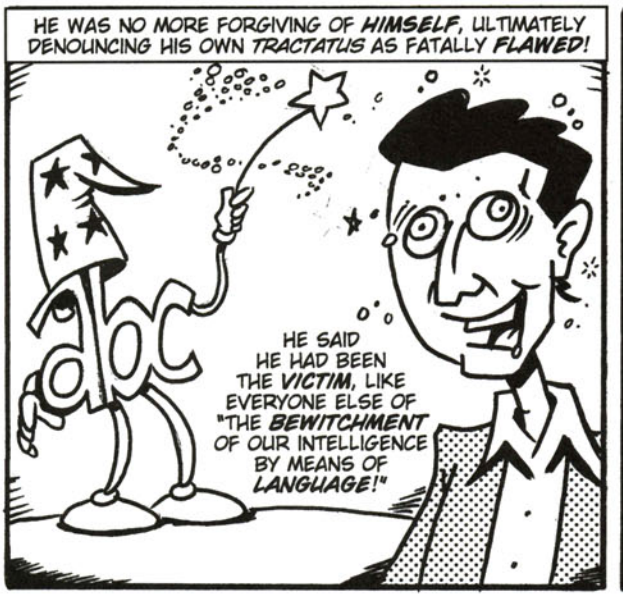

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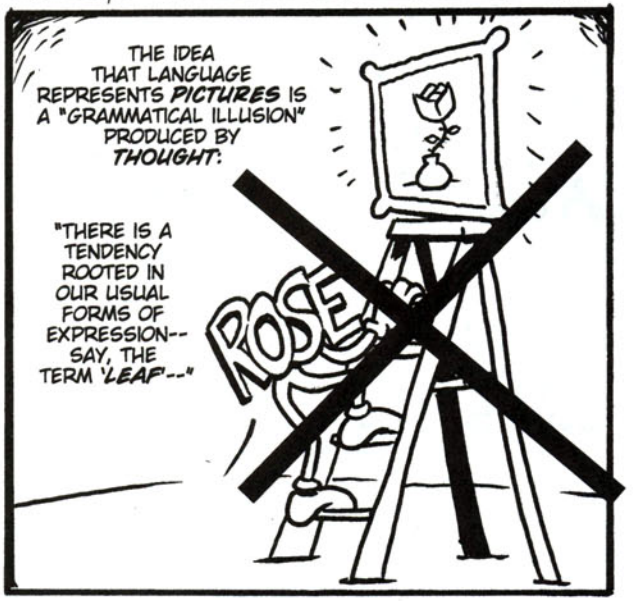

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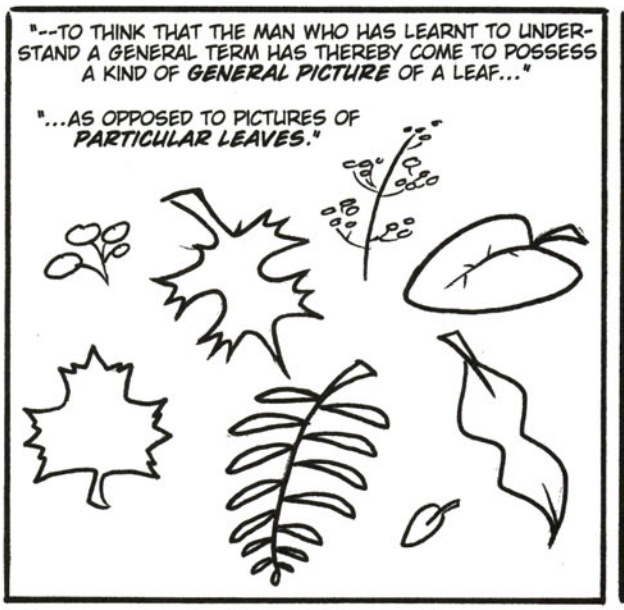

YEAH, OKAY.
WHY THE HELL NOT?
SHRUG!
TO SAY LUKI'S DOCTORAL EXAMINATION WAS PERFUNCTORY WOULD BE GROSS HYPERBOLE.

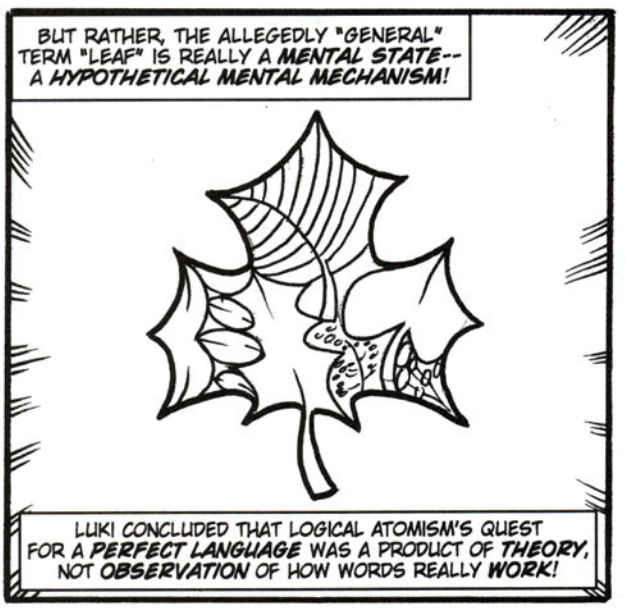

DOCTOR LUKI SPENT MOST OF THE REST OF HIS LIFE TEACHING AT CAMBRIDGE.
HIS STUDENTS FOUND HIM TO BE A CHARISMATIC, MESMERIZING FIGURE.

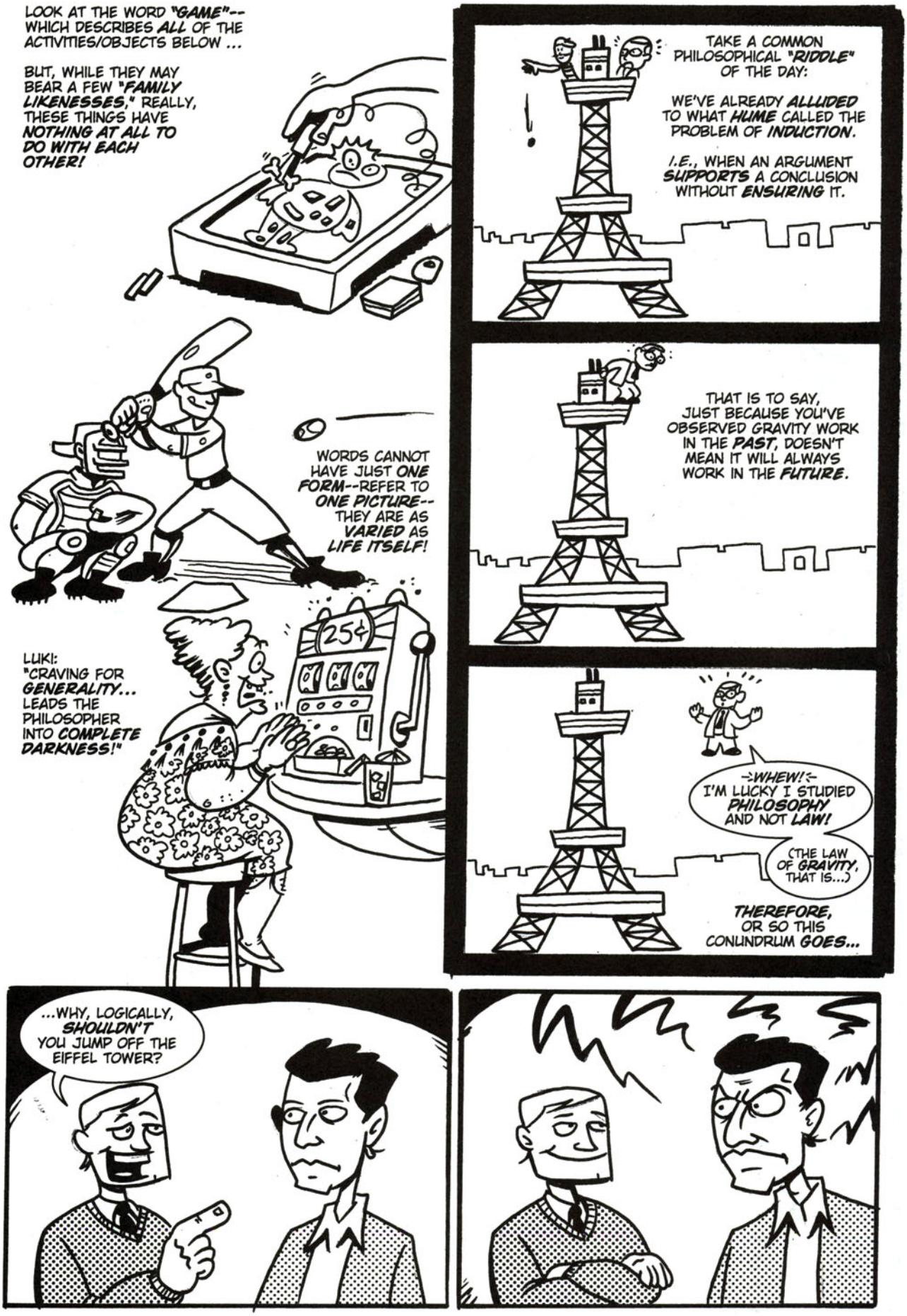

...NOT THAT HIS TEMPERAMENT HAD CHANGED FROM HIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHING DAYS:
THERE'S NOTHING MORE USELESS THAN A PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHER!
ALL REAL PHILOSOPHERS SHOULD BECOME BRICKLAYERS, OR SOME OTHER KIND OF MANUAL LABORER! WORKING WITH ONE'S HANDS IS GOOD FOR THE MIND!*
*: ACTUAL QUOTE!


HE WAS NO MORE FORGIVING OF HIMSELF, ULTIMATELY DENOUNCING HIS OWN TRACTATUS AS FATALLY FLAWED!
HE SAID HE HAD BEEN THE VICTIM, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE OF "THE BEWITCHMENT OF OUR INTELLIGENCE BY MEANS OF LANGUAGE!"


