EVIL TWIN COMICS

Issue #7
Oct 2006
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ACTION PHILOSOPHERS!

IT'S ALL GREEK TO YOU!



We are happy to serve you:









VOTE FOR AP#9 ON-LINE!

That's right, ActPhilo Heads, since our AP #6 poll was so spectacularly successful, AND since we're wholly lacking in imagination, we thought we'd do it again: You should log on RIGHT NOW to **www.actionphilosophers.com**, click on the Message Board, take just a couple quick seconds to register, and you can decide which thinkers will be featured in AP #9: THE LIGHTNING ROUND!

For this Reader's Choice issue, however, we're doing things a little bit differently. As the title implies, we're going too cram as many philosophers as we can into one 32-page comic book. This is in the spirit of that classic Simpsons episode, "22 Short Films About Springfield", although I doubt we'll actually manage to do 22 people... Or WILL we, hmmmm...?

Choose your favorite from the provided list – which was still nominated by YOU from all the suggestions in your emails, at cons, and on the message board -- and we'll DEFINITELY do the top vote-getters, and ... this is a change from the last reader's choice poll ... You can WRITE-IN candidates attached in the thread itself. If we like 'em, we'll do 'em. SUCH A DEAL!

(Oh, and if you registered on the message board BEFORE Mid-August 2006, we're sorry to say that you will have to RE-register, as, in a woefully futile attempt to thwart spambots, we updated the forum software … and promptly erased its entire database. Sorry about that. Our bad.)

AP #9 NOMINEES (THUS FAR)

- ❑ Arthur Schopenhauer
- ❑ Benedict Spinoza
- ❑ Boethius
- ❑ Confucius
- ❑ David Hume
- ❑ Diogenes the Cynic
- ❑ Francis Bacon
- ❑ G. W. Leibniz
- ❑ George Berkeley
- ❑ J.J. Rousseau
- ❑ John Locke
- ❑ Lao Tzu
- ❑ Mary Wollstonecraft
- ❑ Michel Foucault
- ❑ Peter Abelard
- ❑ The Sophists
- ❑ Thomas Hobbes
- ❑ William James
- ❑ Zoroaster

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"OF THE ***FIRST*** PHILOSOPHERS," WRITES THE FIRST REAL ***HISTORIAN*** OF PHILOSOPHY, ***ARISTOTLE***, "***MOST*** THOUGHT THE ***PRINCIPLES*** WHICH WERE OF THE NATURE OF ***MATTER*** WERE THE ***ONLY*** PRINCIPLES OF ***ALL*** THINGS."

IN OTHER WORDS, THERE WERE NO "***META***"-PHYSICS... THE MATERIAL, IDEALISTIC, AND SPIRITUAL WORLDS ALL OBEYED ***IDENTICAL*** LAWS!

THOSE THEORIES PREVAILED IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF THIS FIRST MEGA-STAR PHILOSOPHER, ***SOCRATES***, SO THE THINKERS THAT EXPOUNDED THEM ARE KNOWN, COLLECTIVELY, AS ***ACTION PHILOSOPHER(S) #19...***

THE PRE-SOCRATICS!

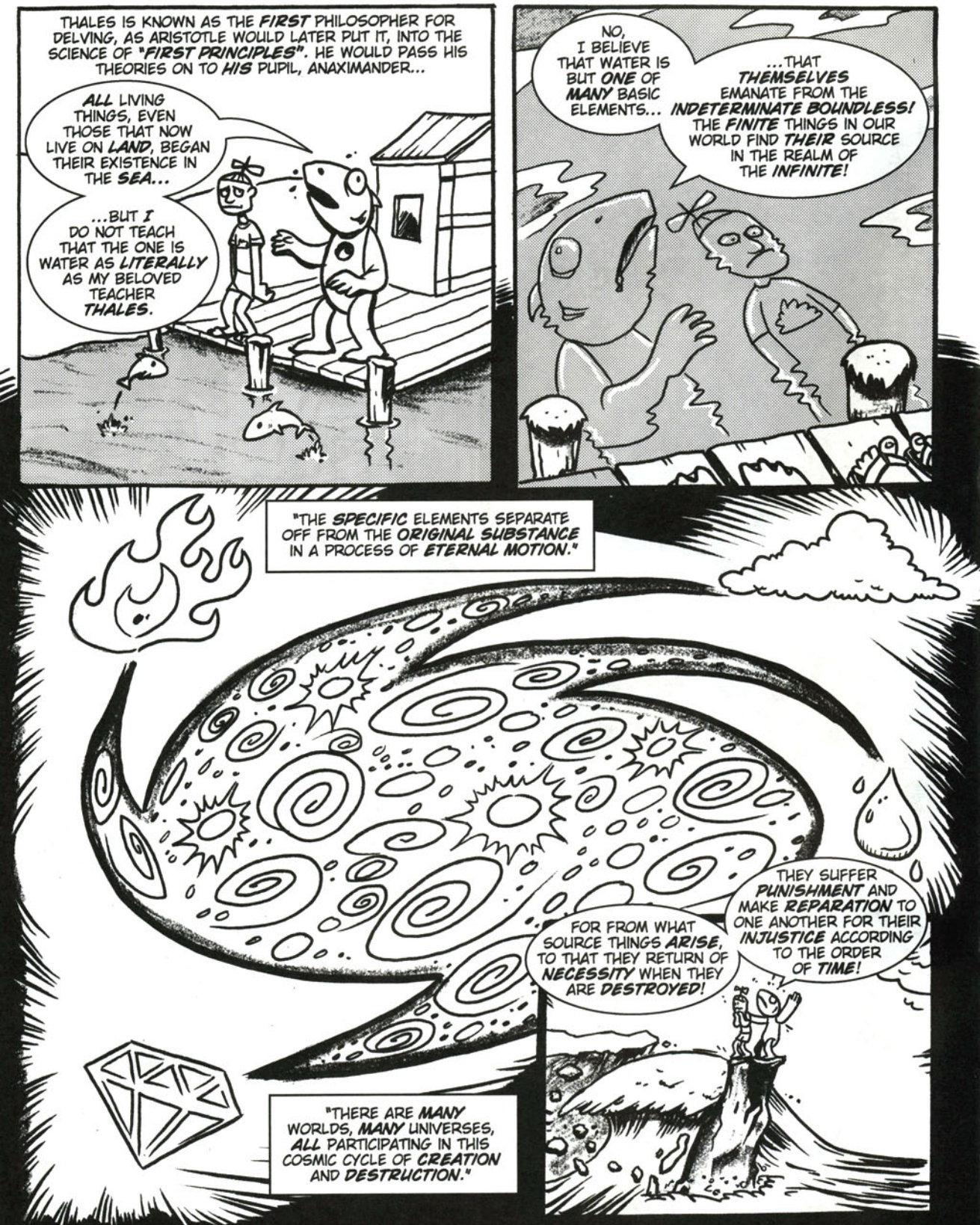
THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS ***COMIC BOOK*** ARE STORY (BY ***FRED VAN LENTE***) AND ART (BY ***RYAN DUNLAVEY***)!

THALES OF MILETUS!




BUT FINANCIAL SUCCESS COULD NOT SLAKE THALES' THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE...
THERE IS SUCH A WONDROUS VARIETY TO THE THINGS IN THE WORLD...CLOUDS, STARS, MEN, EARTH...
...YET I AM CONVINCED THAT THE MANY ARE RELATED TO EACH OTHER BY A SINGLE COMMONALITY--THE ONE!
BUT WHAT COULD THIS "ONE" BE--
--WHOOA!!
DANGER! WELL
SPLASH!
DANGER! WELL
DANGER! WELL
BY ZEUS, I'VE GOT IT!
ALL THINGS ARE MADE OF WATER!
DANGER! WELL

ANAXIMANDER!



ANAXIMENES!

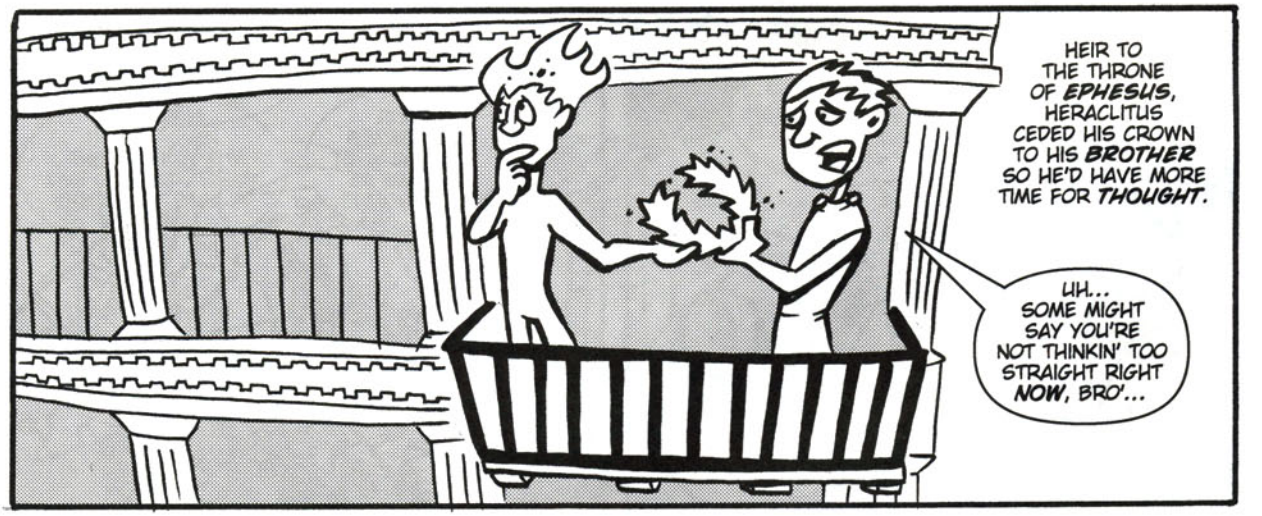

NOW... I RETURN TO THE INDETERMINATE BOUNDLESS... COUGH!
I TRUST YOU WILL CARRY ON MY TEACHINGS, ANAXIMENES... ->GAK!<-


YEAH, RIGHT! IN YOUR DREAMS, POPS!
YOUR THEORIES STINK ALMOST AS BAD AS YOUR FEET!
ANYBODY WITH HALF A BRAIN COULD SEE THE FIRST CAUSE ISN'T WATER--
Kick!
OR YOUR WACKY INDETERMINATE BOUNDLESS...

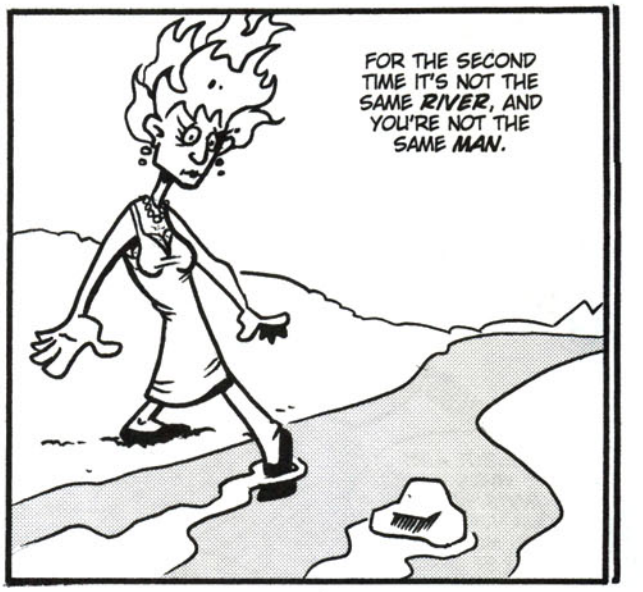

...BUT AIR! WHILE IT IS INVISIBLE, LIKE OUR VERY SOULS, ITS MOVEMENTS MAY BE TRACKED SCIENTIFICALLY!
ALL THE OTHER ELEMENTS DERIVE FROM AIR! WHEN SPED UP, AIR FORMS FIRE, AND WHEN SLOWED DOWN, IT FORMS WATER!

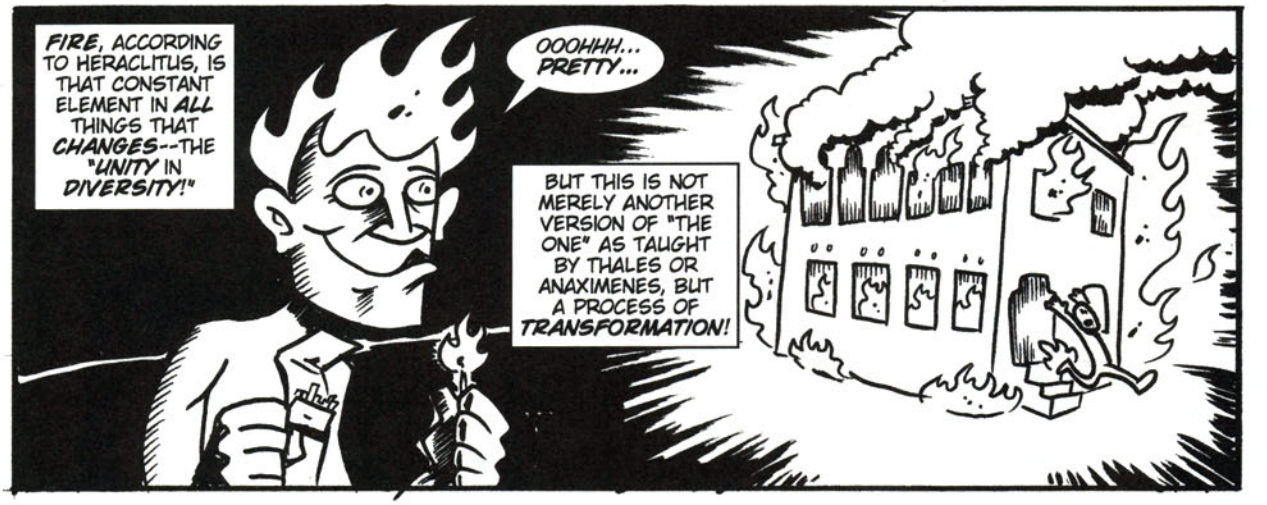

SO WAS INAUGURATED ONE OF THE MOST COMMON PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS:
EVERY PHILOSOPHER WHO CAME BEFORE ME WAS AN IDIOT!

HERACLITUS!

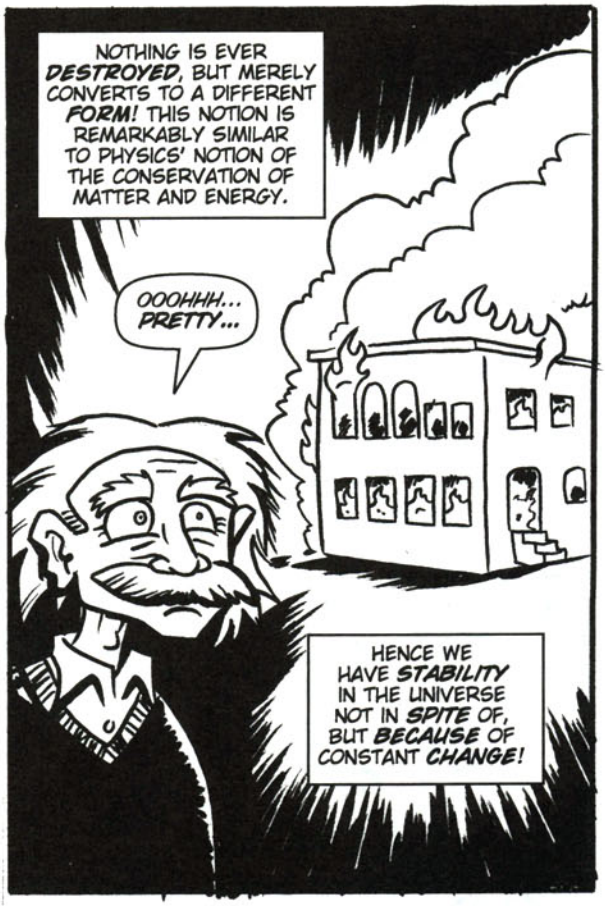

HEIR TO THE THRONE OF *EPHESUS*, HERACLITUS CEDED HIS CROWN TO HIS *BROTHER* SO HE'D HAVE MORE TIME FOR *THOUGHT*.
UH... SOME MIGHT SAY YOU'RE NOT THINKIN' TOO STRAIGHT RIGHT *NOW*, BRO'...


"ALL THINGS ARE IN FLUX" WAS HIS CATCHPHRASE, MORE *FAMOUSLY* FORMULATED AS:
"YOU CANNOT STEP *TWICE* INTO THE SAME *RIVER*."


FOR THE SECOND TIME IT'S NOT THE SAME *RIVER*, AND YOU'RE NOT THE SAME *MAN*.


