

18 APR 07. Hail James! Many thanks for your letter mailed on 12 APR 07 & your essay on "The Impossibility of Absolute Knowledge." You are lucky that I have good eyesight, for your text is faint indeed. However, with good natural lighting & a magnifying glass of the size Sherlock Holmes would use, I can decode faint words within their context.

Congratulations on your progress in German. You are going to master the language in your method of learning the written form, only, since German is 100% phonetic, unlike English. Once you learn the rules of pronunciation in regard to the letters, you will be able to read out loud. We students learned to read German out loud with a couple of hours of instruction, & when we heard words pronounced correctly, we could spell them correctly. Pronunciation tip: sand is pronounced Zant; strand is pronounced shtrant; weiss = vice, in pronunciation, not in meaning! Nouns are capitalized; all nouns have genders, & one should learn them as he learns his words so as to use them properly in sentences. Prussian or High German resembles Slavic or Latin in its grammar, rather than it resembles true Germanic languages such as Low German, Flemish, Swedish or English. Prussian has cases which are in the words themselves, rather than the word order. Needless to say, I am not all that correct in my use of German, although I can translate from German into English or Spanish with no difficulty. Here's an example of gender/case: Ich gehe ins Kino. I go (am going) into the cinema (movie theater); ins = in das. Cinema is neuter. Gender has no particular rhyme nor reason in High German. When I studied it in the 1960s, there was controversy about the gender of a locomotive. Some favored feminine because of the ending; others favored neuter, since one does not breed locomotives. As a Germanic speaker, I strongly object to the imposition of gender on objects which do not breed sexually. I see language as conveying USEFUL information, rather than meaningless forms. O.K., so we have gone into the cinema. Now we can say: ich bin im Kino = I am in the cinema. The motion has stopped. English used words in the transitive sense, so one could ask: Whither goest thou? (German uses the familiar conjugation, which is used when one speaks to dogs, gods, family members & friends). We could also say, whither are you going? Your answer in motion would be: I'm going to the movies or I go to the movies. Once there, you receive a phonecall: Where are you? You'd reply: I'm at the movies or I'm in the cinema house. You could also say that you were wandering around inside the movie theater: ich bin umherum laufen im Kino. Oh, im = in dem (in the). True Germanic languages have one word for "the," rather than 3: der, die und das for each gender. Many German words are spelt the same as English words: ein Hand is a hand; a finger ist ein Finger, und ein Feuerzeug ist ein Feuerzeug (cigarette lighter!). The best way to learn German or any other language, in my opinion, is to read well-written literature. That way, we can aid our memories by word-association. Songs are great teaching tools, rather than mere wordlists, but if one wishes, he can read words in a dictionary, & thus enhance his vocabulary. Whatever works is correct. We learned German dialogs, which we had to memorize every evening, after classes, for use the next day. Dialogs are great for vocabulary & word-associations. We would learn dialogs on such scenarios as a store; a railway station; an airport; a taxi ride; a tennis game; a restaurant. This enabled us to learn our vocabulary & grammar by practice, association & patterns, much as we learned our original language. As Mark Twain wrote, great progress could be made if English speakers could agree on ONE way to pronounce the letters of English words. How do you pronounce "read", for example? It is spelt the same for past or present, but it is pronounced differently!

You observe many similarities between gulag life & the life of students in colleges & dormitories, or monks in a monastery: all such conditions restrict travel & emphasize the life of the mind, for good or ill. Under certain conditions, we can learn to be learned or we can learn to be mad. Confinement for some is punishment, for others, opportunity. As you noted, it depends on the individual. I saw school as a form of confinement which I had to endure before I could go into the real world & direct my own life. I saw education as an obligation to overcome, as well as an opportunity to acquire certain knowledge, which is only valid if we can apply it in the real world of people & events. My knowledge of Spanish & German proved valuable in Europe & in Latin America, as we might expect. One professor said that people with my lust for action rarely make good students. According to his tests, good students tend toward passivity, rather than activity. My scores were on the 'active' side of the scale. A phrase, possibly from Goethe frequently rang in the recesses of my mind: "Out of this, into the open!" When denied physical freedom, the intelligent person is able to develop & to apply his mind. When I enjoyed a two-week stay as a guest of Her Majesty in Soviet Canuckistan, I enjoyed helping others to learn math & English. Naturally,