THE IDEA THAT LANGUAGE REPRESENTS PICTURES IS A "GRAMMATICAL ILLUSION" PRODUCED BY THOUGHT:
"THERE IS A TENDENCY ROOTED IN OUR USUAL FORMS OF EXPRESSION-- SAY, THE TERM 'LEAF'--"
ROSE


"--TO THINK THAT THE MAN WHO HAS LEARNT TO UNDERSTAND A GENERAL TERM HAS THEREBY COME TO POSSESS A KIND OF GENERAL PICTURE OF A LEAF..."
"...AS OPPOSED TO PICTURES OF PARTICULAR LEAVES."


BUT RATHER, THE ALLEGEDLY "GENERAL" TERM "LEAF" IS REALLY A MENTAL STATE-- A HYPOTHETICAL MENTAL MECHANISM!
LUKI CONCLUDED THAT LOGICAL ATOMISM'S QUEST FOR A PERFECT LANGUAGE WAS A PRODUCT OF THEORY, NOT OBSERVATION OF HOW WORDS REALLY WORK!


LOOK AT THE WORD "GAME"-- WHICH DESCRIBES ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES/OBJECTS BELOW ...
BUT, WHILE THEY MAY BEAR A FEW "FAMILY LIKENESSES," REALLY, THESE THINGS HAVE NOTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH EACH OTHER!
WORDS CANNOT HAVE JUST ONE FORM--REFER TO ONE PICTURE-- THEY ARE AS VARIED AS LIFE ITSELF!
LUKI: "CRAVING FOR GENERALITY... LEADS THE PHILOSOPHER INTO COMPLETE DARKNESS!"
25¢
TAKE A COMMON PHILOSOPHICAL "RIDDLE" OF THE DAY:
WE'VE ALREADY ALLUDED TO WHAT HUME CALLED THE PROBLEM OF INDUCTION.
I.E., WHEN AN ARGUMENT SUPPORTS A CONCLUSION WITHOUT ENSURING IT.
THAT IS TO SAY, JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE OBSERVED GRAVITY WORK IN THE PAST, DOESN'T MEAN IT WILL ALWAYS WORK IN THE FUTURE.
-WHEW!- I'M LUCKY I STUDIED PHILOSOPHY AND NOT LAW!
(THE LAW OF GRAVITY, THAT IS...)
THEREFORE, OR SO THIS CONUNDRUM GOES...
...WHY, LOGICALLY, SHOULDN'T YOU JUMP OFF THE EIFFEL TOWER?

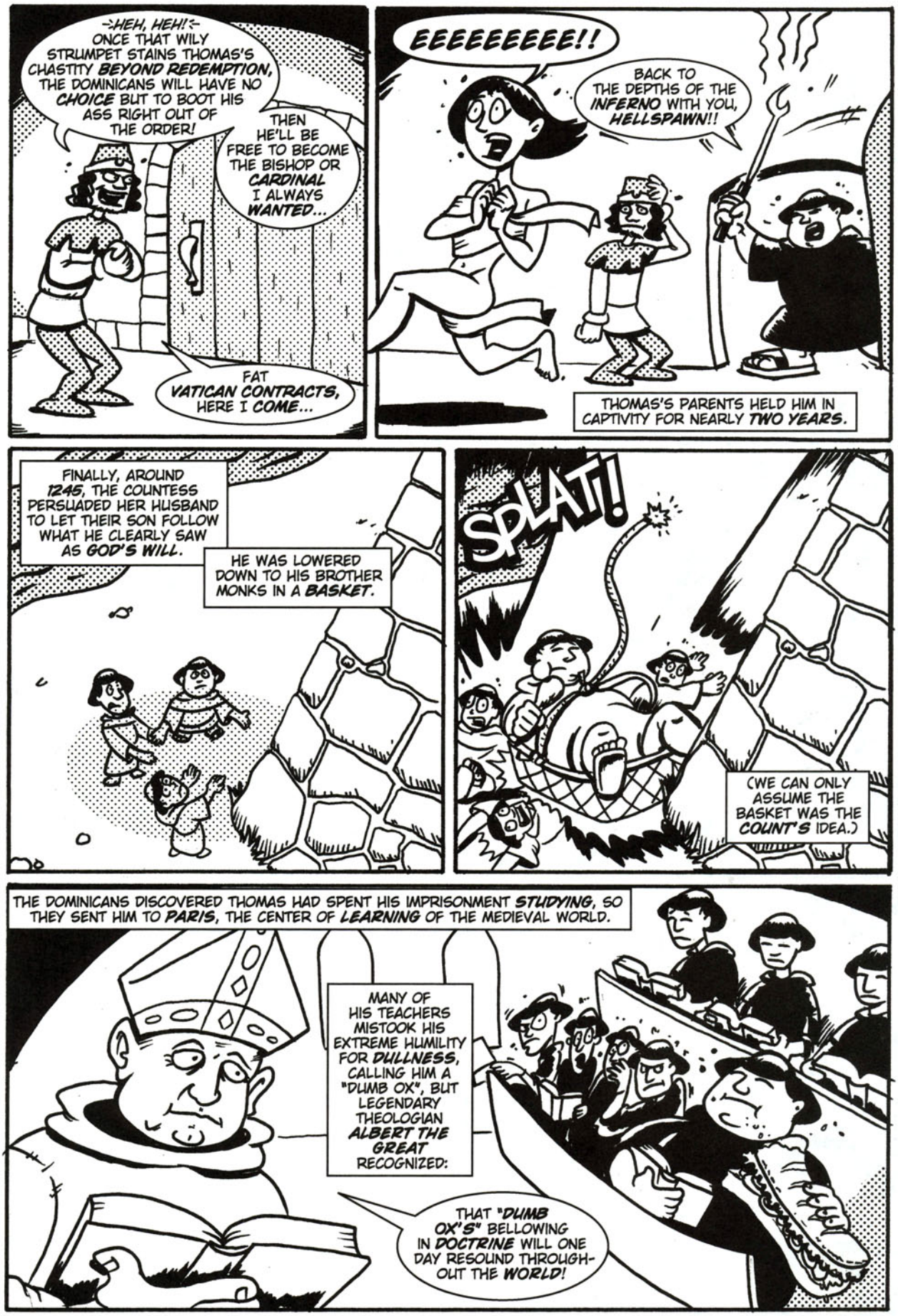

BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO!!
WHAT KIND OF A MORON WANTS TO JUMP OFF THE EIFFEL TOWER?!
THIS IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF POINTLESS MUMBO-JUMBO I'M TALKING ABOUT!!
ERROR RESULTS WHEN LANGUAGE IS IDLING (I.E., DEFINING) RATHER THAN WORKING (I.E., DESCRIBING)!
EMPHASIS
ENLIGHTEN
DIVIDE
LUKI'S NEW "ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY" REJECTED GENERALITIES AND USED WORDS AS THEY WERE MEANT TO BE USED--AS TOOLS--WITHIN CONTEXT OF EACH OTHER!
"WHAT WE DO IS TO BRING WORDS BACK FROM THEIR METAPHYSICAL TO THEIR EVERYDAY USAGE!"
"A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM HAS THE FORM: 'I DON'T KNOW MY WAY ABOUT.'"
OUR JOB IS TO "SHOW THE FLY THE WAY OUT OF THE FLY-BOTTLE!"
AND SO WITTGENSTEIN HAS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY PHILOSOPHER IN HISTORY TO HAVE DEFINED TWO (COUNT 'EM! TWO!) WHOLLY SEPARATE AND MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT!
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT, LUKI?
CAN'T TALK NOW. THINKING.
666
ER...OKAY...WE'LL CHECK BACK IN WITH YOU LATER...



St. Thomas Aquinas!




THEN I SHALL GIVE YOU PLENTY OF TIME TO CHANGE IT!
GUARDS! THROW HIM IN THE TOWER!
I AM TOLD YOU ARE THE GREATEST PROSTITUTE IN ALL OF ITALY!
YES. YES I AM.
YOU MUST SEDUCE MY SON INTO BREAKING THE VOWS OF HIS ORDER!
HOW ELSE CAN HE BECOME POPE?!
THE COUNT INSTALLED THE TEMPTRESS IN THOMAS'S ROOM IN THE FORTRESS OF SAN GIOVANNI AT ROCCO SECCA.
OOOHHHH TOOOOMMMMEEE...
I NEED HELP REMOVING ALL THIS TIGHT, RESTRICTING LINGERE...
OH, GOLLY, SHE'S SO HOT! WHAT AM I GONNA DO, LORD?!?
Fear NOT Thomas! God has HEARD thy prayers and sent US to help thee!
Did not a HOLY MAN on the hour of thy birth predict that NO ONE would be found to equal to thy LEARNING and thy SANCTITY?
We GIRD THEE with the girdle of PERPETUAL VIRGINITY!
AWESOME! GOD'S THE BEST!
Yes. We know. We're ANGELS.


-:HEH, HEH!:-
ONCE THAT WILY STRUMPET STAINS THOMAS'S CHASTITY BEYOND REDEMPTION, THE DOMINICANS WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BOOT HIS ASS RIGHT OUT OF THE ORDER!
THEN HE'LL BE FREE TO BECOME THE BISHOP OR CARDINAL I ALWAYS WANTED...
FAT VATICAN CONTRACTS, HERE I COME...
EEEEEEEEE!!
BACK TO THE DEPTHS OF THE INFERNO WITH YOU, HELLSPAWN!!
THOMAS'S PARENTS HELD HIM IN CAPTIVITY FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS.
FINALLY, AROUND 1245, THE COUNTESS PERSUADED HER HUSBAND TO LET THEIR SON FOLLOW WHAT HE CLEARLY SAW AS GOD'S WILL.
HE WAS LOWERED DOWN TO HIS BROTHER MONKS IN A BASKET.
SPLAT!
(WE CAN ONLY ASSUME THE BASKET WAS THE COUNT'S IDEA.)
THE DOMINICANS DISCOVERED THOMAS HAD SPENT HIS IMPRISONMENT STUDYING, SO THEY SENT HIM TO PARIS, THE CENTER OF LEARNING OF THE MEDIEVAL WORLD.
MANY OF HIS TEACHERS MISTOOK HIS EXTREME HUMILITY FOR DULLNESS, CALLING HIM A "DUMB OX", BUT LEGENDARY THEOLOGIAN ALBERT THE GREAT RECOGNIZED:
THAT "DUMB OX'S" BELLOWING IN DOCTRINE WILL ONE DAY RESOUND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!