FIRE, ACCORDING TO HERACLITUS, IS THAT CONSTANT ELEMENT IN *ALL* THINGS THAT *CHANGES*--THE *"UNITY* IN *DIVERSITY!"*
OOOHHH... PRETTY...
BUT THIS IS NOT MERELY ANOTHER VERSION OF "THE ONE" AS TAUGHT BY THALES OR ANAXIMENES, BUT A PROCESS OF *TRANSFORMATION!*

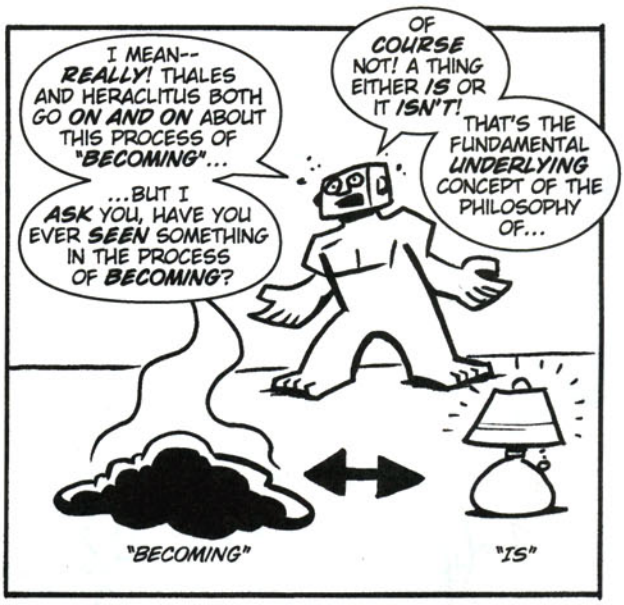

THE WORLD IS, HERACLITUS SAYS, AN "EVER-LIVING FIRE" WHICH IS MAINTAINED BY "MEASURES OF IT KINDLING AND MEASURES GOING OUT."
"ALL THINGS ARE AN EXCHANGE FOR FIRE, AND FIRE FOR ALL THINGS, EVEN AS WARES FOR GOLD AND GOLD FOR WARES."


NOTHING IS EVER DESTROYED, BUT MERELY CONVERTS TO A DIFFERENT FORM! THIS NOTION IS REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO PHYSICS' NOTION OF THE CONSERVATION OF MATTER AND ENERGY.
OOOHHH... PRETTY...
HENCE WE HAVE STABILITY IN THE UNIVERSE NOT IN SPITE OF, BUT BECAUSE OF CONSTANT CHANGE!


GOD IS FIRE, AND GOD-FIRE PERMEATES ALL THINGS--INCLUDING THE HUMAN SOUL!
REASON IS THE FIRE OF THE SOUL, FOR ONLY THROUGH IT CAN WE SEE THAT WHICH IS SHARED BY ALL THINGS!
THUS, THOUGH MEN ARE ALL DIFFERENT, THEY ARE UNITED BY A SINGLE FLAME!


AND THOUGH MEN ALWAYS DISAGREE, "WHAT IS IN OPPOSITION IS IN CONCERT AND FROM WHAT DIFFERS COMES THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HARMONY."
JUST AS FIRE IS THE CONSTANT IN CHANGE, IT IS ONLY THROUGH THE TENSION BETWEEN OPPOSITES THAT THE UNIVERSE ACHIEVES ORDER!


IF THAT SOUNDS LIKE TOTAL B.S. TO YOU, YOU'RE NOT ALONE!
I'VE ALWAYS FOUND THE WHOLE NOTION OF CHANGE TO BE COMPLETELY ILLOGICAL!

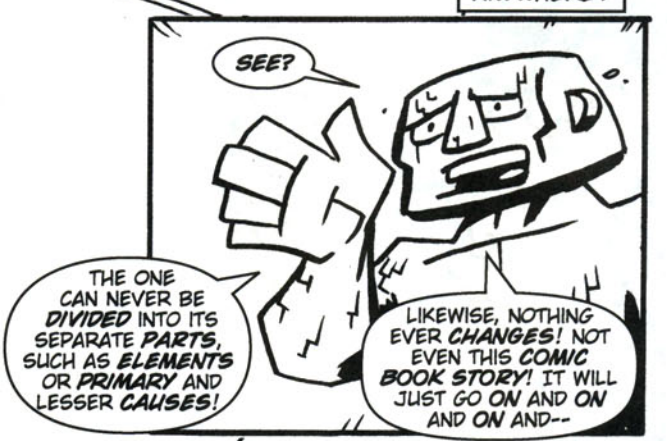

I MEAN-- REALLY! THALES AND HERACLITUS BOTH GO ON AND ON ABOUT THIS PROCESS OF "BECOMING"...
...BUT I ASK YOU, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SOMETHING IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING?
OF COURSE NOT! A THING EITHER IS OR IT ISN'T!
THAT'S THE FUNDAMENTAL UNDERLYING CONCEPT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF...
"BECOMING"
"IS"

PARMENIDES!

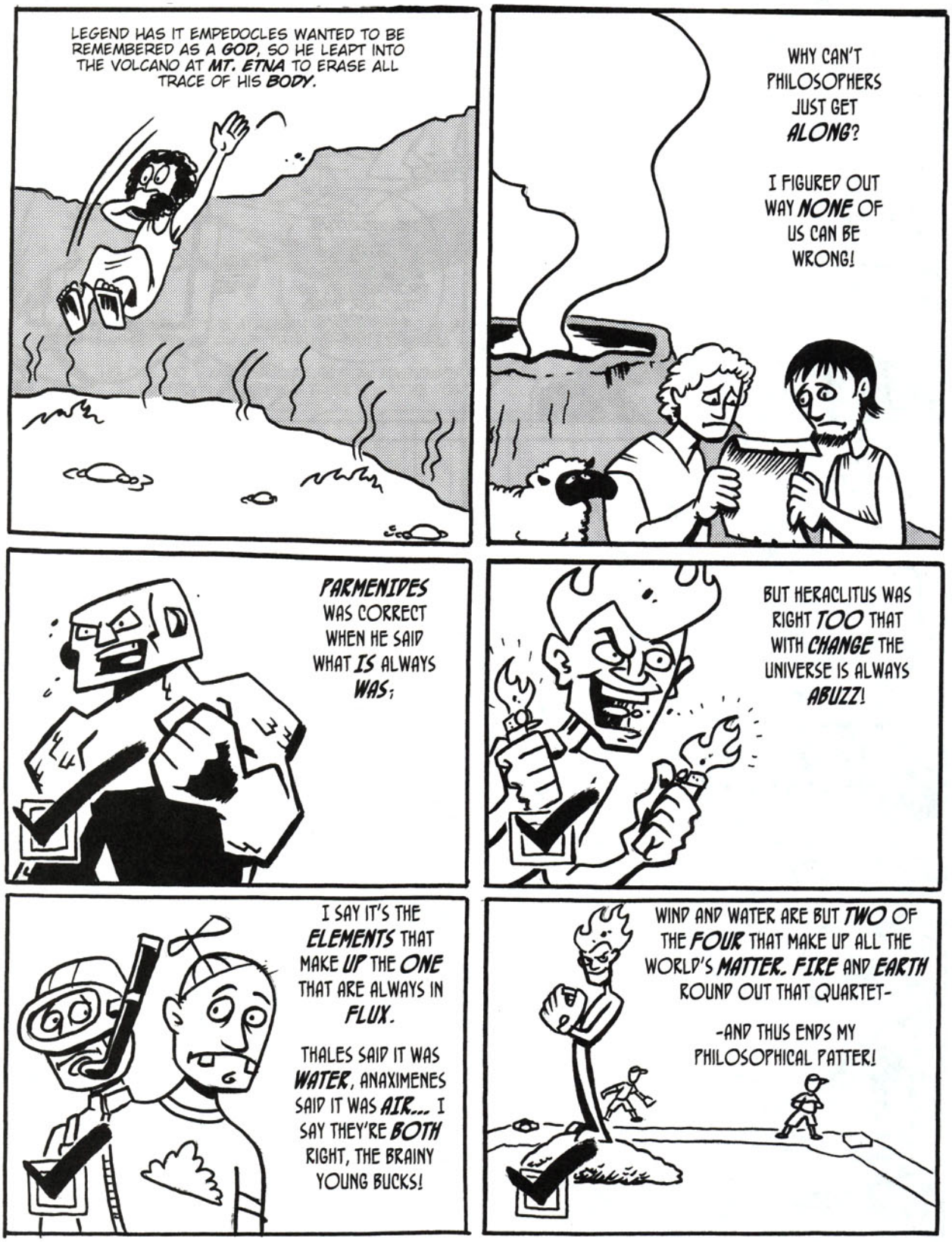

"ONE PATH ONLY IS LEFT FOR US TO SPEAK OF, NAMELY, THAT IT IS. IN THIS PATH ARE VERY MANY TOKENS THAT WHAT IS, IS UNCREATED AND INDESTRUCTIBLE, FOR IT IS COMPLETE, UNMOVABLE AND WITHOUT END."
THERE IS NO CHANGE OR MOTION -- THESE ARE MERELY ILLUSIONS PRODUCED BY OUR SENSES!
THOUGH THINGS MAY ALTER IN APPEARANCE, THEY REMAIN, IN ESSENCE, EXACTLY THE SAME!


PARMENIDES' STUDENT ZENO ILLUSTRATED THE ILLUSION OF MOTION WITH HIS FAMOUS PARADOX:
FINISH
½ of ½ WAY


½ WAY MARK
IF YOU'RE RUNNING A RACE, YOU CAN'T REACH THE FINISH WITHOUT GETTING HALFWAY THERE, RIGHT-- AND YOU CAN'T THERE WITHOUT GETTING HALFWAY TO HALFWAY, RIGHT--AND YOU CAN'T GET TO HALFWAY TO HALFWAY WITHOUT GETTING HALF WAY-- SO...THE QUESTION IS...
...HOW DOES ANYONE GET ANYWHERE?

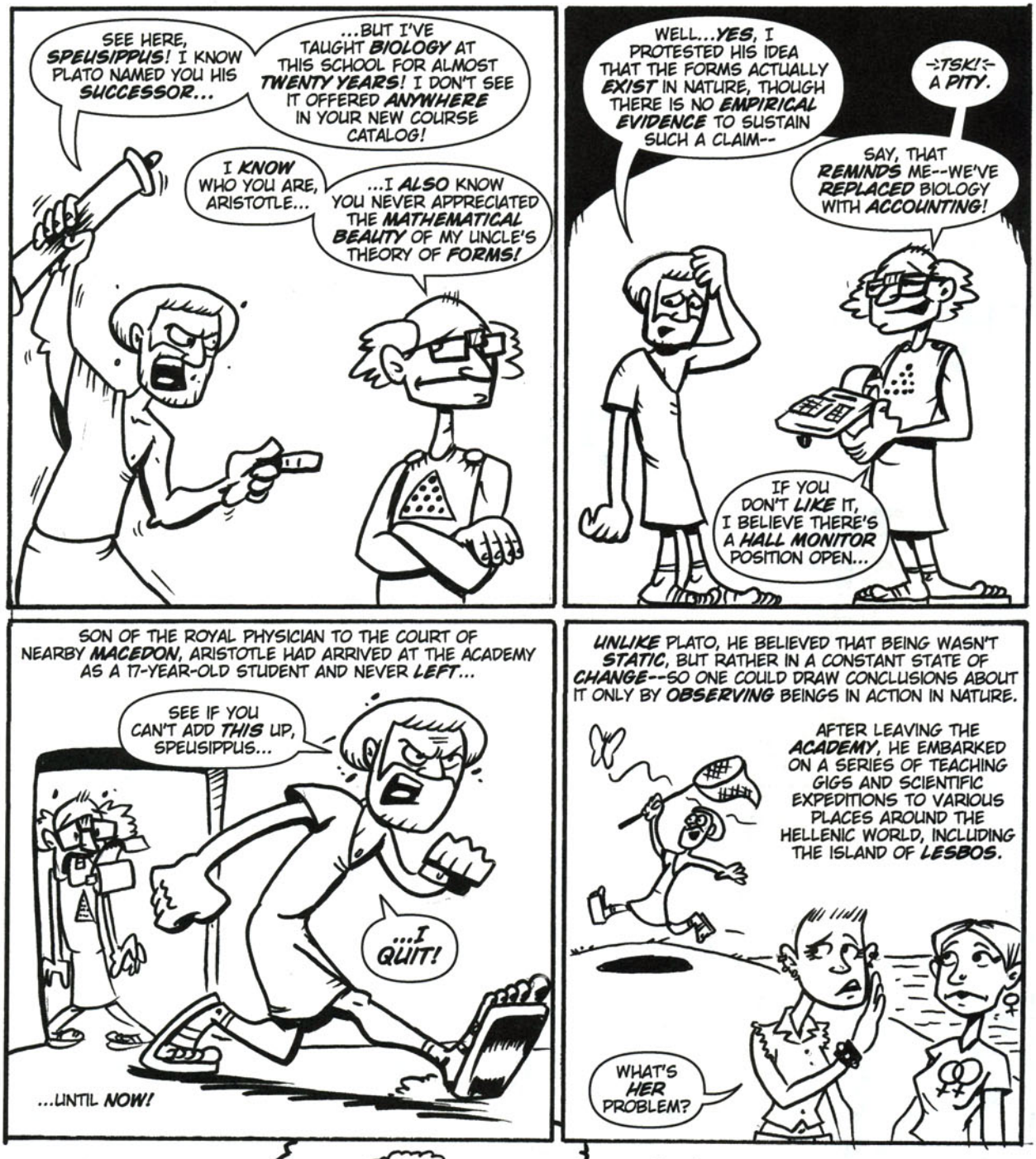

SEE?
THE ONE CAN NEVER BE DIVIDED INTO ITS SEPARATE PARTS, SUCH AS ELEMENTS OR PRIMARY AND LESSER CAUSES!
LIKEWISE, NOTHING EVER CHANGES! NOT EVEN THIS COMIC BOOK STORY! IT WILL JUST GO ON AND ON AND ON AND--

EMPEDOCLES!

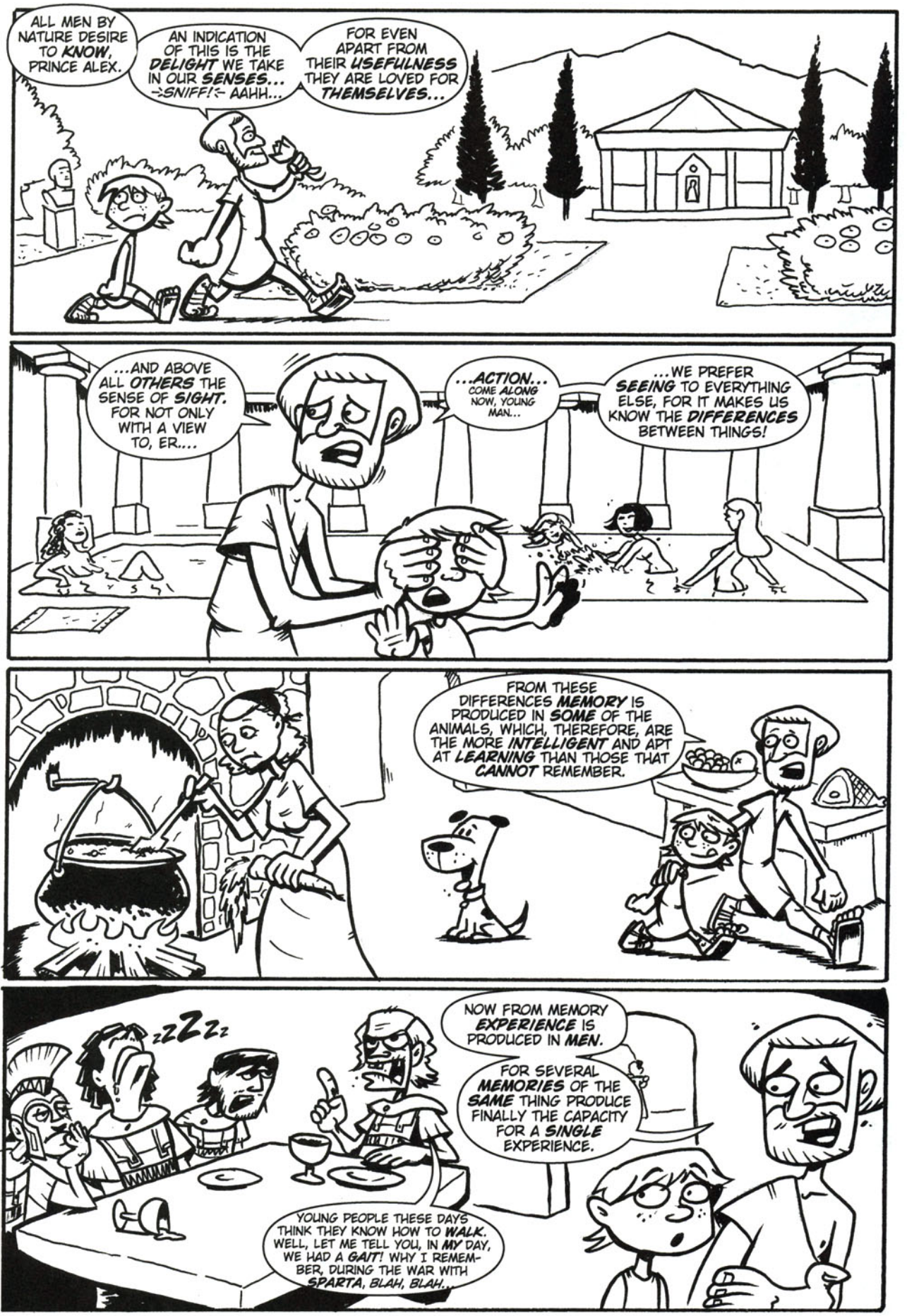

LEGEND HAS IT EMPEDOCLES WANTED TO BE REMEMBERED AS A GOD, SO HE LEAPT INTO THE VOLCANO AT MT. ETNA TO ERASE ALL TRACE OF HIS BODY.
WHY CAN'T PHILOSOPHERS JUST GET ALONG?
I FIGURED OUT WAY NONE OF US CAN BE WRONG!
PARMENIDES WAS CORRECT WHEN HE SAID WHAT IS ALWAYS WAS;
BUT HERACLITUS WAS RIGHT TOO THAT WITH CHANGE THE UNIVERSE IS ALWAYS ABUZZ!
I SAY IT'S THE ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP THE ONE THAT ARE ALWAYS IN FLUX.
THALES SAID IT WAS WATER, ANAXIMENES SAID IT WAS AIR... I SAY THEY'RE BOTH RIGHT, THE BRAINY YOUNG BUCKS!
WIND AND WATER ARE BUT TWO OF THE FOUR THAT MAKE UP ALL THE WORLD'S MATTER. FIRE AND EARTH ROUND OUT THAT QUARTET-
-AND THUS ENDS MY PHILOSOPHICAL PATTER!