2) I also learned from them, for there is always something to be learned, no matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

The ancient Greeks described "the fatal flaw," or the Achilles Heel of vulnerability. This is why self-knowledge is so important. We are rich, indeed, when we can recognize our strengths & weaknesses. We can learn this from experience alias The School of Hard Knocks, but we can also learn such lessons by observing others. I can, for example, observe what happens to a fellow who downs a quantity of booze in a brief time. If he passes out & falls off his barstool, I figure that would likely happen to me. Hence, if I did not want to pass out & fall off my stool, I would not do what he did. But, if the fellow were to down the booze & behave otherwise sober & sensible, I might follow his example, only to pass out & fall off my barstool! In the first case, I learn from his experience; in the last case, I learn from my experience. You see why I prefer to learn from others' experience first, instead of my own. Other people are good teachers or guinea pigs, as we prefer. I agree that confinement at close quarters with others concentrates the learning experience, unlike life in less crowded, less restricted circumstances. It is a process of fast, or slow learning. I think we agree on that topic.

Sometimes, a learning experience is so drastic that it can influence one to enter new fields of thought & action. One Yakimoron was so shocked at the reality of the massive Mexican Occupation Day Parade last May that he actually inquired into the immigration/invasion issue & is now attending local political meetings in regard to this matter. Perhaps Thoreau had the same reaction following his incarceration for refusing to pay his Christinsane thought-tax. Was his reaction due to a flaw or his lack of knowledge? If my residence were on fire, the knowledge thereof would alter my behavior. My flaw would be if I were to ignore the emergency.

As you say, nincompoops make noise, perhaps to prove to themselves & others that they are alive. I noted Afro-Eurasians in Latin America who'd sit on a curb & bang on it with a piece of rebar. They were not making primitive music, just noise. Most mestizos don't close doors. They slam them. Perhaps they have a racial memory of closing their teepee flaps, so the 'bang' of door-slamming does not register on their mongrel psyches. This behavior is something I've noted from coast to coast, north & south, in mainly mestizo America. When Descartes stated the non sequitur, "I think, therefore I am," which is equally true or false if the reverse is stated, he may have described the mestizo mentality in which "I make noise, therefore I am." In Brownest Yakima, our mestizo-bandidos love to blast us with their stereos.

Many thanks for your cogent thoughts on Jung, whose works I have not read. The analogy of Earth & The Universe & its connections with racial archetypes is indeed intriguing. Too bad Jung could not translate the thoughts of the Black tribesmen in regard to his nascent theories. As I understand, the 'clicks' in some African languages are not words in themselves, but ways of pronunciation or parts of speech. In my part of Africa, tribal myths often featured the "mondoro," or tribal spirit. The tales usually involve a tribesman who wanders in search of an answer to some pressing problem. On a path, he meets an old man who incarnates the spirit of his tribe, & whose wisdom allows the young wanderer to solve his problem. This story resembles stories of bemused White men who encounter their tribal god, Odin, who confers his wisdom upon them in timely fashion. Anthropologists have honored other races & tribes by studying their archetypes, & it is high time that Whites studied theirs! Languages describe people's worldview. If their existence is simple, their vocabulary is usually limited, as I discovered in Colombia, where people could not read Spanish because they could not speak it, due to their lack of vocabulary. Since Spanish was their only language, they were ignorant indeed! I understand that some African languages have an entire vocabulary related to walking on sand, on mud, on grass, &c., since walking is of major importance in their society.

In your essay, you mention the "omni" qualities attributed to gods which are also 'infinite'. You use relativity in showing us that identity relies upon relationships when we assign to 3 oranges numbers in sequence as identities. But what happens when we give the 3 oranges names, instead of numbers? Instead of 1, 2 & 3, we have Tom, Dick & Harry, or Tomas, Ricardo y Geraldo in current speech. As long as we recall the positions of the 3 oranges, we can remove two & still know that the one on the table is "Geraldo," et al. As we learn, such analogies illustrate, but they do not prove. One teacher gave an example: "Government is like a car. Only one person should be in the driver's seat." So, adios, democracy!