ALBERT BELIEVED THAT FAITH SHOULD BE MARRIED TO ***REASON*** WHENEVER POSSIBLE!

HE LED THE ***"SCHOLASTIC"*** MOVEMENT THAT FUSED CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS WITH THE NEWLY-TRANSLATED (INTO ***LATIN***) SECULAR PHILOSOPHIES OF ***ARISTOTLE***!

HEY! LOOK WHAT ***I*** FOUND!

ARISTOTLE

WHEN THOMAS BEGAN TEACHING IN PARIS ***HIMSELF*** IN ***1252***, HE WAS OPPOSED, AT FIRST, BY ***PLATONISTS*** (LIKE ***ST. BONAVENTURA***) WHO FELT ARISTOTLE'S ***REJECTION*** OF THE THEORY OF FORMS DENIED THAT GOD POSSESSED ALL THE ***IDEAS*** OF THE WORLD!

THOMAS SET ABOUT ***"CHRISTIANIZING"*** ARISTOTLE TO MAKE HIM FIT FOR USE IN THE ***THEOLOGICAL*** CLASSROOM!

HE WROTE IN CAREFULLY-CONSTRUCTED ***DIALECTICS*** THAT EXEMPLIFIED THE CLEAR, SIMPLE STRUCTURE OF ARISTOTELIAN ***LOGIC***:

ARIST

QUESTION: Whether God exists?

OBJECTION: IT SEEMS THAT GOD DOES ***NOT*** EXIST; FOR THE WORD "GOD" MEANS THAT HE IS ***INFINITE GOODNESS***.

IF, THEREFORE, GOD ***EXISTED***, THERE WOULD BE NO ***EVIL*** DISCOVERABLE; BUT THERE ***IS*** EVIL IN THE WORLD.

THEREFORE, GOD DOES ***NOT*** EXIST!

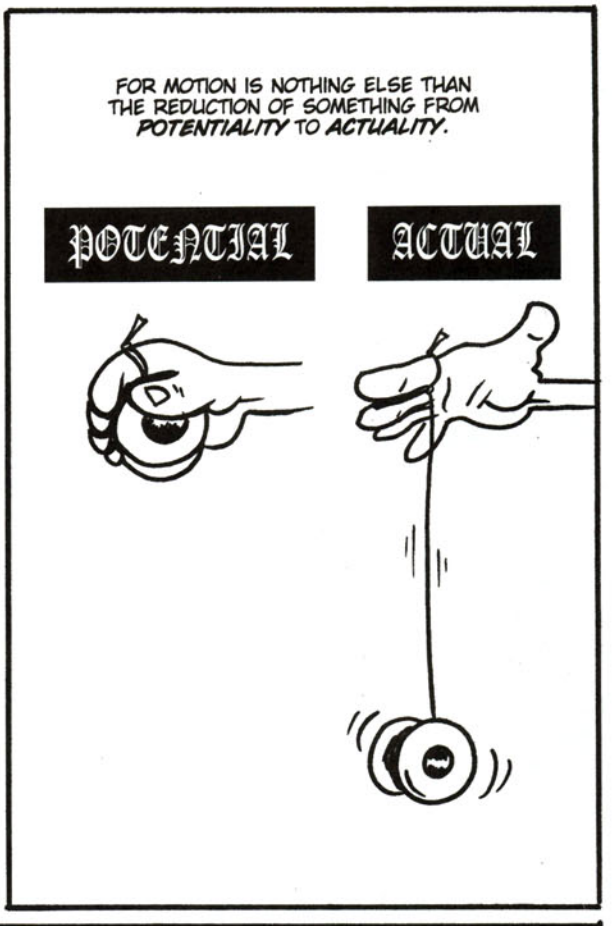
ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS SAID IN THE PERSON OF GOD: ***"I AM WHO I AM"*** (EXODUS 3:14).

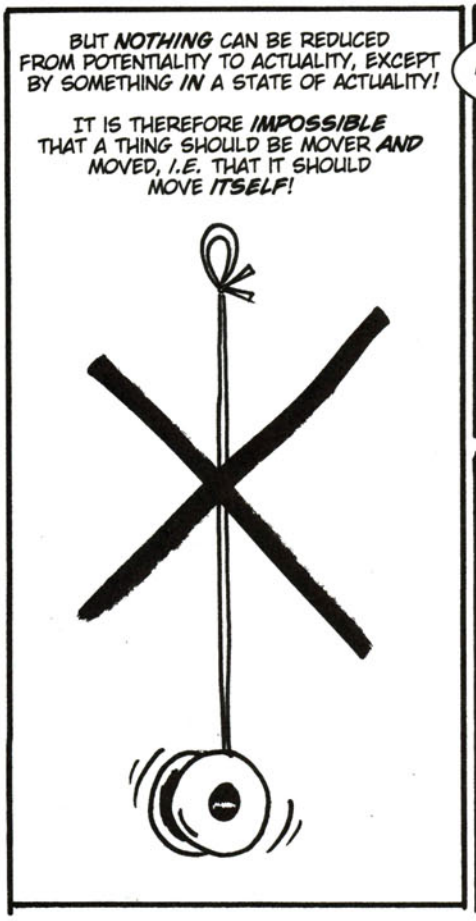
I ANSWER THAT, THE EXISTENCE OF GOD CAN BE PROVED IN ***FIVE*** WAYS:

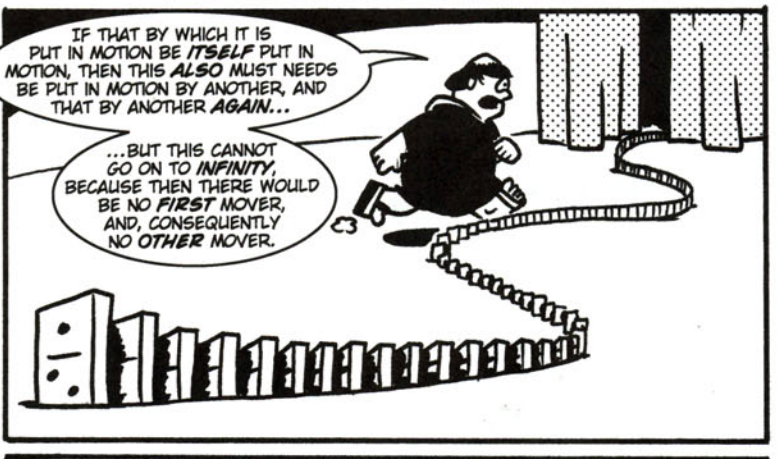
Ye Olde Shakee

Proof the First: from MOTION







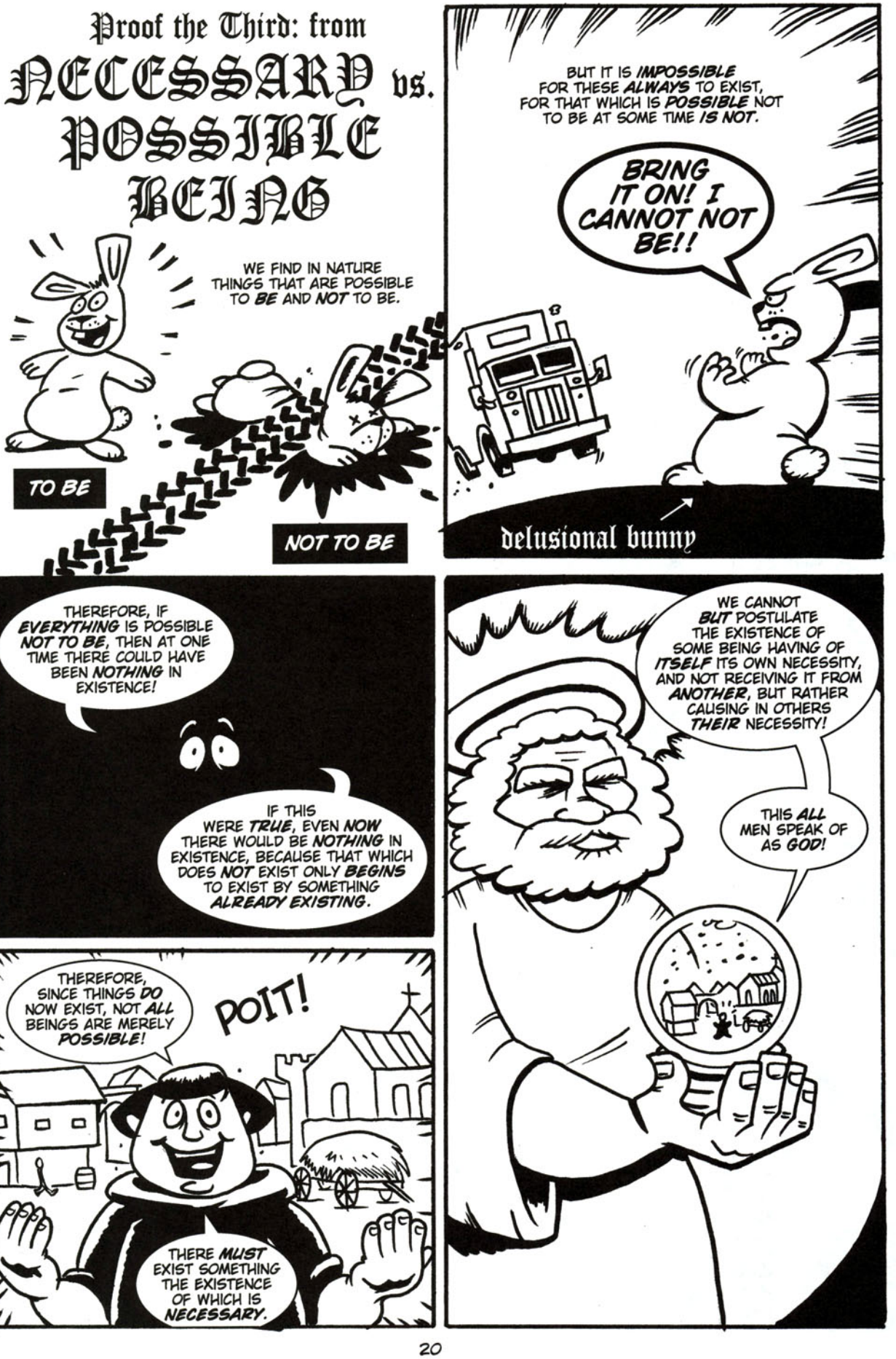




Proof the Second: from EFFICIENT CAUSE



Proof the Third: from NECESSARY vs. POSSIBLE BEING



Proof the Fourth: from the DEGREES OF PERFECTION



Proof the Fifth: from the ORDER of the UNIVERSE

WE SEE THAT THINGS WHICH LACK *INTELLIGENCE*--

ER...