WATER!
AIR!
FIRE!
NONE OF THE ABOVE!
ALL OF THE ABOVE!
A-HEM! PARDON ME, KIND SIRS...
...I, DEMOCRITUS, WOULD LIKE TO HUMBLY ASSERT A THEORY FIRST PROPOSED BY MY TEACHER, WISE LEUCIPPUS OF THRACE.
I PROPOSE THAT THE PRINCIPAL NATURE OF ALL MATTER IS IN THE FORM OF MICROSCOPIC BUILDING BLOCKS CALLED "ATOMS."
BWHAHAHA!
I'M GAINING WEIGHT--IT MUST BE BECAUSE THE ATOM FAIRY PAID ME A VISIT!
!@#$%! JERKS!
LOOK AT ME! I'M MADE UP OF MILLIONS OF INVISIBLE LITTLE ATOMS!


PLATO, FOUNDER OF THE ATHENIAN ACADEMY, DIED IN 347 B.C., AND MANY FEARED THAT HIS TRADITION OF THINKING AND LEARNING MIGHT DIE WITH HIM.
NO ONE YET REALIZED THAT ACTION PHILOSOPHER #20 WAITED IN THE WINGS TO PICK UP THE TORCH...
ARISTOTLE!
A IS PREDICATED OF ALL C WHERE B IS PREDICATED OF ALL C, AND:
A = FRED VAN LENTE'S SCRIPT (NATURE)
B = RYAN DUNLAVEY'S ART (CAUSE)
C = THIS COMIC (SUBSTANCE).
LISTEN UP, PEOPLE! THOUGH WE'RE ALL STILL MOURNING MY UNCLE, I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE SOME CHANGES TO NEXT TERM'S COURSE OFFERINGS:
WE'RE REPLACING HISTORY WITH PROBABILITY-- LITERATURE WITH GEOMETRY-- AND, INSTEAD OF RECESS...
...CALCULUS!
NEW CURRICULUM:
MATH
MATH
MORE MATH
?


SEE HERE, SPEUSIPPUS! I KNOW PLATO NAMED YOU HIS SUCCESSOR...
...BUT I'VE TAUGHT BIOLOGY AT THIS SCHOOL FOR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS! I DON'T SEE IT OFFERED ANYWHERE IN YOUR NEW COURSE CATALOG!
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, ARISTOTLE...
...I ALSO KNOW YOU NEVER APPRECIATED THE MATHEMATICAL BEAUTY OF MY UNCLE'S THEORY OF FORMS!
WELL...YES, I PROTESTED HIS IDEA THAT THE FORMS ACTUALLY EXIST IN NATURE, THOUGH THERE IS NO EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE TO SUSTAIN SUCH A CLAIM--
-TSK!- A PITY.
SAY, THAT REMINDS ME--WE'VE REPLACED BIOLOGY WITH ACCOUNTING!
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, I BELIEVE THERE'S A HALL MONITOR POSITION OPEN...
SON OF THE ROYAL PHYSICIAN TO THE COURT OF NEARBY MACEDON, ARISTOTLE HAD ARRIVED AT THE ACADEMY AS A 17-YEAR-OLD STUDENT AND NEVER LEFT...
SEE IF YOU CAN'T ADD THIS UP, SPEUSIPPUS...
...I QUIT!
...UNTIL NOW!
UNLIKE PLATO, HE BELIEVED THAT BEING WASN'T STATIC, BUT RATHER IN A CONSTANT STATE OF CHANGE--SO ONE COULD DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT IT ONLY BY OBSERVING BEINGS IN ACTION IN NATURE.
AFTER LEAVING THE ACADEMY, HE EMBARKED ON A SERIES OF TEACHING GIGS AND SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONS TO VARIOUS PLACES AROUND THE HELLENIC WORLD, INCLUDING THE ISLAND OF LESBOS.
WHAT'S HER PROBLEM?
THEN, IN 343 B.C., HE RECEIVED A ROYAL SUMMONS FROM MACEDON'S KING PHILIP II:
YOU SHALL COME TUTOR THE HEIR TO THE THRONE!
OH, WELL. I GUESS A STEADY PAYCHECK WOULD SUPPORT MY RESEARCH...

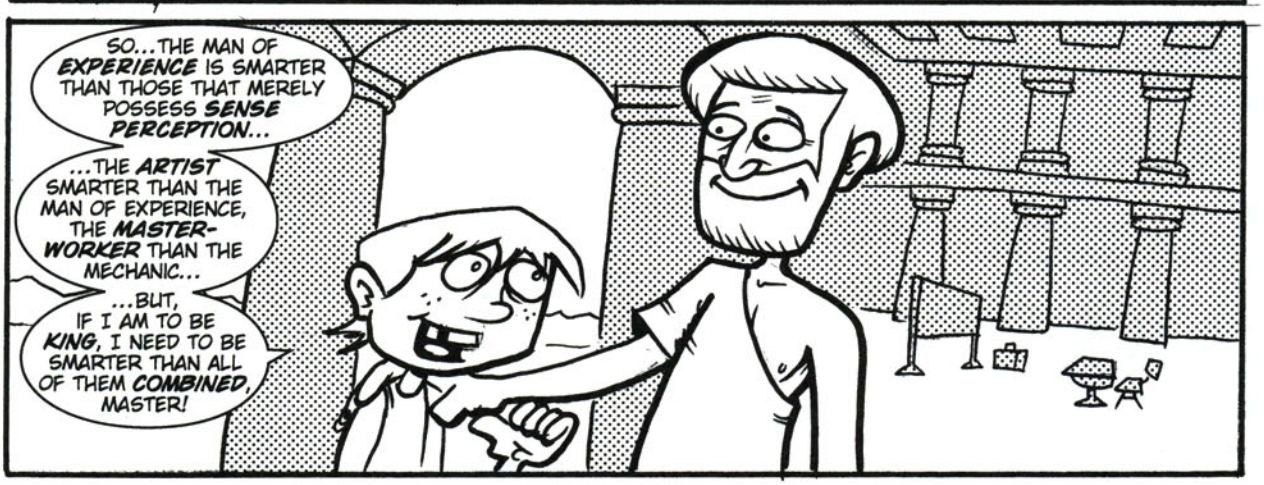

GOOD MORNING, CLASS. I LOOK FORWARD TO A FUN AND REWARDING SCHOOL YEAR.
NOW LET'S CHECK ATTENDANCE...
Mr. Aristotle
ALEXANDER.
HERE.
OKAY, GREAT. NOW THAT THAT'S DONE...
Attendance Scroll:
☐ Alexander
...LET US UNFURL OUR TEXT-SCROLLS TO LINE TWENTY-FIVE...
...SO WE MAY COMMENCE YOUR INSTRUCTION IN FIRST PRINCIPLES.
WHY?
BECAUSE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES AND THE CAUSES ARE MOST KNOWABLE.
WHY?
BECAUSE FROM THEM ALL OTHER THINGS COME TO BE KNOWN, AND NOT BY MEANS OF THE THINGS SUBORDINATE TO THEM.
WHY?
BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT IS MOST TRULY KNOWLEDGE--AND THUS THAT IS WHAT WE WHO CHOOSE TO KNOW FOR THE SAKE OF KNOWING MUST CHOOSE TO KNOW.
BUT WHY?
-:GRRRR!:-
BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE PURSUED FOR ITS OWN SAKE IS HIGHER THAN ANY UTILITARIAN END--
UM... MASTER? I HAVE A QUESTION...
YOU WOULDN'T DARE...
-:SIGH.:-
PERHAPS I SHOULD START AT THE VERY BEGINNING.
WE'RE HAVING CLASS OUTSIDE TODAY.
YAAAAAAAAAAYY!!

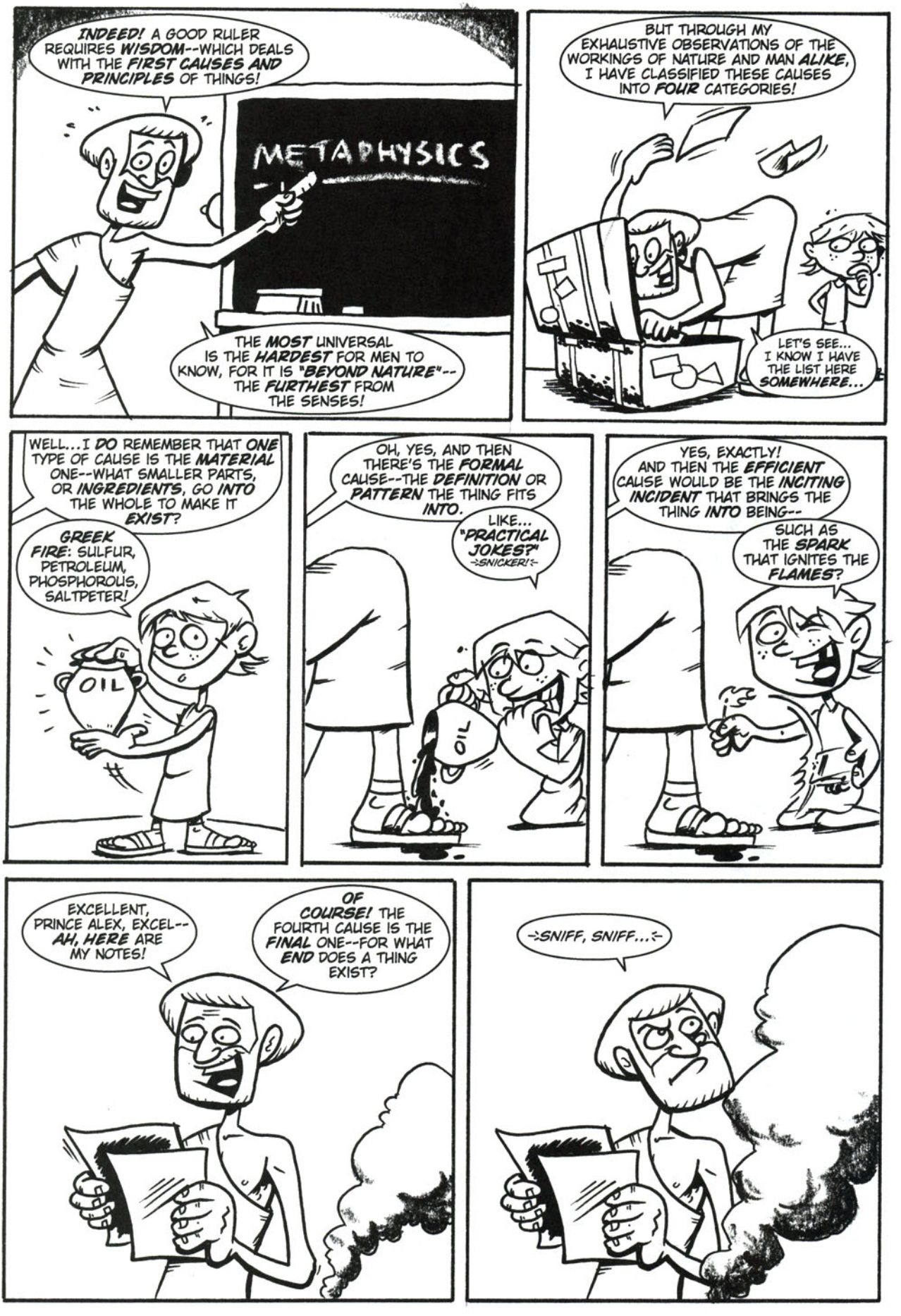

ALL MEN BY NATURE DESIRE TO KNOW, PRINCE ALEX.
AN INDICATION OF THIS IS THE DELIGHT WE TAKE IN OUR SENSES... ->SNIFF!<- AAHH...
FOR EVEN APART FROM THEIR USEFULNESS THEY ARE LOVED FOR THEMSELVES...
...AND ABOVE ALL OTHERS THE SENSE OF SIGHT. FOR NOT ONLY WITH A VIEW TO, ER....
...ACTION... COME ALONG NOW, YOUNG MAN...
...WE PREFER SEEING TO EVERYTHING ELSE, FOR IT MAKES US KNOW THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THINGS!
FROM THESE DIFFERENCES MEMORY IS PRODUCED IN SOME OF THE ANIMALS, WHICH, THEREFORE, ARE THE MORE INTELLIGENT AND APT AT LEARNING THAN THOSE THAT CANNOT REMEMBER.
zZZzz
NOW FROM MEMORY EXPERIENCE IS PRODUCED IN MEN.
FOR SEVERAL MEMORIES OF THE SAME THING PRODUCE FINALLY THE CAPACITY FOR A SINGLE EXPERIENCE.
YOUNG PEOPLE THESE DAYS THINK THEY KNOW HOW TO WALK. WELL, LET ME TELL YOU, IN MY DAY, WE HAD A GAIT! WHY I REMEMBER, DURING THE WAR WITH SPARTA, BLAH, BLAH...

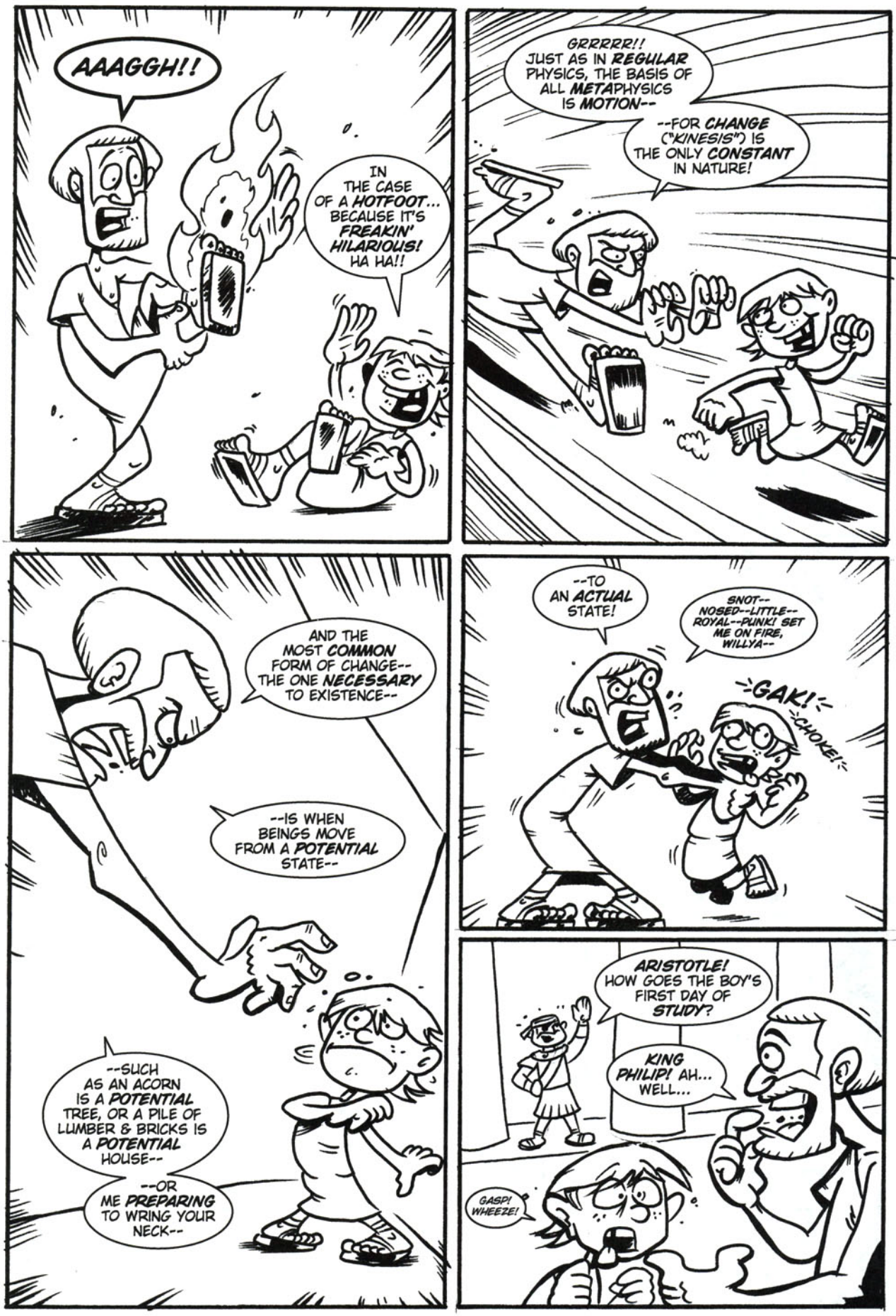

ART ARISES WHEN FROM MANY NOTIONS GAINED BY EXPERIENCE ONE UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT ABOUT A CLASS OF OBJECTS IS PRODUCED.
TO SAY WHEN YOUR FRIEND CALLIAS WAS ILL OF THIS DISEASE AND THIS MEDICINE DID HIM GOOD, THAT IS EXPERIENCE--
--BUT TO SAY THE SAME MEDICINE WILL DO GOOD TO ALL MEN WITH THAT DISEASE, THAT IS ART!

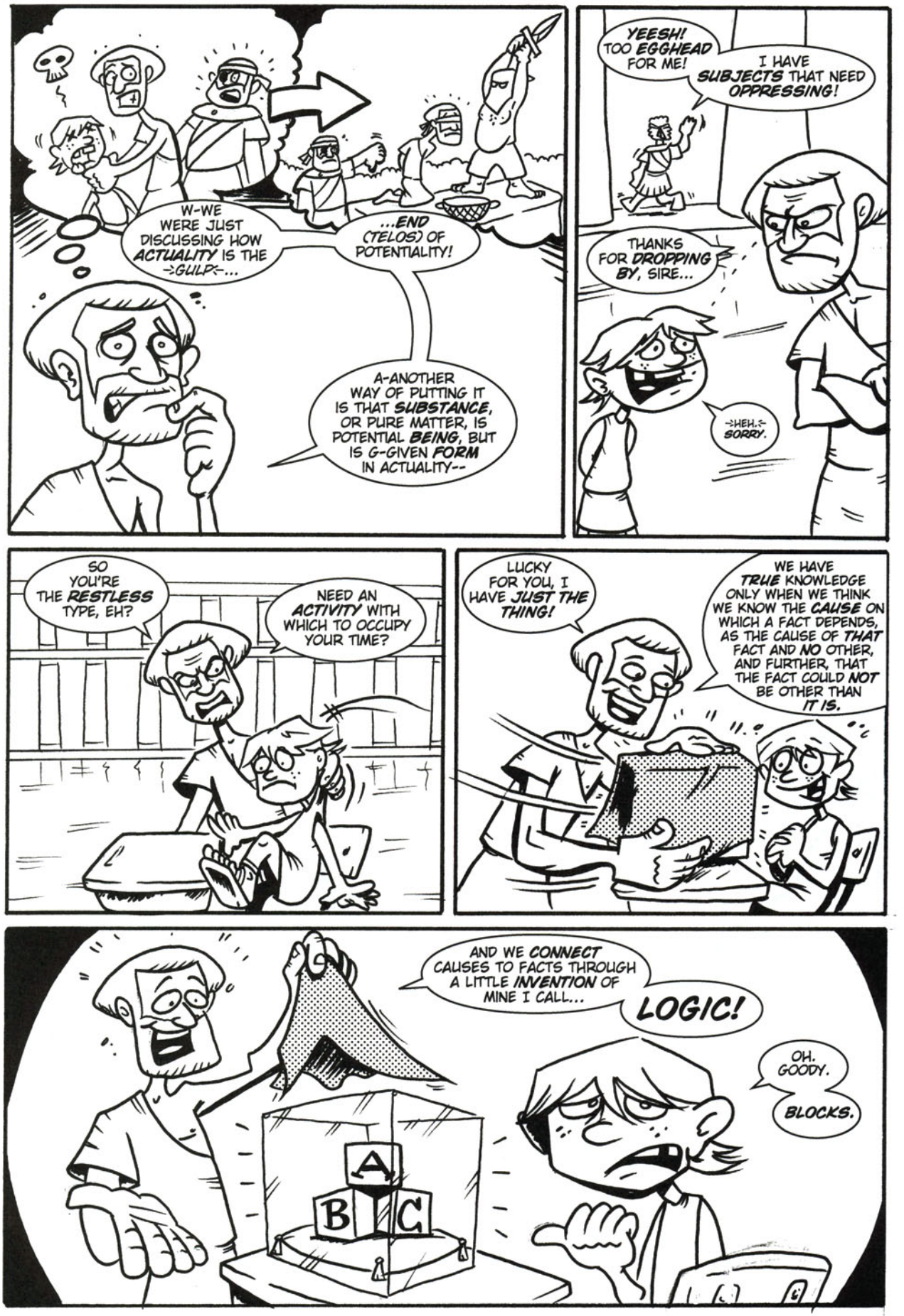

FOR MEN OF EXPERIENCE MAY KNOW THAT A THING IS SO, BUT NOT KNOW WHY.
HENCE WE THINK THAT MASTER-WORKERS IN EACH CRAFT ARE WISER THAN THE MANUAL WORKERS, FOR THEY KNOW THE CAUSES OF THE THINGS THAT ARE DONE.

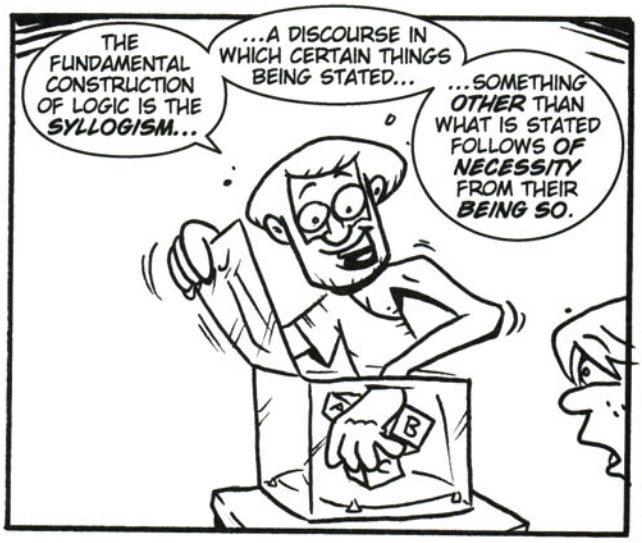

FURTHERMORE, ARTISTS, BECAUSE THEY KNOW THE WHYS OF A THING, UNLIKE MEN OF MERE EXPERIENCE, MAY TEACH OTHERS HOW TO DO IT.
A LOT OF TIMES, THAT'S THE ONLY WORK THEY CAN GET!
I HEARD THAT!

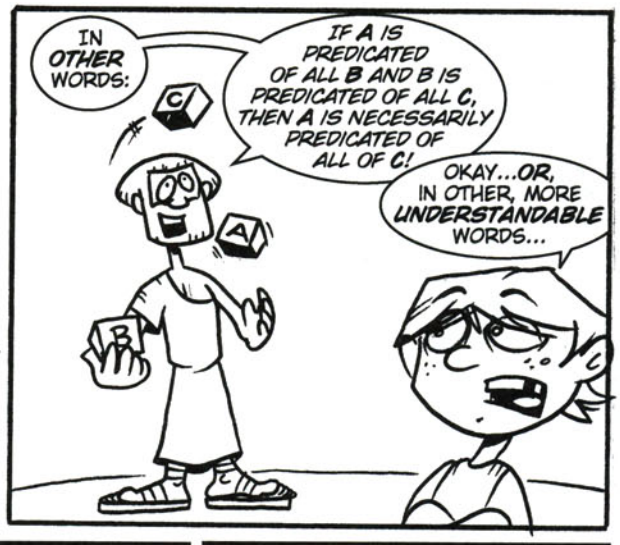

SO...THE MAN OF EXPERIENCE IS SMARTER THAN THOSE THAT MERELY POSSESS SENSE PERCEPTION...
...THE ARTIST SMARTER THAN THE MAN OF EXPERIENCE, THE MASTER-WORKER THAN THE MECHANIC...
...BUT, IF I AM TO BE KING, I NEED TO BE SMARTER THAN ALL OF THEM COMBINED, MASTER!

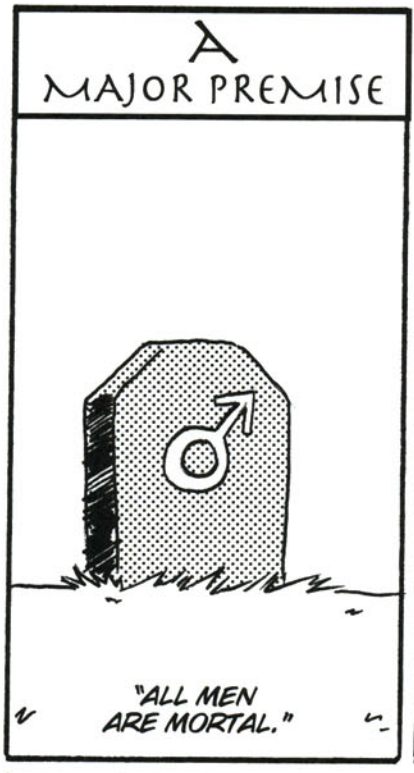

INDEED! A GOOD RULER REQUIRES WISDOM--WHICH DEALS WITH THE FIRST CAUSES AND PRINCIPLES OF THINGS!
METAPHYSICS
THE MOST UNIVERSAL IS THE HARDEST FOR MEN TO KNOW, FOR IT IS "BEYOND NATURE"--THE FURTHEST FROM THE SENSES!
BUT THROUGH MY EXHAUSTIVE OBSERVATIONS OF THE WORKINGS OF NATURE AND MAN ALIKE, I HAVE CLASSIFIED THESE CAUSES INTO FOUR CATEGORIES!
LET'S SEE... I KNOW I HAVE THE LIST HERE SOMEWHERE...
WELL...I DO REMEMBER THAT ONE TYPE OF CAUSE IS THE MATERIAL ONE--WHAT SMALLER PARTS, OR INGREDIENTS, GO INTO THE WHOLE TO MAKE IT EXIST?
GREEK FIRE: SULFUR, PETROLEUM, PHOSPHOROUS, SALTPETER!
OIL
OH, YES, AND THEN THERE'S THE FORMAL CAUSE--THE DEFINITION OR PATTERN THE THING FITS INTO.
LIKE... "PRACTICAL JOKES?" -:SNICKER!:-
OIL
YES, EXACTLY! AND THEN THE EFFICIENT CAUSE WOULD BE THE INCITING INCIDENT THAT BRINGS THE THING INTO BEING--
SUCH AS THE SPARK THAT IGNITES THE FLAMES?
EXCELLENT, PRINCE ALEX, EXCEL--AH, HERE ARE MY NOTES!
OF COURSE! THE FOURTH CAUSE IS THE FINAL ONE--FOR WHAT END DOES A THING EXIST?
-:SNIFF, SNIFF...:-


AAAGGH!!
IN THE CASE OF A HOTFOOT... BECAUSE IT'S FREAKIN' HILARIOUS! HA HA!!
GRRRRR!! JUST AS IN REGULAR PHYSICS, THE BASIS OF ALL METAPHYSICS IS MOTION--
--FOR CHANGE ("KINESIS") IS THE ONLY CONSTANT IN NATURE!
AND THE MOST COMMON FORM OF CHANGE-- THE ONE NECESSARY TO EXISTENCE--
--IS WHEN BEINGS MOVE FROM A POTENTIAL STATE--
--SUCH AS AN ACORN IS A POTENTIAL TREE, OR A PILE OF LUMBER & BRICKS IS A POTENTIAL HOUSE--
--OR ME PREPARING TO WRING YOUR NECK--
--TO AN ACTUAL STATE!
SNOT-- NOSED--LITTLE-- ROYAL--PUNK! SET ME ON FIRE, WILLYA--
GAK!
CHOKE!
ARISTOTLE! HOW GOES THE BOY'S FIRST DAY OF STUDY?
KING PHILIP! AH... WELL...
GASP! WHEEZE!


W-WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING HOW ACTUALITY IS THE -:GULP:-...
...END (TELOS) OF POTENTIALITY!
A-ANOTHER WAY OF PUTTING IT IS THAT SUBSTANCE, OR PURE MATTER, IS POTENTIAL BEING, BUT IS G-GIVEN FORM IN ACTUALITY--
YEESH! TOO EGGHEAD FOR ME!
I HAVE SUBJECTS THAT NEED OPPRESSING!
THANKS FOR DROPPING BY, SIRE...
-:HEH.:- SORRY.
SO YOU'RE THE RESTLESS TYPE, EH?
NEED AN ACTIVITY WITH WHICH TO OCCUPY YOUR TIME?
LUCKY FOR YOU, I HAVE JUST THE THING!
WE HAVE TRUE KNOWLEDGE ONLY WHEN WE THINK WE KNOW THE CAUSE ON WHICH A FACT DEPENDS, AS THE CAUSE OF THAT FACT AND NO OTHER, AND FURTHER, THAT THE FACT COULD NOT BE OTHER THAN IT IS.
AND WE CONNECT CAUSES TO FACTS THROUGH A LITTLE INVENTION OF MINE I CALL...
LOGIC!
OH. GOODY.
BLOCKS.
A
B
C


THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTRUCTION OF LOGIC IS THE SYLLOGISM...
...A DISCOURSE IN WHICH CERTAIN THINGS BEING STATED...
...SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT IS STATED FOLLOWS OF NECESSITY FROM THEIR BEING SO.
B


IN OTHER WORDS:
C
IF A IS PREDICATED OF ALL B AND B IS PREDICATED OF ALL C, THEN A IS NECESSARILY PREDICATED OF ALL OF C!
OKAY...OR, IN OTHER, MORE UNDERSTANDABLE WORDS...
A
B


A
MAJOR PREMISE
"ALL MEN ARE MORTAL."


B
MINOR PREMISE
CENSORED
"SOCRATES IS A MAN."


C
CONCLUSION
CRAP.
"THEREFORE, SOCRATES IS MORTAL."


BY ZEUS, ALEX, I THINK YOU'VE GOT IT!