NO...

WE MEAN *NATURAL BODIES*...

...ACT FOR AN *END*, AND THIS IS EVIDENT FROM THEIR ACTING ALWAYS, OR *NEARLY* ALWAYS, IN THE *SAME WAY*, SO AS TO OBTAIN THE *BEST RESULT*.

"TOUCH OF CLASS" TRAILER PARK

REBEL

BEER

HENCE IT IS PLAIN THAT NOT *FORTUITOUSLY*, BUT *DESIGNEDLY*, DO THEY ACHIEVE THEIR END.

NOW WHATEVER LACKS INTELLIGENCE CANNOT *MOVE* TOWARDS AN END, UNLESS IT BE *DIRECTED* BY SOME BEING ENDOWED *WITH* KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLIGENCE...

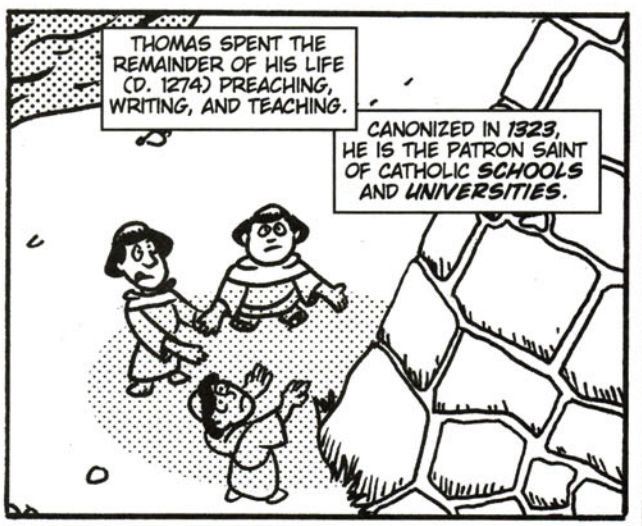
...THEREFORE, *SOME* INTELLIGENT BEING EXISTS BY WHOM *ALL* NATURAL THINGS ARE DIRECTED TO THEIR END, AND *THIS* BEING WE CALL...

I @#$%&*! *HATE TRAILER PARKS!!*

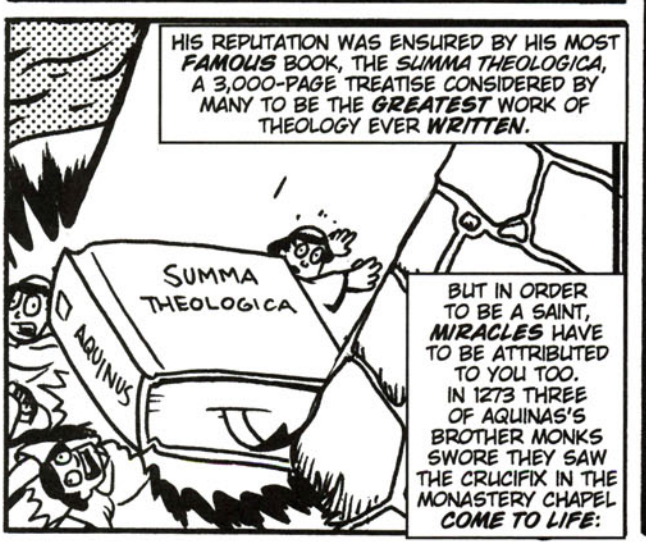
...ER...YOU KNOW...


REPLY OBJ.: AS AUGUSTINE SAYS:
"SINCE GOD IS THE HIGHEST GOOD, HE WOULD NOT ALLOW ANY EVIL TO EXIST IN HIS WORKS...
...UNLESS HIS OMNIPOTENCE AND GOODNESS WERE SUCH AS TO BRING GOOD EVEN OUT OF EVIL!"
AAAHHHH! NO MORE! YOU WIN!

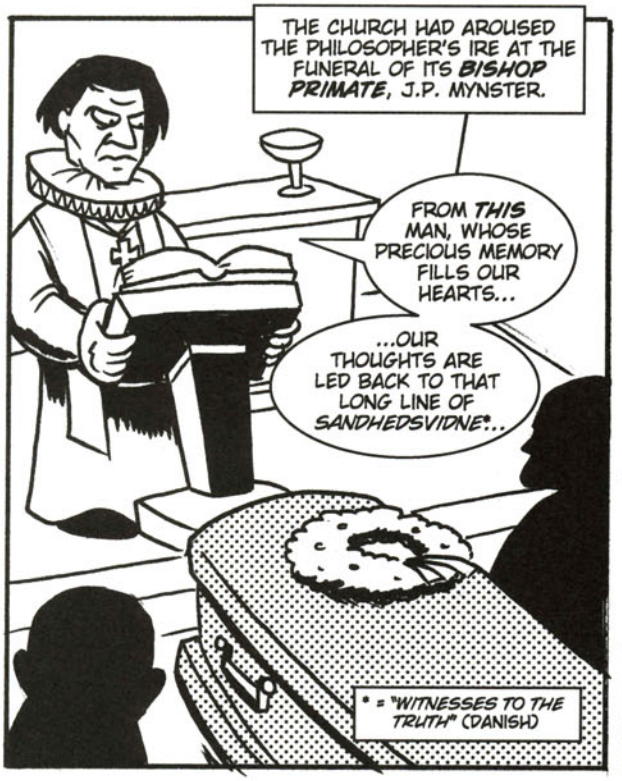

THOMAS WAS SO RIDICULOUSLY SUCCESSFUL AT SHOWING HOW THE METHODS OF THE PAGAN GREEKS COULD BE APPLIED TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT, ARISTOTLE & CO. REMAIN THE FOUNDATION OF PHILOSOPHY THROUGHOUT CHRISTENDOM TO THIS DAY.
THANKS A BUNCH, AQUINAS-DUDE!
COLLEGE
ARISTOTLE'S POETICS


THOMAS SPENT THE REMAINDER OF HIS LIFE (D. 1274) PREACHING, WRITING, AND TEACHING.
CANONIZED IN 1323, HE IS THE PATRON SAINT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES.


Thou hast written WELL of me, Thomas; what REWARD wilt thou have?
NONE OTHER THAN THYSELF, LORD!
NOW HOW MANY PHILOSOPHERS CAN BOAST SUCH GLOWING REVIEWS BY THEIR OWN SUBJECTS?

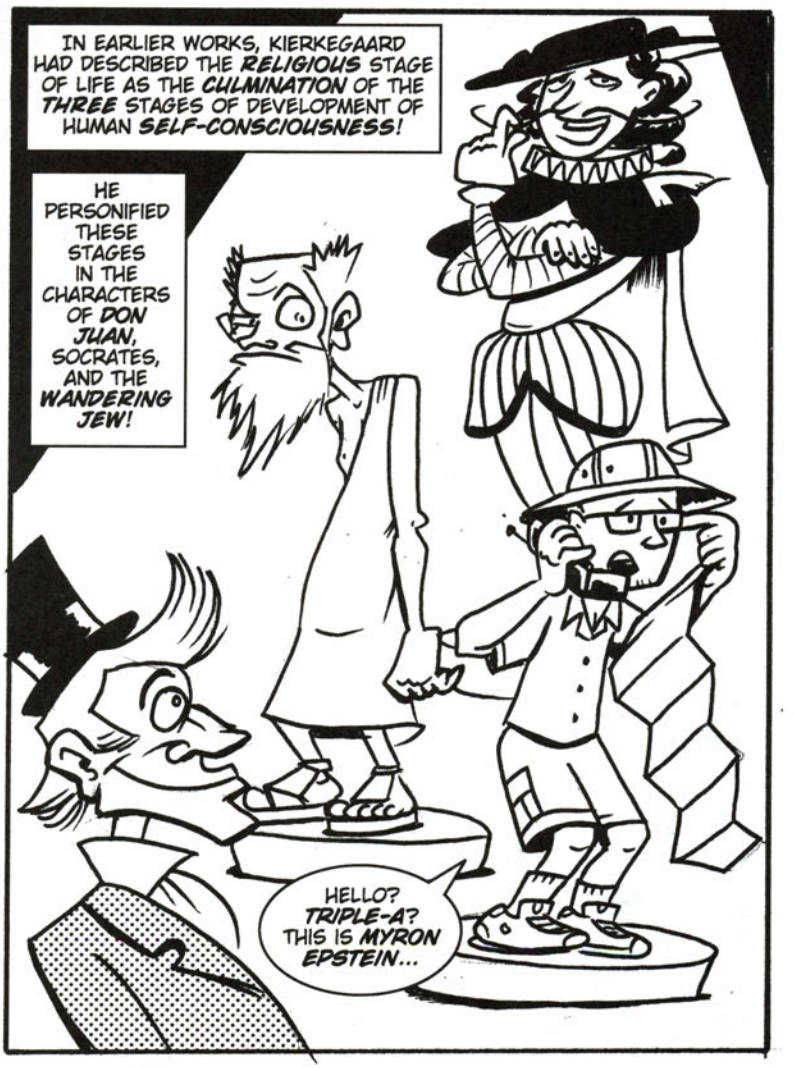

HIS REPUTATION WAS ENSURED BY HIS MOST FAMOUS BOOK, THE SUMMA THEOLOGICA, A 3,000-PAGE TREATISE CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE THE GREATEST WORK OF THEOLOGY EVER WRITTEN.
SUMMA THEOLOGICA
AQUINUS
BUT IN ORDER TO BE A SAINT, MIRACLES HAVE TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO YOU TOO. IN 1273 THREE OF AQUINAS'S BROTHER MONKS SWORE THEY SAW THE CRUCIFIX IN THE MONASTERY CHAPEL COME TO LIFE:


IN 1855, AFTER REPEATED, VEHEMENT ATTACKS ON DENMARK'S STATE RELIGION, THE MOST POPULAR GUY IN COPENHAGEN WAS MOST DEFINITELY NOT ACTION PHILOSOPHER #18:
Søren Kierkegaard
BUT HE WAS HAVING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE!
WRITTEN (OUT OF FEAR) BY FRED VAN LENTE DRAWN (THOUGH TREMBLING) BY RYAN DUNLAVEY!
AH, HA! MY ARCH-NEMESIS, THE DANISH PEOPLE'S CHURCH!
I'VE GOT YOU RIGHT WHERE I WANT YOU!
AND I SWEAR TO YOU... I WILL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH!

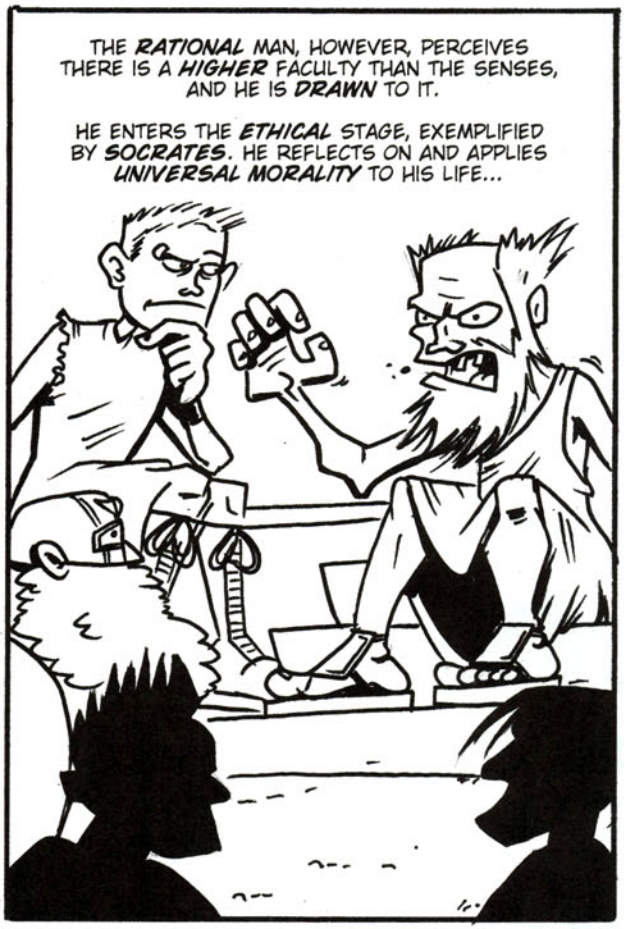

THE CHURCH HAD AROUSED THE PHILOSOPHER'S IRE AT THE FUNERAL OF ITS BISHOP PRIMATE, J.P. MYNSTER.
FROM THIS MAN, WHOSE PRECIOUS MEMORY FILLS OUR HEARTS...
...OUR THOUGHTS ARE LED BACK TO THAT LONG LINE OF SANDHEDSVIDNE*...
* = "WITNESSES TO THE TRUTH" (DANISH)


...WHICH, LIKE A HOLY CHAIN, STRETCHES THROUGH TIME FROM THE APOSTLES UP TO OUR OWN DAY...
SANDHEDSVIDNE? SANDHEDSVIDNE?!
WHAT A RIP-OFF!!

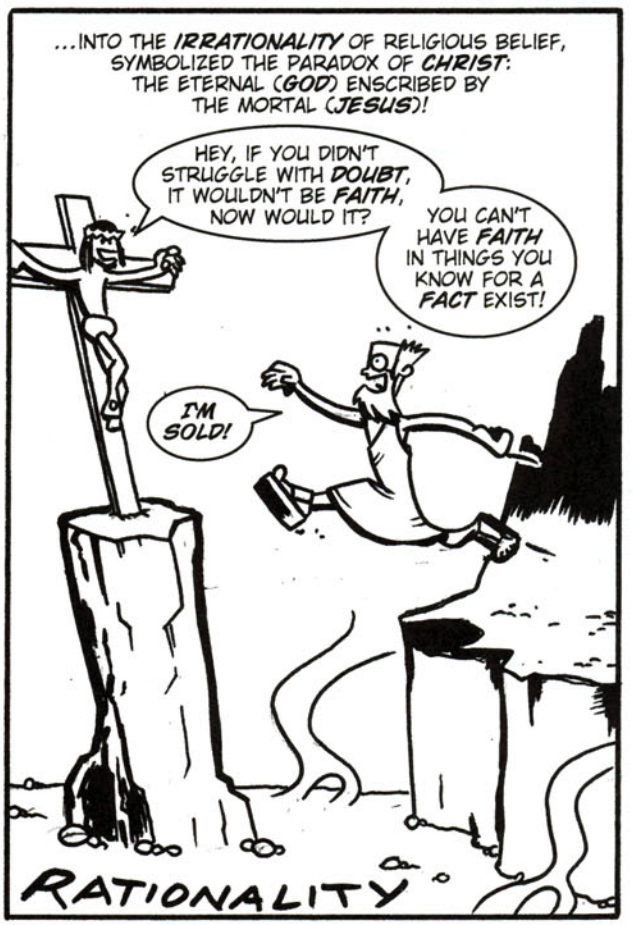

THOUGH LARGELY UNKNOWN OUTSIDE HIS NATIVE LAND (HE WROTE IN DANISH, WHICH DIDN'T HELP), KIERKEGAARD WAS A RESPECTED LITERARY FIGURE WITHIN DENMARK.
OHHHHHH...
...NOW I GET IT!
HE HAD COINED THE TERM "SANDHEDSVIDNE" IN CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES (1848) TO DESCRIBE MARTYRS WHO CAME INTO A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE THROUGH SUFFERING!


IN EARLIER WORKS, KIERKEGAARD HAD DESCRIBED THE RELIGIOUS STAGE OF LIFE AS THE CULMINATION OF THE THREE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS!
HE PERSONIFIED THESE STAGES IN THE CHARACTERS OF DON JUAN, SOCRATES, AND THE WANDERING JEW!
HELLO? TRIPLE-A? THIS IS MYRON EPSTEIN...


DON JUAN REPRESENTS THE AESTHETIC STAGE OF LIFE, IN WHICH A PERSON IS RULED BY HIS IMPULSES AND EMOTIONS. HE PLACES NO LIMITATIONS ON HIS EXISTENCE SAVE TASTE; HE CARES NOT FOR THE QUALITY OF HIS EXPERIENCES... ONLY FOR THEIR VARIETY AND NUMBER!


THE RATIONAL MAN, HOWEVER, PERCEIVES THERE IS A HIGHER FACULTY THAN THE SENSES, AND HE IS DRAWN TO IT.
HE ENTERS THE ETHICAL STAGE, EXEMPLIFIED BY SOCRATES. HE REFLECTS ON AND APPLIES UNIVERSAL MORALITY TO HIS LIFE...


...LIKE THE BACHELOR WHO VOLUNTEERS TO CONSTRICT HIS SEXUAL IMPULSES BY THE ETHICAL CONTRACT OF MARRIAGE!
YET THE ETHICAL MAN DISCOVERS THAT OBEYING MORAL LAW BRINGS SUFFERING, SO HE HAS TO MAKE A "LEAP OF FAITH" (ANOTHER KIERKEGAARD-COINED TERM)...


...INTO THE IRRATIONALITY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF, SYMBOLIZED THE PARADOX OF CHRIST: THE ETERNAL (GOD) ENSCRIBED BY THE MORTAL (JESUS)!
HEY, IF YOU DIDN'T STRUGGLE WITH DOUBT, IT WOULDN'T BE FAITH, NOW WOULD IT?
YOU CAN'T HAVE FAITH IN THINGS YOU KNOW FOR A FACT EXIST!
I'M SOLD!
RATIONALITY

THE PROBLEM WITH THE ***ETHICAL*** MAN IS THAT HE IS OBSESSED WITH THE ***ABSTRACT***. "PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS" AMOUNT TO LITTLE MORE THAN HYPOTHETICAL ***DETOURS*** AROUND LIFE'S NECESSARY ***CHOICES***.

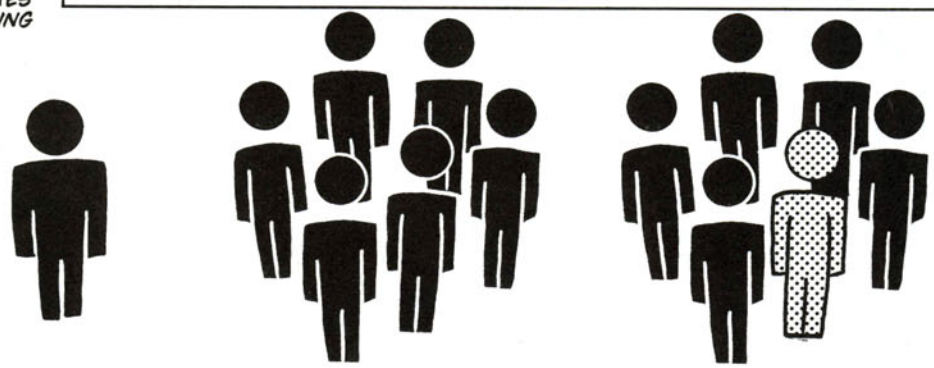
BEING

RATIONALLY, THERE MAY BE REASONS FOR ***OR*** AGAINST ANY GIVEN DECISION. BUT HUMANS, IN ORDER TO LIVE ***IN*** THE WORLD, ***MUST*** SET RATIONALITY ASIDE AND ***CHOOSE ONE***.

WHERE'S THE @#$! OFF-RAMP?!

"THE PARADOX OF FAITH IS ***THIS***," KIERKEGAARD WRITES IN *FEAR & TREMBLING* (1843):

"THAT THE INDIVIDUAL IS ***HIGHER*** THAN THE UNIVERSAL, THAT THE INDIVIDUAL DETERMINES HIS ***RELATION*** TO THE UNIVERSAL BY HIS RELATION TO THE ***ABSOLUTE***."