Dear Master,

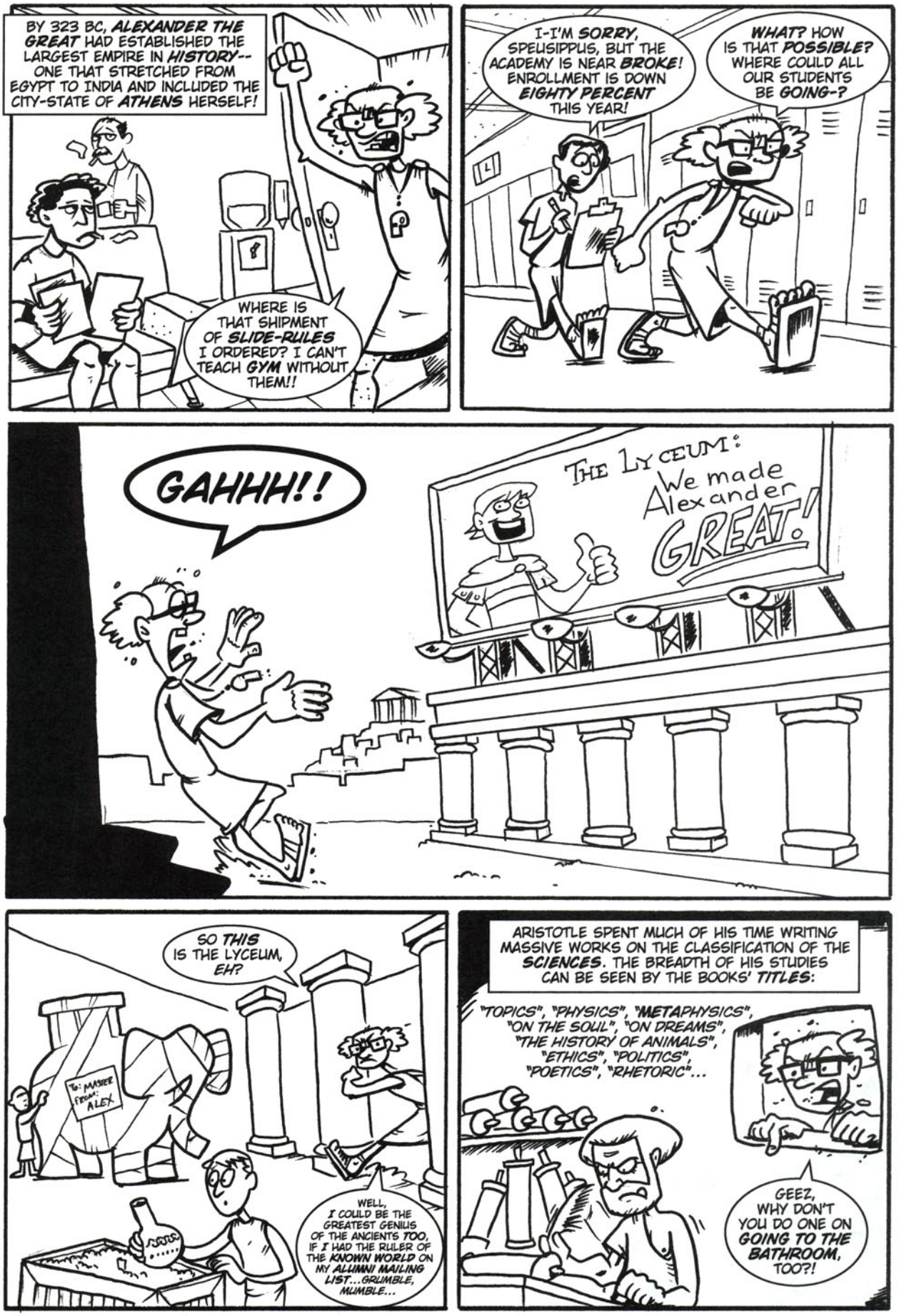
Having a ***smashing time*** *conquering Asia Minor. And I do mean that* ***literally****! Ha, ha!*

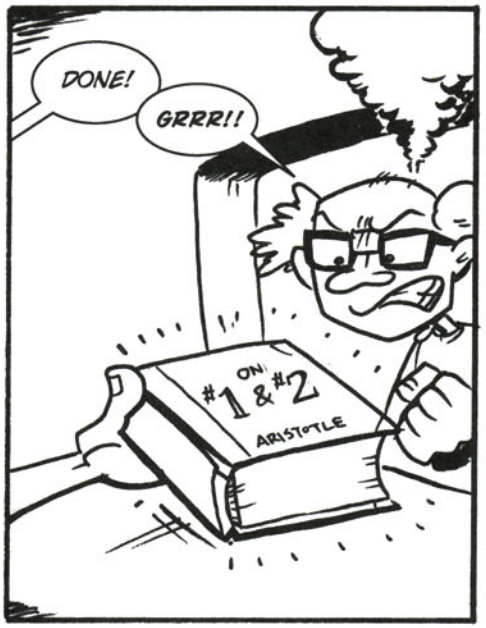
But ***seriously****, in my campaigns I have come across many fascinating* ***specimens*** *that will help you in your* ***research****. I will be sending them to you shortly.*

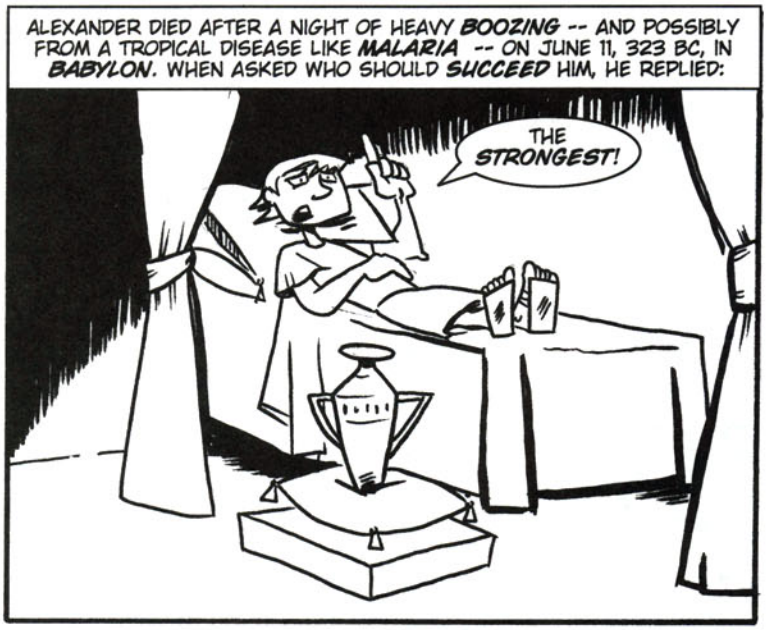
Whoops– The ground is ***shaking****, so that must mean enemy* ***war elephants*** *are on their way! No rest for the* ***wicked****!*

Hope the Lyceum is going well and I will write again soon.

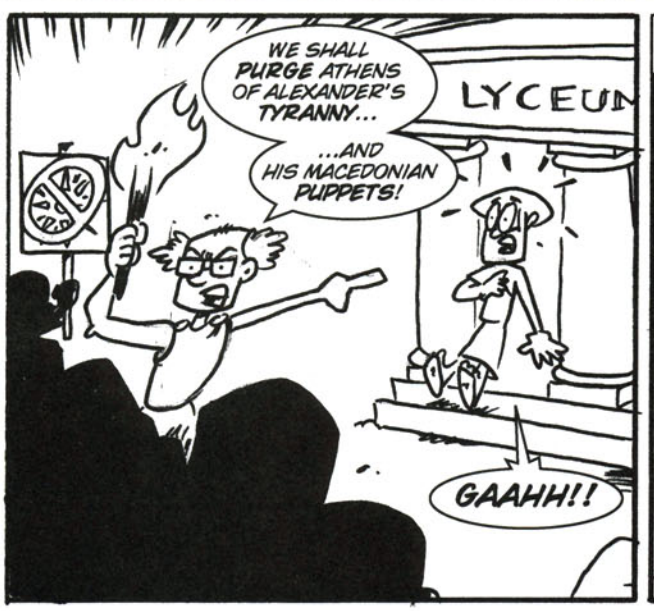
XOXOXOXOX ALEX.

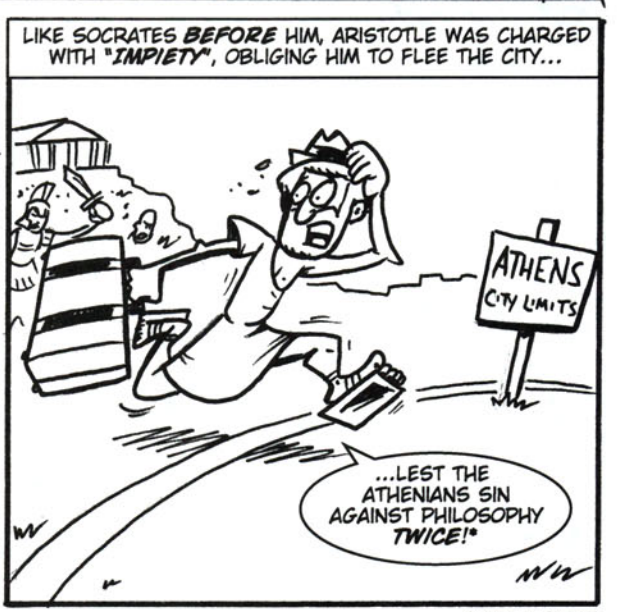

BY 323 BC, ALEXANDER THE GREAT HAD ESTABLISHED THE LARGEST EMPIRE IN HISTORY-- ONE THAT STRETCHED FROM EGYPT TO INDIA AND INCLUDED THE CITY-STATE OF ATHENS HERSELF!
WHERE IS THAT SHIPMENT OF SLIDE-RULES I ORDERED? I CAN'T TEACH GYM WITHOUT THEM!!
I-I'M SORRY, SPEUSIPPUS, BUT THE ACADEMY IS NEAR BROKE! ENROLLMENT IS DOWN EIGHTY PERCENT THIS YEAR!
WHAT? HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? WHERE COULD ALL OUR STUDENTS BE GOING-?
GAHHH!!
THE LYCEUM: We made Alexander GREAT!
SO THIS IS THE LYCEUM, EH?
TO: MASTER FROM: ALEX
WELL, I COULD BE THE GREATEST GENIUS OF THE ANCIENTS TOO, IF I HAD THE RULER OF THE KNOWN WORLD ON MY ALUMNI MAILING LIST...GRUMBLE, MUMBLE...
ARISTOTLE SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME WRITING MASSIVE WORKS ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE SCIENCES. THE BREADTH OF HIS STUDIES CAN BE SEEN BY THE BOOKS' TITLES:
"TOPICS", "PHYSICS", "METAPHYSICS", "ON THE SOUL", "ON DREAMS", "THE HISTORY OF ANIMALS", "ETHICS", "POLITICS", "POETICS", "RHETORIC"...
GEEZ, WHY DON'T YOU DO ONE ON GOING TO THE BATHROOM, TOO?!


DONE!
GRRR!!
ON #1 & #2
ARISTOTLE


ALEXANDER DIED AFTER A NIGHT OF HEAVY BOOZING -- AND POSSIBLY FROM A TROPICAL DISEASE LIKE MALARIA -- ON JUNE 11, 323 BC, IN BABYLON. WHEN ASKED WHO SHOULD SUCCEED HIM, HE REPLIED:
THE STRONGEST!


WHILE HIS GENERALS BATTLED OVER HIS CROWN, ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE SWIFTLY CRUMBLED.
-:TSK!:- POOR ALEX! HE WAS ONLY THIRTY-THREE.
WE CAN ONLY HOPE, WITH HIM GONE, THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE DOESN'T DEGENERATE TOO QUICKLY--


WE SHALL PURGE ATHENS OF ALEXANDER'S TYRANNY...
...AND HIS MACEDONIAN PUPPETS!
LYCEUM
GAAHH!!

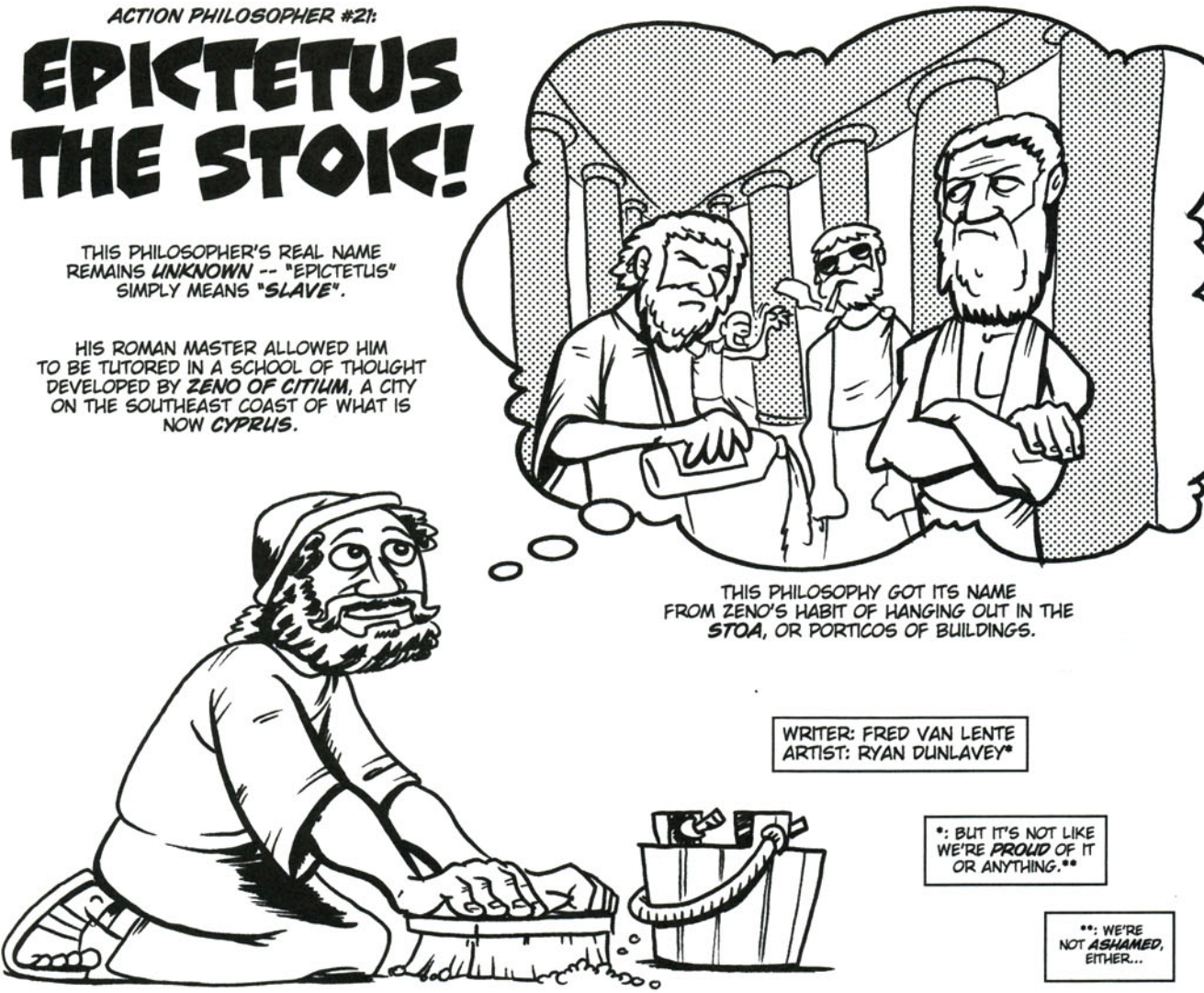

LIKE SOCRATES BEFORE HIM, ARISTOTLE WAS CHARGED WITH "IMPIETY", OBLIGING HIM TO FLEE THE CITY...
ATHENS CITY LIMITS
...LEST THE ATHENIANS SIN AGAINST PHILOSOPHY TWICE!*
*: ACTUAL QUOTE!

ACTION PHILOSOPHER #21:

EPICTETUS THE STOIC!

THIS PHILOSOPHER'S REAL NAME REMAINS ***UNKNOWN*** -- "EPICTETUS" SIMPLY MEANS "***SLAVE***".

HIS ROMAN MASTER ALLOWED HIM TO BE TUTORED IN A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT DEVELOPED BY ***ZENO OF CITIUM***, A CITY ON THE SOUTHEAST COAST OF WHAT IS NOW ***CYPRUS***.

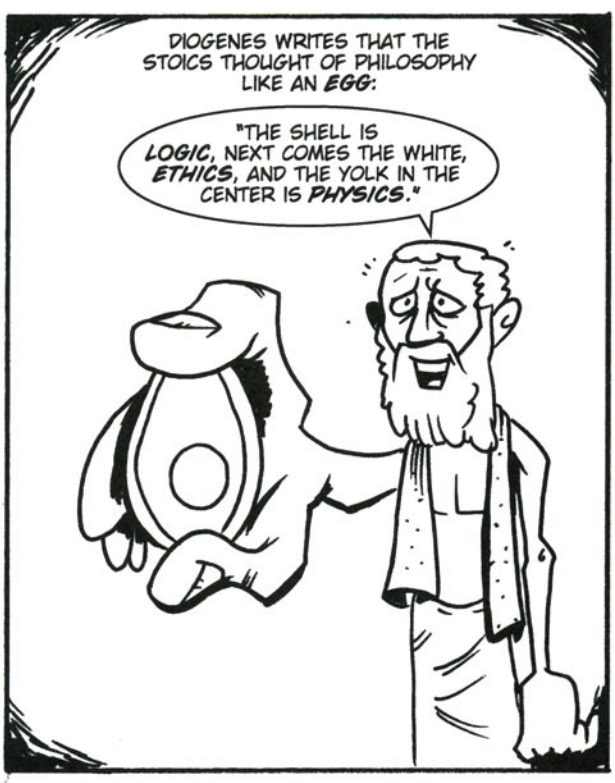


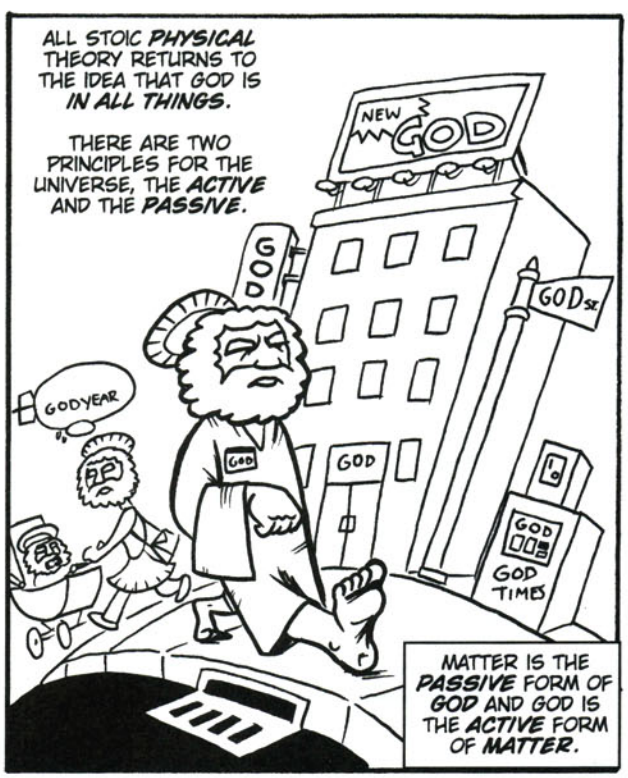
THIS PHILOSOPHY GOT ITS NAME FROM ZENO'S HABIT OF HANGING OUT IN THE ***STOA***, OR PORTICOS OF BUILDINGS.