THE RELIGIOUS MAN DETERMINES THIS RELATION BY WHAT KIERKEGAARD CALLS ***"INFINITE RESIGNATION"***.

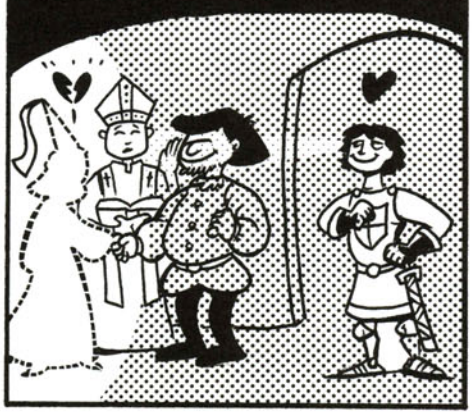
AS IN THE CASE OF A KNIGHT WHO SO LOVES A FAIR ***PRprincess...***

...THAT HE ***GIVES HER UP*** TO ANOTHER!

BY THIS, "HE KEEPS THIS LOVE ***YOUNG***, AND ALONG WITH ***HIM*** IT INCREASES IN YEARS AND IN ***BEAUTY***."

"HE HAS NO NEED OF THOSE EROTIC TINGLINGS IN THE NERVES AT THE SIGHT OF HIS BELOVED *ETC.*, NOR DOES HE NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY TAKING LEAVE OF HER IN A ***FINITE*** SENSE..."

"...BECAUSE HE RECOLLECTS HER IN AN ***ETERNAL*** SENSE!"



"TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT IS TO BECOME ***SPIRIT.***"

"TO BECOME SPIRIT ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT IS TO ***DIE OFF FROM*** THE WORLD."

"FOR DYING IS FAIRLY ***BRIEF*** SUFFERING, WHEREAS DYING OFF LASTS ***THE WHOLE OF ONE'S LIFE!***"

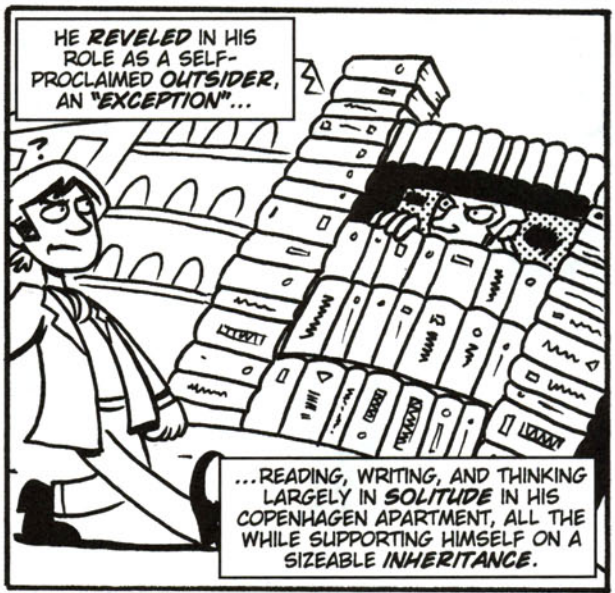


KIERKEGAARD SET ABOUT "DYING OFF FROM THE WORLD" NOT LONG AFTER RECEIVING HIS DOCTORATE IN ***THEOLOGY*** IN 1841.



THAT SAME YEAR HE INEXPLICABLY BROKE OFF HIS ENGAGEMENT TO ***REGINE OLSEN***, THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE!

HE ***REVELED*** IN HIS ROLE AS A SELF-PROCLAIMED ***OUTSIDER***, AN "***EXCEPTION***"...

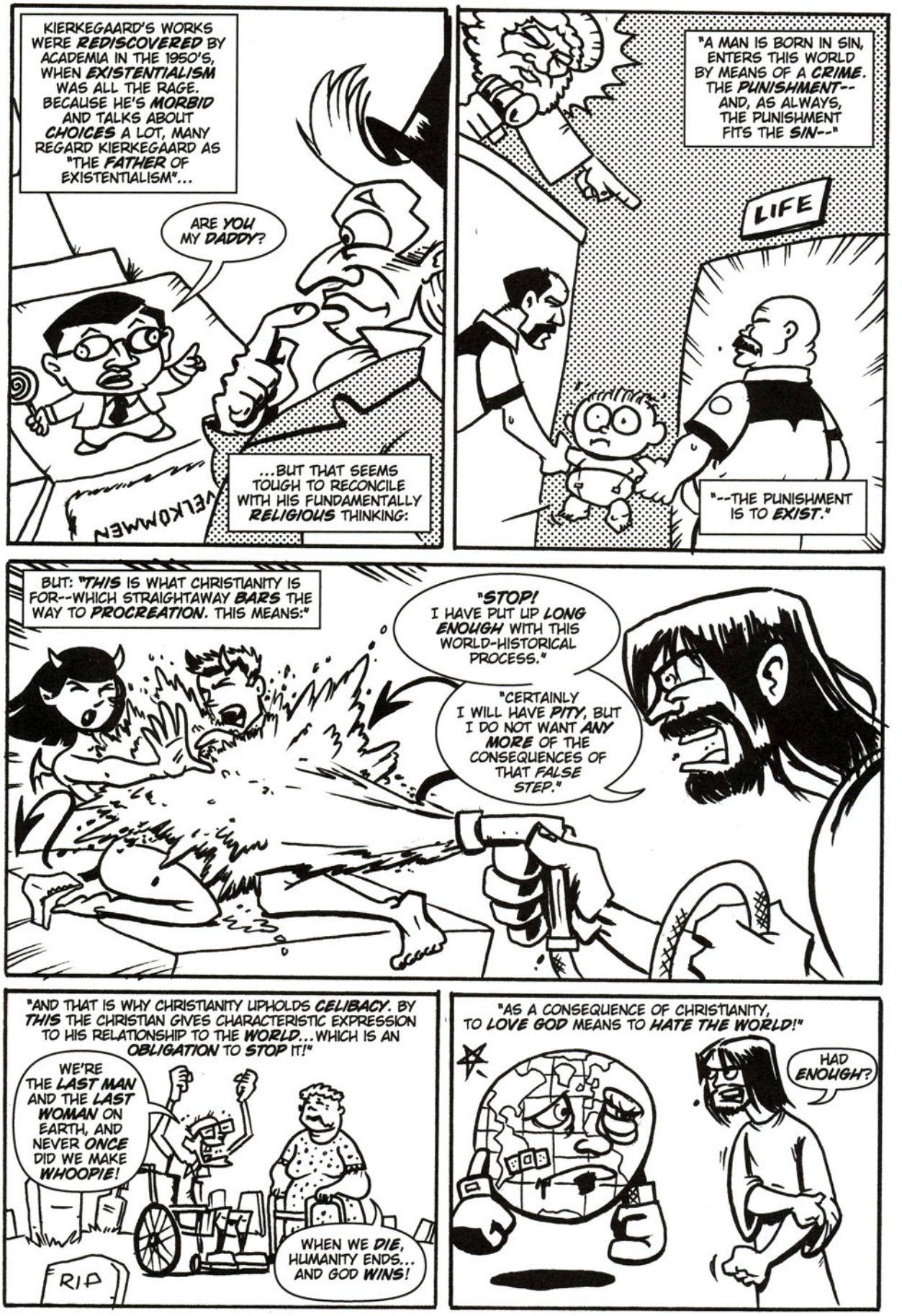


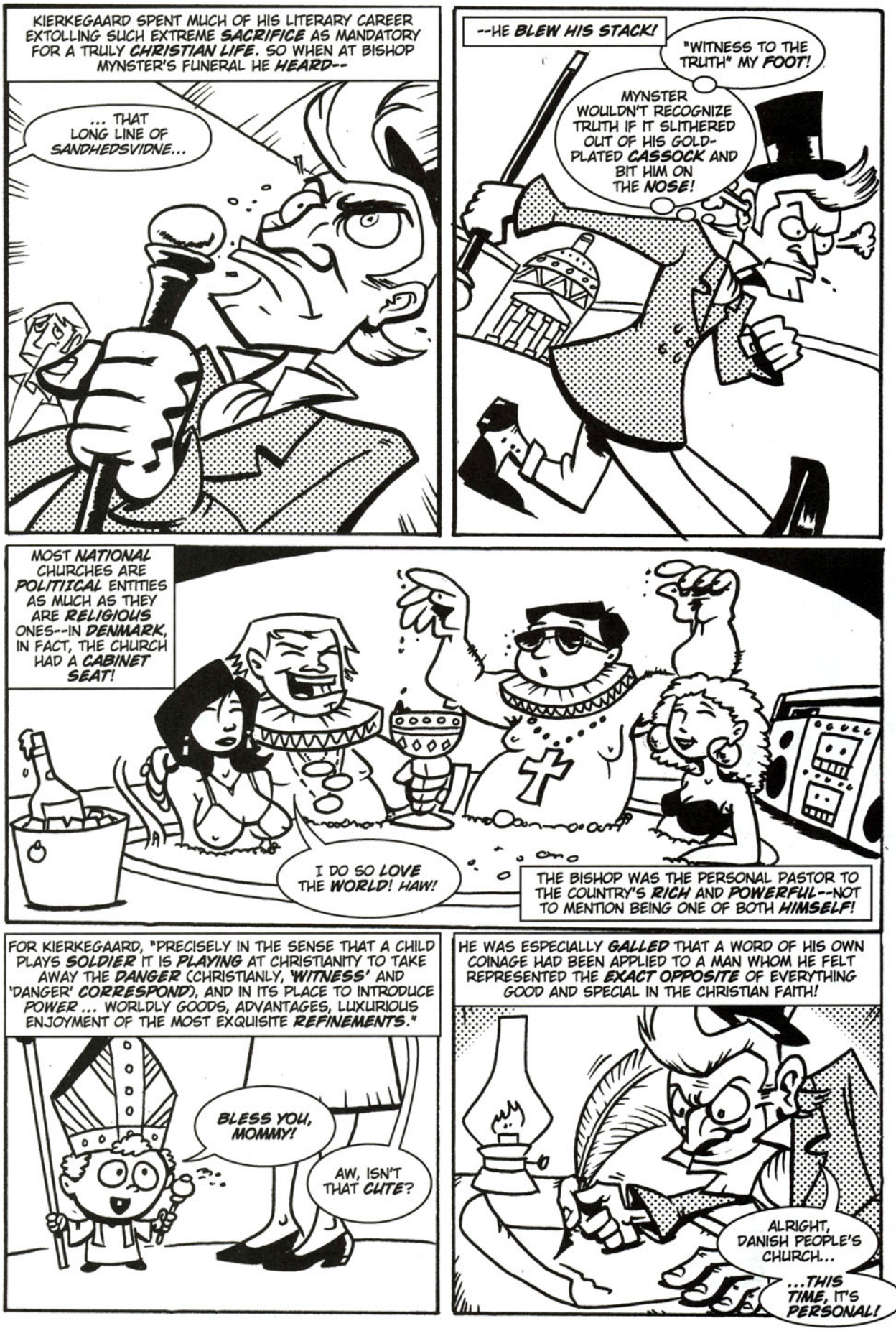
...READING, WRITING, AND THINKING LARGELY IN ***SOLITUDE*** IN HIS COPENHAGEN APARTMENT, ALL THE WHILE SUPPORTING HIMSELF ON A SIZEABLE ***INHERITANCE.***

AFTER FLIRTING FOR A TIME WITH HEGELIAN ***IDEALISM***, KIERKEGAARD FOUND AT LAST IN ***CHRISTIANITY*** THAT FOR WHICH HE HAD BEEN STRIVING FOR ALL HIS LIFE:

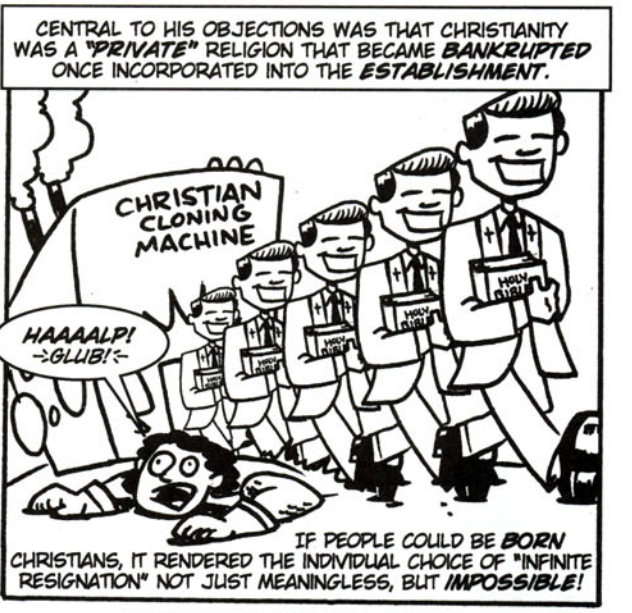


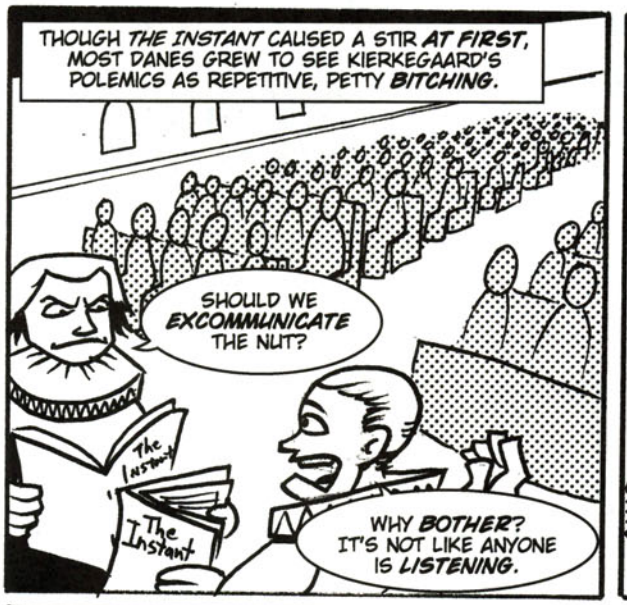
"THE THING IS TO FIND A ***TRUTH*** WHICH IS ***TRUE FOR ME***, TO FIND THE IDEA FOR WHICH I CAN LIVE AND ***DIE.***"


KIERKEGAARD'S WORKS WERE REDISCOVERED BY ACADEMIA IN THE 1950'S, WHEN EXISTENTIALISM WAS ALL THE RAGE. BECAUSE HE'S MORBID AND TALKS ABOUT CHOICES A LOT, MANY REGARD KIERKEGAARD AS "THE FATHER OF EXISTENTIALISM"...
ARE YOU MY DADDY?
...BUT THAT SEEMS TOUGH TO RECONCILE WITH HIS FUNDAMENTALLY RELIGIOUS THINKING:
VELKOMMEN
"A MAN IS BORN IN SIN, ENTERS THIS WORLD BY MEANS OF A CRIME. THE PUNISHMENT-- AND, AS ALWAYS, THE PUNISHMENT FITS THE SIN--"
LIFE
"--THE PUNISHMENT IS TO EXIST."
BUT: "THIS IS WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS FOR--WHICH STRAIGHTAWAY BARS THE WAY TO PROCREATION. THIS MEANS:"
"STOP! I HAVE PUT UP LONG ENOUGH WITH THIS WORLD-HISTORICAL PROCESS."
"CERTAINLY I WILL HAVE PITY, BUT I DO NOT WANT ANY MORE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT FALSE STEP."
"AND THAT IS WHY CHRISTIANITY UPHOLDS CELIBACY. BY THIS THE CHRISTIAN GIVES CHARACTERISTIC EXPRESSION TO HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD...WHICH IS AN OBLIGATION TO STOP IT!"
WE'RE THE LAST MAN AND THE LAST WOMAN ON EARTH, AND NEVER ONCE DID WE MAKE WHOOPIE!
WHEN WE DIE, HUMANITY ENDS... AND GOD WINS!
RIP
"AS A CONSEQUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, TO LOVE GOD MEANS TO HATE THE WORLD!"
HAD ENOUGH?


KIERKEGAARD SPENT MUCH OF HIS LITERARY CAREER EXTOLLING SUCH EXTREME SACRIFICE AS MANDATORY FOR A TRULY CHRISTIAN LIFE. SO WHEN AT BISHOP MYNSTER'S FUNERAL HE HEARD--
... THAT LONG LINE OF SANDHEDSVIDNE...
--HE BLEW HIS STACK!
"WITNESS TO THE TRUTH" MY FOOT!
MYNSTER WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE TRUTH IF IT SLITHERED OUT OF HIS GOLD-PLATED CASSOCK AND BIT HIM ON THE NOSE!
MOST NATIONAL CHURCHES ARE POLITICAL ENTITIES AS MUCH AS THEY ARE RELIGIOUS ONES--IN DENMARK, IN FACT, THE CHURCH HAD A CABINET SEAT!
I DO SO LOVE THE WORLD! HAW!
THE BISHOP WAS THE PERSONAL PASTOR TO THE COUNTRY'S RICH AND POWERFUL--NOT TO MENTION BEING ONE OF BOTH HIMSELF!
FOR KIERKEGAARD, "PRECISELY IN THE SENSE THAT A CHILD PLAYS SOLDIER IT IS PLAYING AT CHRISTIANITY TO TAKE AWAY THE DANGER (CHRISTIANLY, 'WITNESS' AND 'DANGER' CORRESPOND), AND IN ITS PLACE TO INTRODUCE POWER ... WORLDLY GOODS, ADVANTAGES, LUXURIOUS ENJOYMENT OF THE MOST EXQUISITE REFINEMENTS."
BLESS YOU, MOMMY!
AW, ISN'T THAT CUTE?
HE WAS ESPECIALLY GALLED THAT A WORD OF HIS OWN COINAGE HAD BEEN APPLIED TO A MAN WHOM HE FELT REPRESENTED THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF EVERYTHING GOOD AND SPECIAL IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH!
ALRIGHT, DANISH PEOPLE'S CHURCH...
...THIS TIME, IT'S PERSONAL!


BETWEEN MAY AND SEPTEMBER 1855 HE BANKROLLED TEN ISSUES OF ØIEBLIKKET ("THE INSTANT"), HIS SELF-PUBLISHED ASSAULT ON THE DANISH CHURCH!
THE INSTANT


CENTRAL TO HIS OBJECTIONS WAS THAT CHRISTIANITY WAS A "PRIVATE" RELIGION THAT BECAME BANKRUPTED ONCE INCORPORATED INTO THE ESTABLISHMENT.
CHRISTIAN CLONING MACHINE
HAAAALP! -GLUB!-
HOLY BIBLE
IF PEOPLE COULD BE BORN CHRISTIANS, IT RENDERED THE INDIVIDUAL CHOICE OF "INFINITE RESIGNATION" NOT JUST MEANINGLESS, BUT IMPOSSIBLE!

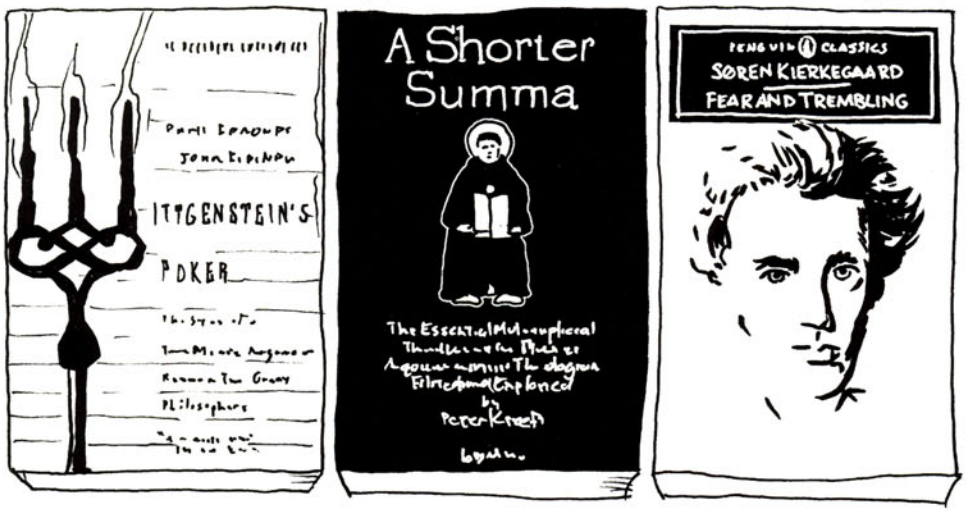

THOUGH THE INSTANT CAUSED A STIR AT FIRST, MOST DANES GREW TO SEE KIERKEGAARD'S POLEMICS AS REPETITIVE, PETTY BITCHING.
SHOULD WE EXCOMMUNICATE THE NUT?
WHY BOTHER? IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE IS LISTENING.
The Instant


THOUGH HE EXHAUSTED HIS SAVINGS PRODUCING THE INSTANT, REGINE OLSEN REPORTED SHE HAD NEVER SEEN KIERKEGAARD SO HAPPY.
"I FEEL MYSELF REALLY IN MY ELEMENT ONLY WHEN I AM SURROUNDED BY HUMAN MEDIOCRITY AND PALTRINESS!"