WRITER: FRED VAN LENTE
ARTIST: RYAN DUNLAVEY*

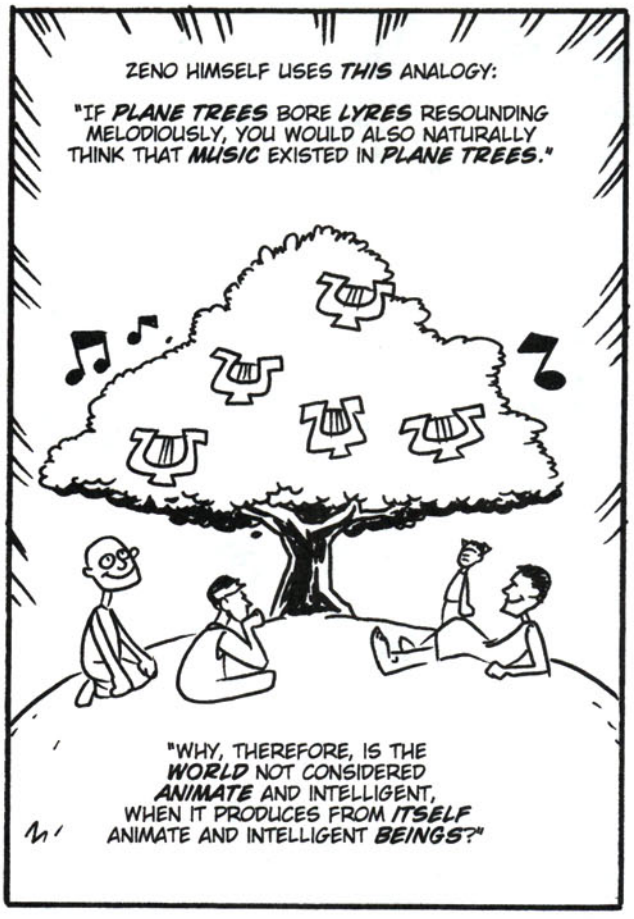
*: BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE ***PROUD*** OF IT OR ANYTHING.**

: WE'RE NOT ***ASHAMED*, EITHER...






THE ROMAN STOIC SENECA WROTE:
WHY SHOULD YOU NOT BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING OF DIVINITY EXISTS IN ONE WHO IS PART OF GOD?
THE WHOLE UNIVERSE THAT CONTAINS US IS ONE, AND IS GOD; WE ARE HIS ASSOCIATES AND HIS MEMBERS.
GOD


ZENO HIMSELF USES THIS ANALOGY:
"IF PLANE TREES BORE LYRES RESOUNDING MELODIOUSLY, YOU WOULD ALSO NATURALLY THINK THAT MUSIC EXISTED IN PLANE TREES."
"WHY, THEREFORE, IS THE WORLD NOT CONSIDERED ANIMATE AND INTELLIGENT, WHEN IT PRODUCES FROM ITSELF ANIMATE AND INTELLIGENT BEINGS?"

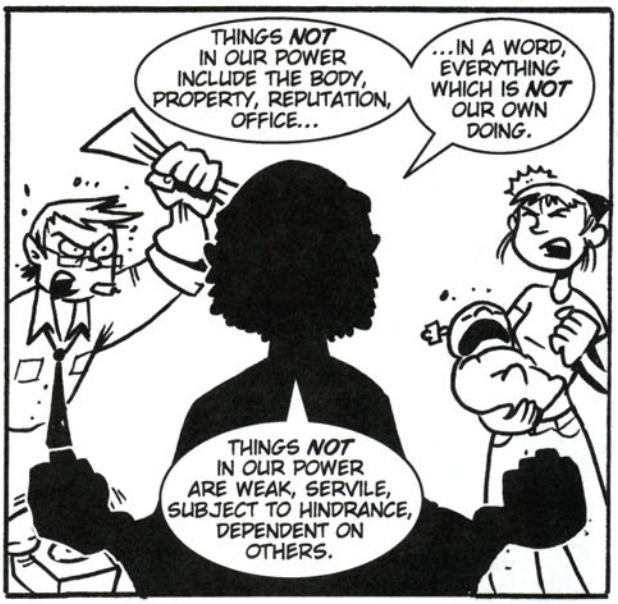

THEREFORE NOTHING, AS PLUTARCH SAYS, "EITHER RESTS OR IS MOVED OTHERWISE THAN ACCORDING TO THE REASON OF GOD, WHICH IS THE SAME THING AS FATE."
LITTLE WONDER THAT SUCH A FATALISTIC OUTLOOK ATTRACTED ADHERENTS AMONG SLAVES...
...BUT OUR NAMELESS HERO WANTED TO CONTINUE TO PREACH STOICISM IN ROME EVEN AFTER HE EARNED HIS FREEDOM!

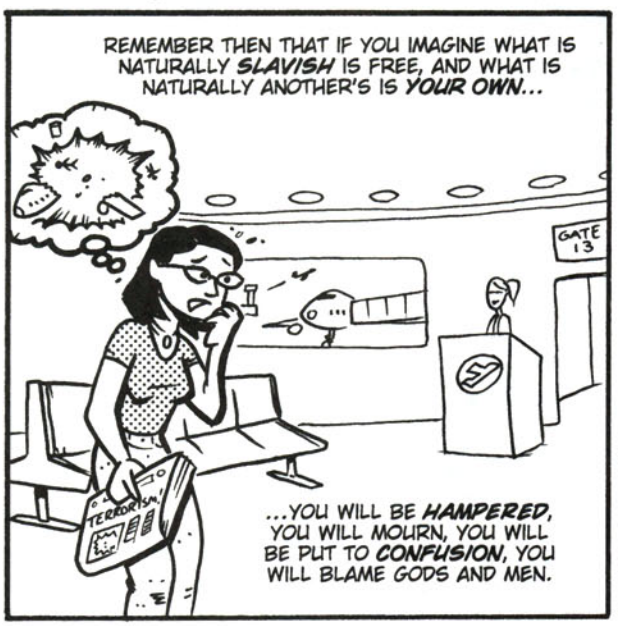

UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, THE PARANOID EMPEROR DOMITIAN EXILED ALL PHILOSOPHERS FROM THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL IN A.D. 94.
AND STAY OUT!


EPICTETUS WOUND UP IN GREECE, SPECIFICALLY EPIRUS, WHERE HIS TEACHINGS REALLY BEGAN TO CATCH ON.
AFTER HE DIED AROUND 127, HIS STUDENT FLAVIUS ARRIAN ASSEMBLED HIS TEACHINGS INTO EIGHT DISCOURSES--
NO LOITERING

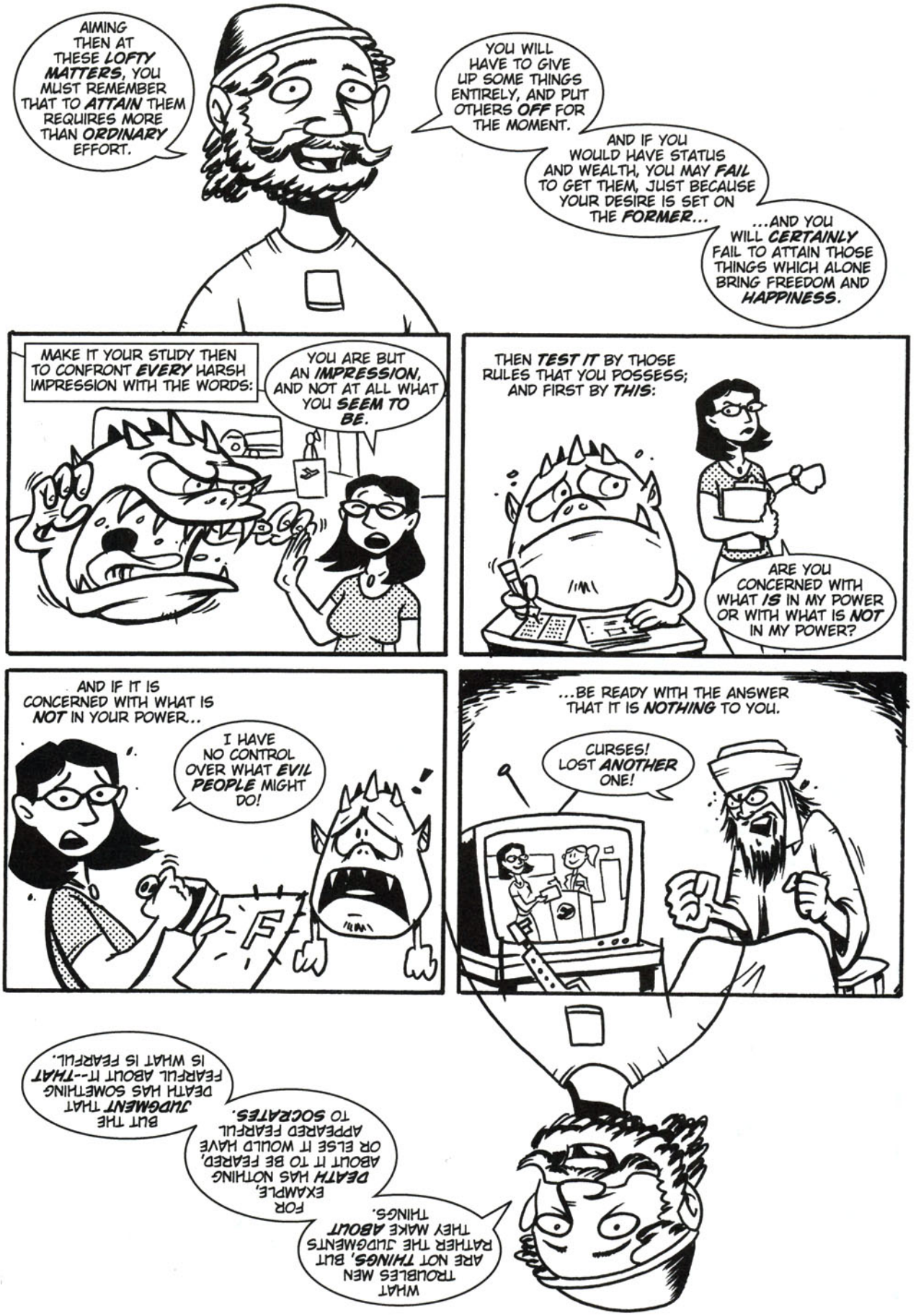

--THE ETHICAL PARTS OF WHICH HE CONDENSED INTO THE ENCHIRIDION (MANUAL), WHICH FAMOUSLY BEGINS:
OF ALL EXISTING THINGS, SOME ARE IN OUR POWER, AND OTHERS ARE NOT IN OUR POWER.

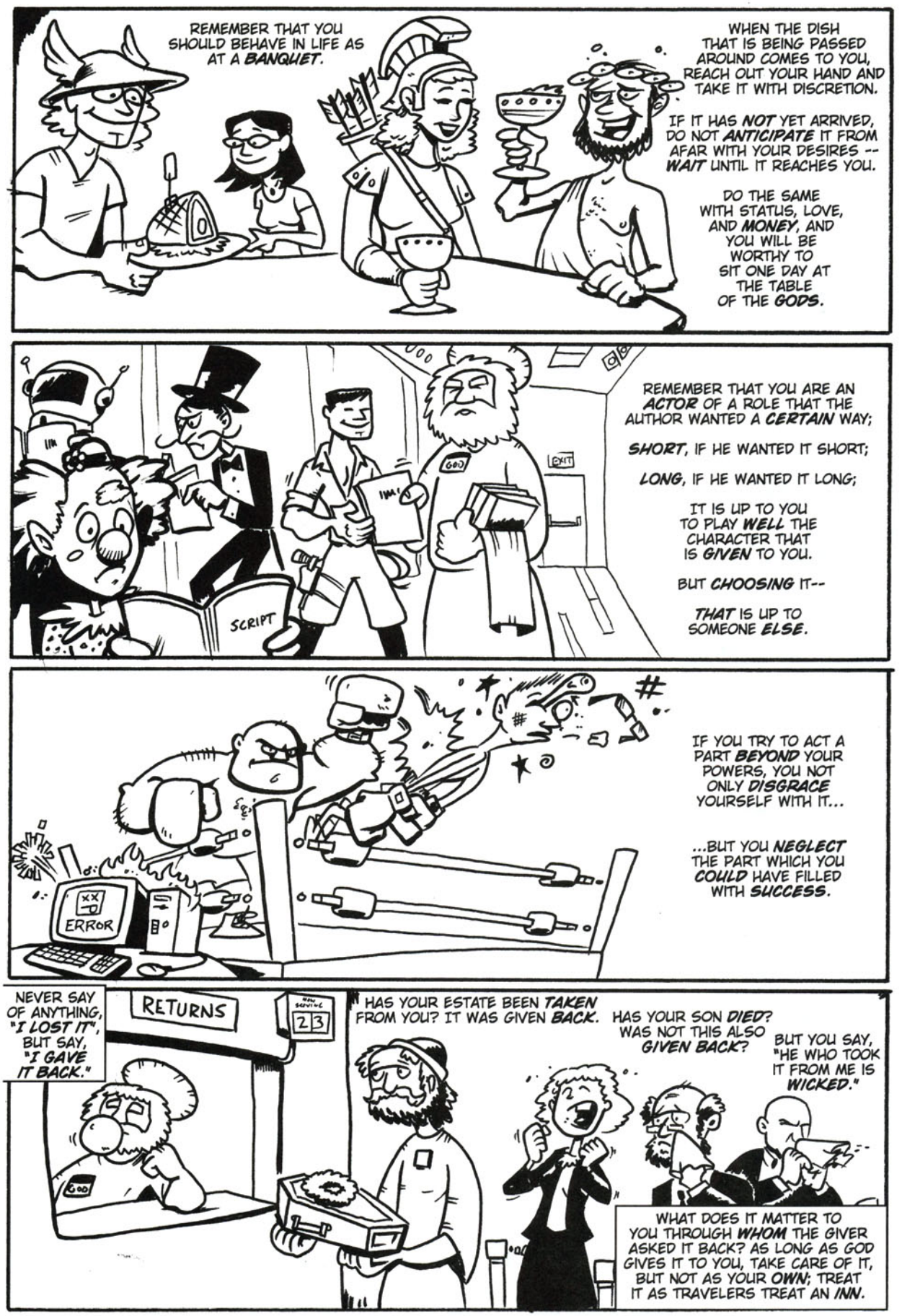

IN OUR POWER ARE THOUGHT, IMPULSE, WILL TO GET AND WILL TO AVOID...
...IN A WORD, EVERYTHING WHICH IS OUR OWN DOING.
THINGS IN OUR POWER ARE BY NATURE FREE, UNHINDERED, UNTRAMMELED.