HE FELL DEATHLY ILL AT THE BEGINNING OF OCTOBER 1855, AND HAD TO BE HOSPITALIZED. AS HIS CONDITION WORSENED, HE REFUSED COMMUNION UNLESS A LAYMAN, NOT A PRIEST, PERFORMED IT.
"THE CLERGY ARE STATE FUNCTIONARIES, AND FUNCTIONARIES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH CHRISTIANITY!"
HE DIED AT 9 AT NIGHT ON NOVEMBER 11.


AT THE FUNERAL, KIERKEGAARD'S ONLY LIVING SIBLING, PETER, HIMSELF A PRIEST, INSISTED THAT THE D.P.C.'S ARCHDEACON TRYDE DELIVER THE COMMITTAL:
MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON THIS BEWILDERED, PERPLEXED SOUL...
KIERKEGAARD'S NEPHEW HENRIK GREW ANGRIER AND ANGRIER THROUGHOUT THE SERVICE, UNTIL FINALLY:
I MUST PROTEST THE WAY THE CHURCH HAS TREATED MY UNCLE TODAY!
HE DECLARED OFTEN IN HIS WRITINGS THAT HE WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN!
THAT'S A LIE!
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN -- THE "AUTOMATIC" KIND OF CHRISTIAN HE DESPISED!
YET THE CHURCH HAS SEIZED HIS BODY--FORCED HIM TO BE COMMITTED TO ETERNITY AS SUCH A CHRISTIAN!
WOULD A RABBI FORCE A CONVERTED JEW TO BE BURIED A JEW? WOULD A TURK (MUSLIM)?
NO, ONLY CHRISTIANS DO THIS! WHAT REVELATIONS SAYS IS TRUE--
--THE STATE CHURCH IS A WHORE SCREWED BY ALL THE TYRANTS OF THE EARTH!
YOU ARE RAPING MY UNCLE'S MEMORY!
STOP THIS THIEF! HE IS DESECRATING HOLY PLACES!
AND SO SOREN KIERKEGAARD HAD THE MOST APPROPRIATE FUNERAL IN HUMAN HISTORY!
I TOLD YOU I'D HAVE THE LAST LAUGH!
-:HEH, HEH!:-

RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE GENIUS-ON-THE-GO



David Edmonds & John Eidinow. *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers.* New York: Ecco, 2002.

This is a fun, unique little intellectual enterprise (not unlike *Action Philosophers*, come to think of it) that explores, in minutest detail, a confrontation between Luki and the anti-totalitarian philosopher Karl Popper at Cambridge's Moral Science Club in 1946 in which the famously hot headed Luki supposedly threatened his colleague with a poker from the fireplace. While I was annoyed by the narrative's bouncing back-and-forth through time, presumably a device to drag out the climax of what was, literally, a ten minute squabble, the authors do a great job of invoking the turn-of-the-century Vienna milieu into which both thinkers were born, as well as setting up what was at stake in the argument: Popper despised Wittgenstein's dismissal of philosophical problems as, essentially, preferring frivolous "language games" to solving the real ethical dilemmas posed by fascism and Stalinism.

This suggests, I would argue, that Popper missed the point of Wittgenstein's ideas entirely, and if the authors falter anywhere it's in getting across the sublime depth of Luki's thought. For that I would direct readers to the *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* itself. Its staggered, numbered propositions lend themselves perfectly to hypertext format, and software engineer Oliver Smith hosts just such a **"Hyper Tractatus"** at: http://www.kfs.org/~jonathan/witt/tlph.html

Peter Kreeft. (ed.) *A Shorter Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica Edited and Explained.* Translated from the Latin by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993.

Hey, I'll admit, I was raised Dutch Presbyterian, so I didn't understand this until I started this series: The Catholic Church really thinks it knows everything, doesn't it? I mean: *Everything*. The Vatican has a snappy answer for every question about life, the universe, and you-know-what, and even for the answers that contradict each other.

I bring this up not just because of the amount of mail we receive from Catholics "solving" various philosophical problems posed by this comic through some pithy piece of Church wisdom, but because, while Kreeft does a great service to us geniuses-on-the-go by condensing the 4,000 pages of Aquinas's original Summa down to a breezily readable 161 (down from Kreeft's earlier edition, *Summa of the Summa*, which was 500), it also boasts the most condescending footnotes I've ever read, in which the editor expounds about how Aquinas's arguments are unassailable, the saint is the greatest thinker ever, and today's modern (you know, post-Medieval) philosophers are idiots.

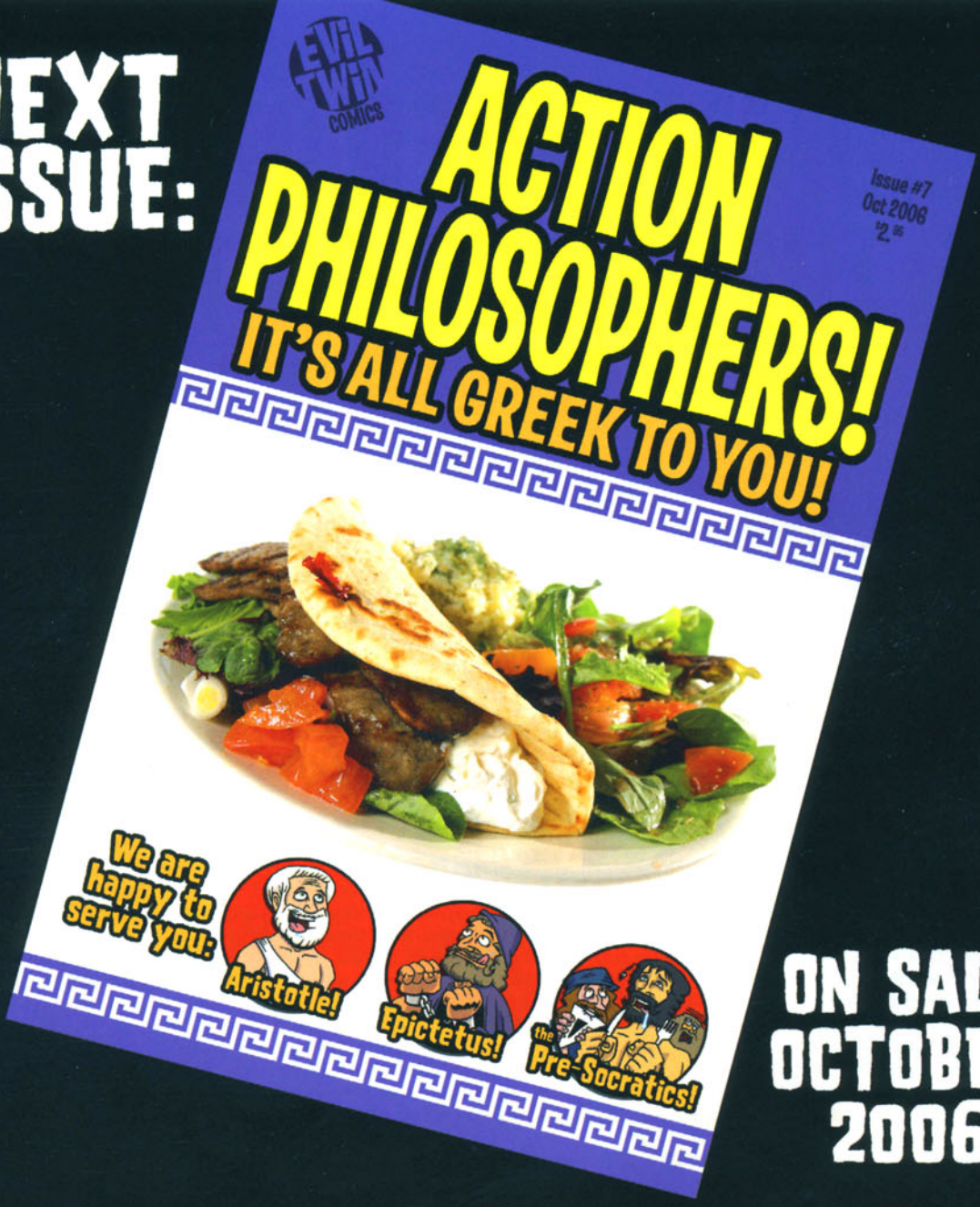
Soren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*. Translated from the Danish by Walter Lowrie. Garden City: Doubleday, 1954.

This is as tepid a recommendation as you'll find in this column, since I find reading Kierkegaard torture landing somewhere between getting my eyelids peeled off and reading Derrida (see last issue). Kierkegaard was one of Wittgenstein's favorite philosophers, though I don't see why, since Luki's opinion of the guy is the same as mine: **"He is too long-winded; he keeps on saying the same thing over and over again. When I read him I always wanted to say, 'Oh all right, I agree, I agree, but please get on with it.'"**

There's no better example of what Wittgy's talking about than this book-length examination of the first three paragraphs of Genesis, chapter 22, in which God commands Abraham to kill Isaac, but then – Psych! – sets a bush on fire to show Abe he's been Punk'd. *F&T* is usually bundled together, due to its scant length, with another one of SK's feel-good self-help books, *The Sickness Unto Death*, which is about how awesome despair is.

I don't know, maybe it sounds better in Danish…

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