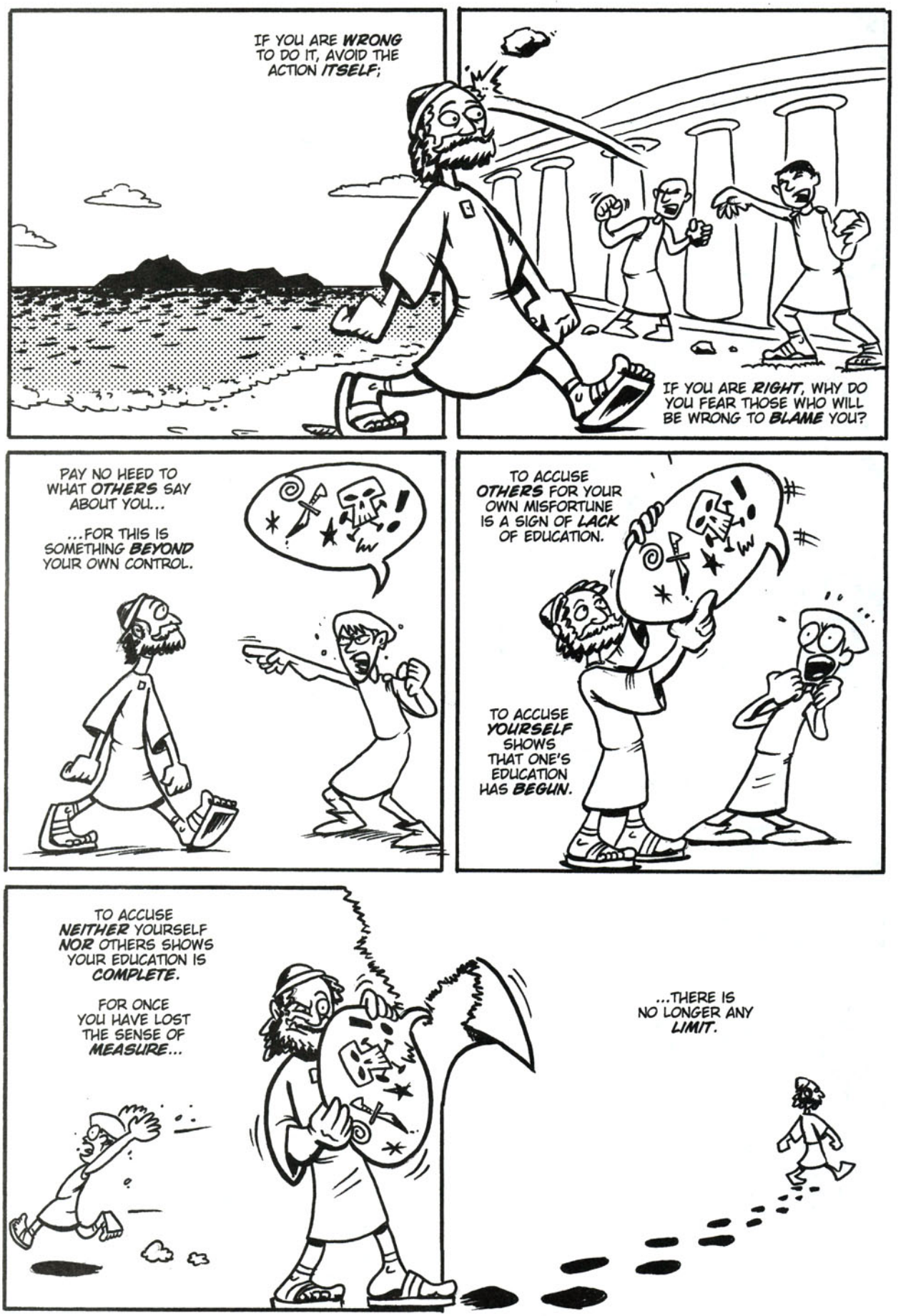

THINGS NOT IN OUR POWER INCLUDE THE BODY, PROPERTY, REPUTATION, OFFICE...
...IN A WORD, EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT OUR OWN DOING.
THINGS NOT IN OUR POWER ARE WEAK, SERVILE, SUBJECT TO HINDRANCE, DEPENDENT ON OTHERS.


REMEMBER THEN THAT IF YOU IMAGINE WHAT IS NATURALLY SLAVISH IS FREE, AND WHAT IS NATURALLY ANOTHER'S IS YOUR OWN...
GATE 13
TERRORISM
...YOU WILL BE HAMPERED, YOU WILL MOURN, YOU WILL BE PUT TO CONFUSION, YOU WILL BLAME GODS AND MEN.


BUT IF YOU THINK THAT ONLY YOUR OWN BELONGS TO YOU, AND THAT WHAT IS ANOTHER'S IS INDEED ANOTHER'S....
NO ONE WILL HARM YOU, YOU WILL HAVE NO ENEMY, FOR NO HARM CAN TOUCH YOU.
ZZZ


AIMING THEN AT THESE LOFTY MATTERS, YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT TO ATTAIN THEM REQUIRES MORE THAN ORDINARY EFFORT.
YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP SOME THINGS ENTIRELY, AND PUT OTHERS OFF FOR THE MOMENT.
AND IF YOU WOULD HAVE STATUS AND WEALTH, YOU MAY FAIL TO GET THEM, JUST BECAUSE YOUR DESIRE IS SET ON THE FORMER...
...AND YOU WILL CERTAINLY FAIL TO ATTAIN THOSE THINGS WHICH ALONE BRING FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS.
MAKE IT YOUR STUDY THEN TO CONFRONT EVERY HARSH IMPRESSION WITH THE WORDS:
YOU ARE BUT AN IMPRESSION, AND NOT AT ALL WHAT YOU SEEM TO BE.
THEN TEST IT BY THOSE RULES THAT YOU POSSESS; AND FIRST BY THIS:
ARE YOU CONCERNED WITH WHAT IS IN MY POWER OR WITH WHAT IS NOT IN MY POWER?
AND IF IT IS CONCERNED WITH WHAT IS NOT IN YOUR POWER...
I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER WHAT EVIL PEOPLE MIGHT DO!
...BE READY WITH THE ANSWER THAT IT IS NOTHING TO YOU.
CURSES! LOST ANOTHER ONE!
WHAT TROUBLES MEN ARE NOT THINGS, BUT RATHER THE JUDGMENTS THEY MAKE ABOUT THINGS.
FOR EXAMPLE, DEATH HAS NOTHING ABOUT IT TO BE FEARED, OR ELSE IT WOULD HAVE APPEARED FEARFUL TO SOCRATES.
BUT THE JUDGMENT THAT DEATH HAS SOMETHING FEARFUL ABOUT IT--THAT IS WHAT IS FEARFUL.


REMEMBER THAT YOU SHOULD BEHAVE IN LIFE AS AT A BANQUET.
WHEN THE DISH THAT IS BEING PASSED AROUND COMES TO YOU, REACH OUT YOUR HAND AND TAKE IT WITH DISCRETION.
IF IT HAS NOT YET ARRIVED, DO NOT ANTICIPATE IT FROM AFAR WITH YOUR DESIRES -- WAIT UNTIL IT REACHES YOU.
DO THE SAME WITH STATUS, LOVE, AND MONEY, AND YOU WILL BE WORTHY TO SIT ONE DAY AT THE TABLE OF THE GODS.
SCRIPT
GOD
EXIT
REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE AN ACTOR OF A ROLE THAT THE AUTHOR WANTED A CERTAIN WAY;
SHORT, IF HE WANTED IT SHORT;
LONG, IF HE WANTED IT LONG;
IT IS UP TO YOU TO PLAY WELL THE CHARACTER THAT IS GIVEN TO YOU.
BUT CHOOSING IT--
THAT IS UP TO SOMEONE ELSE.
ERROR
IF YOU TRY TO ACT A PART BEYOND YOUR POWERS, YOU NOT ONLY DISGRACE YOURSELF WITH IT...
...BUT YOU NEGLECT THE PART WHICH YOU COULD HAVE FILLED WITH SUCCESS.
NEVER SAY OF ANYTHING, "I LOST IT", BUT SAY, "I GAVE IT BACK."
RETURNS
23
HAS YOUR ESTATE BEEN TAKEN FROM YOU? IT WAS GIVEN BACK.
HAS YOUR SON DIED? WAS NOT THIS ALSO GIVEN BACK?
BUT YOU SAY, "HE WHO TOOK IT FROM ME IS WICKED."
WHAT DOES IT MATTER TO YOU THROUGH WHOM THE GIVER ASKED IT BACK? AS LONG AS GOD GIVES IT TO YOU, TAKE CARE OF IT, BUT NOT AS YOUR OWN; TREAT IT AS TRAVELERS TREAT AN INN.


IF YOU ARE WRONG TO DO IT, AVOID THE ACTION ITSELF;
IF YOU ARE RIGHT, WHY DO YOU FEAR THOSE WHO WILL BE WRONG TO BLAME YOU?
PAY NO HEED TO WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT YOU...
...FOR THIS IS SOMETHING BEYOND YOUR OWN CONTROL.
TO ACCUSE OTHERS FOR YOUR OWN MISFORTUNE IS A SIGN OF LACK OF EDUCATION.
TO ACCUSE YOURSELF SHOWS THAT ONE'S EDUCATION HAS BEGUN.
TO ACCUSE NEITHER YOURSELF NOR OTHERS SHOWS YOUR EDUCATION IS COMPLETE.
FOR ONCE YOU HAVE LOST THE SENSE OF MEASURE...
...THERE IS NO LONGER ANY LIMIT.

GRAY MATTERS

Write to: RYAN@EVILTWINCOMICS.COM -or- FRED.VANLENTE@GMAIL.COM

In honor of our all Greek issue, I've edited the following email exchanges together into back-and-forth DIALOGUES; otherwise they're presented as originally written. —FVL

ERIC PAVLAT writes: Thank you very much for your great comic *Action Philosophers!*, which is truly like nothing else I've ever read. I've learned a lot through your writing, and have laughed myself silly on several occasions.

FRED VAN LENTE replies: Thanks for writing, and your kind words! It's always great to receive substanive letters from readers, even when — or, from my point of view, ESPECIALLY when — they disagree with me.

EP: I started late, #4 being the first issue my retailer offered for sale, and just last week "caught up" by buying the *Action Philosophers Giant Size Thing* #1. This volume actually brought up a few problems in my mind: namely, I think I detect a mild, perhaps unintentional, anti-Christian/anti-Catholic slant in a few of the stories here.

Specifically, the Saint Augustine story concludes with a student, Mary, asking a nameless nun, "Why if God has free will, then why did He choose this universe, and not one of the other possible universes where good people didn't get grace and bad people got saved? I mean, if everyone has infinite potential for good, it seems unfair for Him to single some people out over others." The sister then proceeds to spank Mary (panties exposed). This plays in to stereotypes of nuns' behavior, bringing up at the same time shades of the current sex abuse scandal, and I did actually take offense at the sequence (which is unfortunate, because I was otherwise quite fond of the St. Auggie story).

FVL: If it weren't for stereotypes, we humorists wouldn't have jobs. :)

You are reading too much into the sequence, sir: particularly the possibility that we were alluding to the recent Church sex scandals. Many people who were raised Catholic (incluidng AP's very Irish-American artist) have horror stories of nun severity.

EP: Works for me; just making sure. And I've run into a severe nun or two myself; it's just that I personally found them to be in the minority. On the other hand, where's the humor quotient in that? So I see your point.

However, the larger problem is the fact that the nun cannot answer Mary's question and the implication that Saint Augustine wouldn't have been able to do so either. In point of fact, this question is *not* an especially challenging one—if I can think of an answer, certainly St. Augustine would have been able to. Mary is operating from the framework of the "via moderna," while St. Augustine was in the "via antiqua." (I can't remember the issue, but I'm pretty sure that another, later story misrepresented early Medieval thought in the same way.)

The difference between these two ways was as follows. In the late Middle Ages, William of Ockham said that Europe was now in the "via moderna," in which we now "realize" that God has made everything exist by His power and His will alone. Therefore, what we call "good" is good because God says it is. What is "evil" is again by God's say-so. It's all rather arbitrary. This view is commonly held among some Protestants, a few Catholics, and also among many non-Christians who have an incomplete understanding of Christianity.

However, the "via antiqua" of the early Church Fathers and the early Middle Ages argued quite differently: that "good" was "good" because that was what was beneficial to us, and that "evil" was "evil" because it was destructive to us. Murder isn't evil because "God says so," but because it's destructive to (a) the body of the person murdered, (b) the welfare of those around the victim, and (c) the soul of the murderer. God's law, then, becomes a user's manual of how to use our bodies/souls to best benefit rather than an arbitrary and contrary God of rage and revenge. (By the by, the Catholic Church has reaffirmed the "via antiqua" over the "via moderna" in the 1990's Catechism, among other places.)

So St. Auggie would have answered Mary's question by pointing out that good isn't good because God just "said so," but because it involves what is actually beneficial to us, and that it is impossible for God to have created a universe where good and evil were defined differently than in this one. Or, to use another interpretation, if God manipulates things such that no one chooses evil, then we don't actually have free will; we've been created with no capacity to choose, at that point.

FVL: Well, obviously, I can't put St. William of Ockham's words in St. Augustine's mouth (and St. Augustine wasn't there in the scene; a pig-headed nun was. Just like any other group, Christians can be pig-headed too; and in a story showcasing several noble and heroic Christians, I think one bad apple can't be called slander.)

EP: Agreed.

FVL: That said, having gone over what you've written a couple of times now, I'm not sure I follow William's or your reasoning here— or at least I don't get how it refutes Mary's fundamental issue with Augustine's System of Grace, which attempts to reconcile God's omnipotence with human free will. You are talking about two historically different definitions of good and evil, which is not really germane to the issue.

What Mary is asking is: Why did God create THIS universe and not another one? Since none of us is God, this is, fundamentally, an unanswerable question (and I believe, although don't quote me on this one, I believe Augustine says this).

(continued...)

EP: Good clarification. I'm not at all sure it's an unanswerable question, but I see more what you were getting at now. Someone, I'm sure, has addressed this ad nauseum, but probably not Augustine (although I'm sure he could have, had he been asked).

FVL: The point of the scene, really, is at the very end: not the spanking, but Mary asking "Why? Why?", just as Augustine was at the beginning of the tale.

EP: I've always been impressed by the unity of your storytelling; this is yet another example of it.

FVL: There are always unanswered questions, ones that no dogma (not even the Catholics', sorry) can answer ... and this is a GOOD, positive thing, otherwise God would have created one boring-ass universe.

EP: Well, since "infallibility" doesn't mean that the Church teaches the complete truth, but instead that when it *does* teach something, it isn't wrong, I don't have any big problem with that, either.

FVL: As Keirkegaard says, you cannot have faith without doubt: it's no feat to have faith in things you KNOW exist.

EP: Precisely. Like St. Paul pointing out that faith would disappear in the life to come, because then we'll KNOW instead of just believing (1 Cor 13 or something like that).

I also have a few quibbles with the panel of God giving a peasant the Hawaiian good luck sign (in the Thomas Jefferson story).

FVL: Why?

EP: It doesn't conform to my ideas of a loving God, mostly. The historic root of the (Western) meaning of that sign is something along the lines of, "My penis is bigger than yours," although nowadays it's associated with "F*** you" more than anything else. I don't know, to me, it just crosses the line a bit, even in cartoon, to put "F*** you" or "My penis is bigger than yours" in God's metaphorical mouth--or hand, anyway. I mean, I'm not going to go over and bomb your offices, riot in the streets, etc., but it was personally offensive, although I'm sure you weren't trying to do so.

My wife expressed it far better than I ever could: Because there's a difference between being irreverent (which is funny) and blasphemous (which isn't). That's it, in a nutshell.

[I also have a quibble] with the narrator's apparently siding with Joseph Campbell's view that "organized religion demands blind faith in an illogical liturgy that was never meant to be taken literally" (dropping the usual "according to" qualifier).

I'm not implying that I plan to stop buying your comic, but I did want to bring this issue to your attention. It might be a blind spot to you, but it does detract from my enjoyment of your otherwise-excellent comic.

FVL: The narrator of every Action Philosophers story agrees with whoever that particular thinker is; I do my best to refrain from injecting my own personal opinions in wherever I can (which, granted, I don't have a spotless track record on, but I do try my best). When thinkers (Rand, Nietzsche, Sartre, etc.) are hostile to Christianity, we are hostile to Christianity; when thinkers are pro-Christian (Kierkegaard, Descartes, St. Augustine, etc.) we are pro-Christian. Really, it's as simple as that. We have no particular axes to grind: the people we profile have quite enough axes on their own without us adding any! ;)

Generally speaking, EVERY caption in AP could contain the "according to" qualifier, but for obvious reasons of style (it gets repetitive), they don't.

EP: I haven't done a scientific count, but I did glance at the St. Augustine story and the Campbell story next to each other, and it seemed to my (perhaps biased?) eyes that you used the qualifier substantially more for the former than for the latter, but maybe I'm wrong. Anyway, it's good to see that the intention of being bias-free remains intact.

FVL: Although you don't mention it, I would assume that the Catholic Church, as opposed to most other Christian sects, would have sympathy for Campbell's point, as, unlike the fundamentalists, who insist on a creationist/literalist interpretation of Genesis, the Catholics have developed a more nuanced view of the Seven Days (q.v. St. Augustine's "Confessions", the Pope's support for evolution, etc.)

EP: Yes; the Catholic Church, unlike some others, recognizes that God has planted truths in every human institution of religion, and we reject no truths that come from other religions. (Now we also see those truths as preparation for the Gospel, but that's our bailiwick.)

May I suggest that you include a William of Ockham feature in a future issue? I think that future missteps could be avoided if you would go through the steps of presenting the "via antiqua" versus the voluntarist "via moderna" sentiment he espouses. (And I'm sure you could also have a lot of fun with his nominalism and Ockham's famous razor.)

FVL: We have no plans for William, but he is mentioned (for his razor) in the Wittgenstein story in AP #6. And I hope you enjoy the St. Thomas Aquinas story that appears in that issue.

EP: I hope so, too! I was a bit nervous about that one—you did include St. Thomas' liking for pickled herring in that story, right? Hope so!

And I hope AP! lasts for many, many issues--maybe you'll get to William around issue 20 or so. Best wishes for your continued success.

FVL: Thanks again for writing!

EDWARD HUCK writes: I love AP, however I do have one request. Please tell us what you're omitting from each AP biography/essay thingy. I embarrassed myself a couple of weeks ago by trying to start a conversation about St Augustine with a friend of mine who is doing his MDiv. When I asked him what he thought about St Augustine's reconciliation of determinism and free will he raised an eyebrow and said that he knew him for his dialogues with Pelagius(?).

FRED VAN LENTE replies: Hey Ted, thanks for writing!

With all due repsect to your divinity scholar friend, you're not the one that should be embarrassed. While it is true St. A is very well known for his dialogues with Pelagius, he's equally known for such works as CITY OF GOD and, germaine to this discussion, CONFESSIONS, which our comic adapts large chunks of.

And he is also quite well known for reconciling determinism vs. free will in Christian thought, which he used to disarm several competing sects (as our story says); as you suggest, if you want to read more on this subject, I would point you to the excellent on-line Catholic encyclopedia *New Advent:* *http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02091a.htm*

(Pay very close attention to Part II, "His System of Grace".)

I certainly don't claim to be the end all and be all on Augustine, nor should you, nor should your friend. No one work, theory, or adaptation can encompass an entire life or philosophy; if only beacause I am a strong believer that a philosphy can not really be understood outside of each individual life (q.v. Campbell, Husserl, etc.).

So I don't think the problem is with any inadquecies of knowledge, but rather that your friend unjustly made you feel embarrassed (if I understand how you're describing the situation). If he doesn't understand the important part St. A played in developing the concept of free will in Catholic thought, well...

Is he getting his divinity degree through the mail?

EH: Also, when I read your letter column for "Hate the French" I was shocked to hear you discuss Simone de Beauvoir, a so-called "intellectual powerhouse" and reveal that you had decided to omit all mention of her from the story. I do not feel that it would have been demeaning to only mention her in one panel as long as you mentioned that one panel wasn't enough to do her justice. Fortunately I have not yet embarrassed myself with any Sartre related faux-pas.

FVL: Again, there would be no need for embarrassment. Beauvoir played not much of a part in the part of Sartre's life story we dramatized, i.e. his war experiences.

I mean, we didn't mention any of the other philosophers' wives and girlfriends (okay, the All-Sex Special notwithstanding). Why should we mention Sartre's, just because she was famous?

EH: True, but you implied that she would be a worthy subject for her own AP bio. The fact that she was a philosopher? in her own right (whether or not she impacted Sartre's philosophy as developed in his wartime experiences) would at least be worthy of passing mention. As far as I know none of the other philosopher's wives or girlfriends made any great contribution to human thought. I will certainly have to read up about her. I feel that relations/acquaintances of an AP who could also qualify for their own AP story should at least be mentioned.

FVL: If you want to learn more about their relationship, I'd recommend reading the good Hazel Rowley dual biography of them, *Tête-à-Tête.*

EH: If it isn't possilbe to allude to the things you've left out in the comic itself why not put a little column in the back (like you do with the recommended reading section) briefly outlining what else there is to discuss/know about each philosopher. I am more than willing to pay for the extra page, and given your sales it appears most of your other readers are too. Perhaps you could put the information on your website and provide the URL at the end of each comics ("to find out more about AP #133 go to...").

FVL: Well, that's an interesting idea, if only from a (pun intended) philosophical point of view: You want me to write about what I'm not writing about.

But if I wrote about that, then I wouldn't be writing about something I wasn't writing about, since I was writing about it.

Right?

Derrida would love this paradox! :)

EH: Aren't paradoxes great. I think Captain Kirk defeated some crazy computer by feeding it a paradox once, perhaps he showed it some of Derrida's work.

FVL: Seriously, though, all I can tell you is that you should always assume there's something I'm not writing about.

EH: Indeed, at the moment however the comic is my only point of reference for many of these philosophers. I will have to start checking out your recommended reading section and perhaps I should have done that first.

FVL: And, just so you know, the way the printing process works, you can't add in increments of one page — you'd have to add increments of four. (Note that through the staples each piece of paper of the comic actually holds *four* story pages.)

EH: Hmmm, good to know.

FVL: I think part of the reason people enjoy our comics is that they're fun — and they would be less fun if they attempted to be totally comprehensive. That would be the difference between an encylopedia entry and "Action Philosophers".

EH: For someone who is relatively unfamiliar with the philosophers in question (beyond knowing their name/general country of origin) it is easy to believe that you have presented in each segment all there is to know about a given philosopher/philosophy. I love your comic immensely and feel that it would be even better if you took the time to tell us what you are leaving out of each segment.

FVL: Well, with all due respect, I would disagree that we represent it as all you need to know. Otherwise, it would be called "Comprehensive Philosophers" or "Philosophy 101 Comics" instead of "Action Philosophers."

However, I will keep this in mind as I write further comics. Total transparency is always a good goal to strive for, even if it may be impossible to achieve!

And perhaps we can make the Recommending Reading section of our web site a bit more robust: *http://www.eviltwincomics.com/action/bib.php*

EH: Ah, I did not mean to imply that you were actively misrepresenting the philosophers/philosophies. What I meant was that for people who have very little knowledge of these philosophers it can be hard to figure out how complete a picture you are painting. Again, I will have to check out your recommended reading section.

FVL: Bottom line is, I don't mean to cop out, there's only so much we can do in the format we've chosen, and we just try to do the best we can.

EH: Absolutely, it is impossible to write comprehensively about anything except for original though/fiction in which case what you have written becomes a complete entity/object. Your deadlines must be insane.

At the moment I'm just having a bit of trouble figuring out how each story relates to the canon/corpus/corpse of the philosopher in question (again, this comic is serving as my introduction and first point of reference to many of these thinkers). I imagine that the series serves as an introduction to these thinkers for many readers too. Again I will check out the recommended reading section and let you know what I think.

FVL: I'm glad you enjoy the series, and thanks again for writing!

EH: You bet I do, keep em coming! An all-feminist issue has my vote, how about an all Chinese issue focusing on (among others) Confucius and whoever that guy who wrote the Tao te Ching was. Curses, caught with my ignorance showing again.

FVL: And, seriously, if your friend gave you a hard time about the free will thing, he doesn't know what he's talking about.

EH: My friend did not in fact give me a hard time about St Augustine, he just had a different perspective on his work (and I believe had concentrated on a different area of it) and was puzzled by my reference. The embarrassment was purely mine. My friend and I did have a good laugh over how St Augustine totally floored the Manichaeans however.

I believe that my friend, being caught up in the hurly-burly of church politics/history had developed a view of St Augustine focused more on what he did (disarming the competing sects) than how he did it (reconciling determinism with free will). Points of view are funny things aren't they.

Hmm okay, I checked out the bibliography on the site and I see that it's the recommended reading page from the comic. Would it be possible to beef up the recommended reading section? If that were done on the website it wouldn't be as deadline sensitive as the comic and there would be no need to mess with the actual printed artifact itself.

Thanks again for your time, I await the next issue with bated breath.

FVL: Thanks for the input, Ted! We'll take it under advisement.

Just finished reading "World Domination." Thoroughly enjoyed the section on Kabbalah, but I would be very cautious about sending people to the Kabbalah Centre, as they have agendas of their own that are not necessarily in the best interests of the serious student. Daniel Matt is probably the foremost Zohar scholar in the world, and he has produced a number of books that would be more useful to the beginning student than the Centre's on line edition (which has an awful lot of interpolation). Matt's "Essential Kabbalah" is a good starting point, and there is a nice taste of Zohar in Matt's "Zohar: Annotated and Explained." Arthur Green's book "Introduction to the Zohar" gives an excellent discussion of history, context, and modes of interpretation. Matt is also working on a new scholarly edition of the Zohar, "The Zohar: Pritzker Edition," which promises to set a new standard. It is English only, but the Aramaic source is available for download from Stanford University Press at www.sup.org/zohar.

Rich Furman

Thanks for the heads-up, Rich! As you can see, we are passing along the info to our beloved readers...

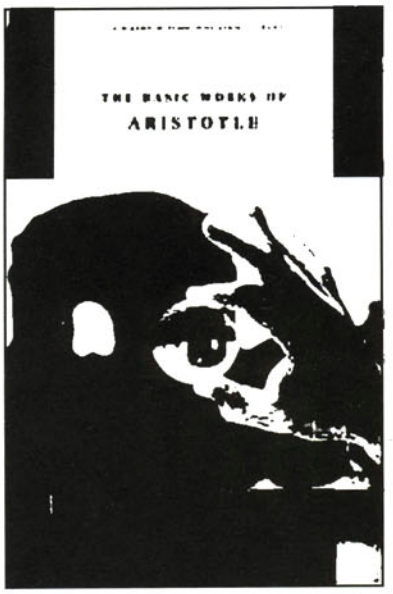
SUPER-SECRET BONUS DELETED ARTWORK CRAP-O-RAMA!!!

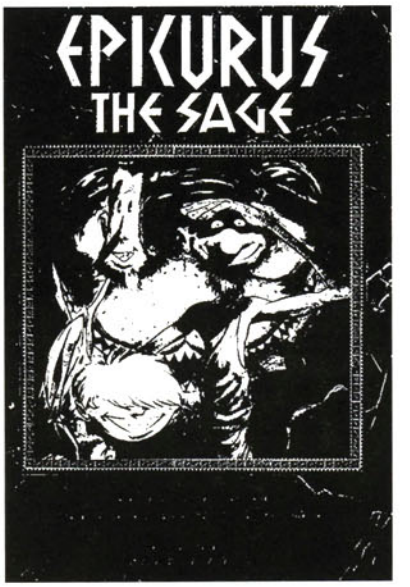
Comic book covers are created months ahead of the actual on-sale date - for example, I'm writing this in late September, and I am currently drawing the cover for issue #8, which goes on sale in February. For this issue I had to make the cover before the script was even written. We knew what (philosophical) subjects were going to covered, but not the details of the stories themselves, so for the Pre-Socratics picture I drew what I thought to be the most prominent thinkers of the time - Diogenes, Zeno and Pythagoris - pictured at the right. As you can see, the story came out a LOT differently, with entirely different set of philosophers, so I re-drew it for the final cover. I also didn't have to draw 12 pages of old bearded dudes in bathrobes and slippers - which is always nice.
You don't care about any of this.

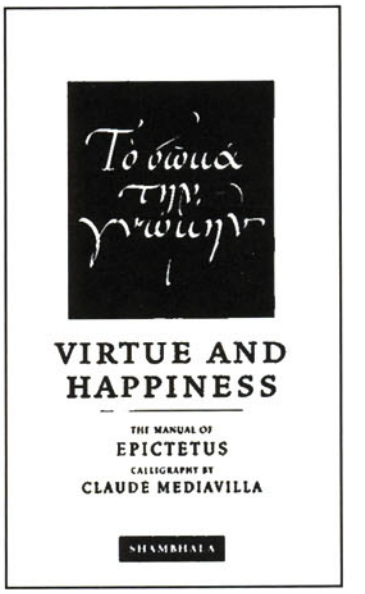
-Ryan Dunlavey



RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE GENIUS-ON-THE-GO







Aristotle. *Metaphyics*. Translated from the Greek by W.D. Ross.
eBook on-line at: http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/

Much of what we know about the Pre-Socratics, since they wrote very little down that has survived, comes from the stories told about them by those philosophers who followed them, such as Plato, Diogenes the Cynic, and AP#7 featured thinker Aristotle. In Metaphysics, the greatest polymath of the ancient world describes the systems of "first principles" that preceded him, including those developed by Thales, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, the "Anax"-ie gang and more, and pretty much demolishes them single-handedly, along with his own teacher's Theory of Forms … thereby earning him the enmity of Platonists for generations to come. Aristotle then proceeds to outline his own logic-based system, inexorably linking the two disciplines – in fact, I'd strongly recommend tackling Aristotle's primary treatise on Logic, Analytica Posteriora, before attempting Metaphysics. Mad props to the Aussie academics at Adelaide U. for uploading Aristotle's oeuvre in downloadable eBook format.

William Messner-Loebs and Sam Keith. *Epicurus the Sage*. La Jolla, CA: DC/Wildstorm 2003.

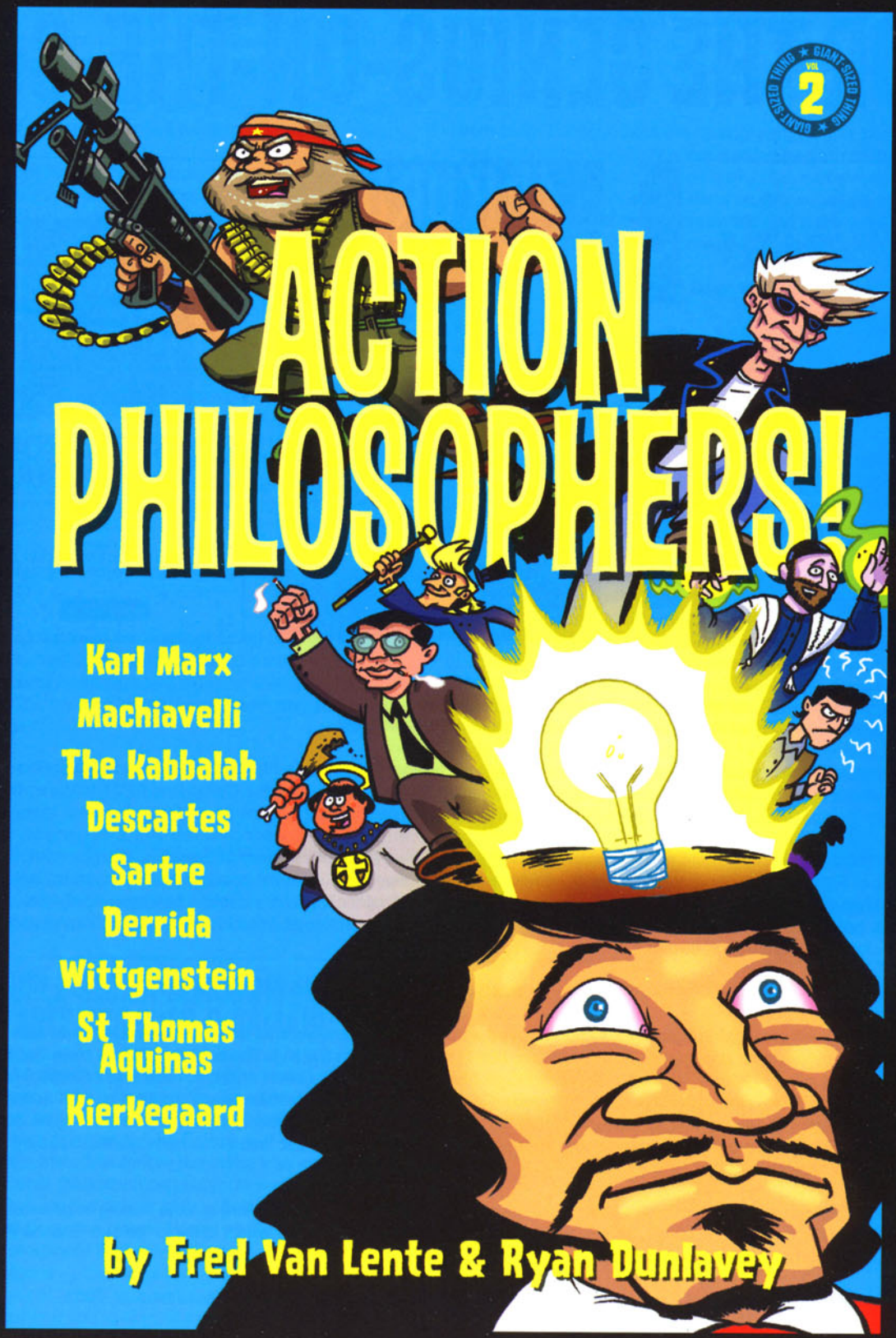
Hey, you didn't think we wouldn't give love to our beloved antecedent? This wonderful odd duck from DC's first stab at high-falutin' funnybooks for grown-ups, Piranha Press, has been, along with the Kyle Baker classic Why I Hate Saturn, its most memorable effort. Though billed as a satire of Greek philosophy, it's more of an anarchic (and anachronistic) farce in the vein of a Mel Brooks film, with Epicurus rubbing elbows with all of ancient Greece's heavy thinkers as well as tangling with major figures of Greek mythology, especially that can't-keep-it-in-his-pants horndog, Zeus. (Epicurus fans no doubt noted that the relationship between Aristotle and young Alexander the Great in this issue was heavily influenced by this seminal graphic work.)

The historical Epicurus espoused the Pleasure Principle: that the good can be known through the feeling of pleasure it elicits in those who give and receive it, and by that standard, the Wildstorm edition, which collects the two Piranha Press GN's into one volume, is unequivocally good.

Epictetus the Stoic. *Virtue and Happiness: The Manual of Epictetus*. Boston: Shambhala Books, 2003.

Calligraphist Claude Mediavilla illustrates this beautiful abridgement (though not by much) of Epictetus's classic work on ethics and self-discipline. If you ever need to buy a "self-help" book for a neurotic friend, this would be the one: as we went to lengths to demonstrate in the AP story, Epictetus' simple teachings are as true today as they were two thousand years ago.

on sale December 2006:



www.actionphilosophers.com