

# **The Tale of Grok and Blok**

or

## **The Meaning of Existence**

**A Story of Deception and Enlightenment**

(an allegorical one-act theater piece)

Draft #2, by Thanos Endrizzi, Feb. 2, 2010

### **SETTING:**

The play is set in classical Athens, Greece, in the mid- to late-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., sometime during the tyrannical (but for all that, still fairly populist and progressive) ~50-year dynasty of the Peisistratid family, roughly a generation or two prior to the establishment of Athenian democracy. Although at this time, Athens is still being managed in a strict authoritarian fashion by a succession of Eponymous Archons<sup>1</sup>, the city is rapidly becoming more structured and sophisticated economically, socially and politically throughout this period, and its degree of control over its whole province of Attica is solidifying. The state's policy of cultivating for itself popular goodwill (and thus political stability) by keeping the people entertained with religious festivals is being established. Over the course of the next century, once democracy is established, Athens will carry out its rise to power as the dominant Greek city-state, and the post-Socratic era of philosophy will begin.

### **CHARACTERS AND BACKGROUND:**

Our main characters are Grok and Blok, two old friends who are the founding partners of a private and rather secretive Philosophical Council, which has been commissioned by the Peisistratid clan to invent (and assist civic authorities by applying) various types of intellectual property that are deemed valuable to the city-state. These include various mechanical designs used in construction and warfare, as well as new systematic practices for architecture, civic and agricultural planning, and accounting, which leverage newly discovered geometric and arithmetic algorithms. In the historical fiction of our play, these two men were (though little of their work was seen by the general public) in many ways the wisest, most insightful and deep-thinking of all the pre-Socratic philosophers, and were in fact the true (albeit unrecognized) originators of a great many successful philosophical and mathematical ideas, some of which the great philosophers and mathematicians of subsequent centuries<sup>2</sup> (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid) happened to

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<sup>1</sup> These were the chief magistrates, usually Peisistratid family members or close allies, holding one-year appointments. They were "Eponymous" because the year of their reign was named after them.

<sup>2</sup> Further, the contemporaneous fellow mathematician, Pythagoras of Samos, was a good friend and occasional colleague of our pair who came to visit them in Athens on multiple occasions; he learned many ingenious new tricks of arithmetic and number theory in discussions during his stays with them, which he brought back with him to his quasi-religious sect (the Pythagoreans) that he established around

come across while perusing records in the Athens City Archives, and subsequently represented as their own inventions – but to be fair, they really had no choice, since by then, because of the high value of its accumulated mechanical designs and methods of figuring, the Council’s very existence was kept so secret – known only to the Archons, and to selected philosophers on a “need to know” basis – that even speaking publicly of its existence, or its past (& present) membership, or of their many classified discoveries, had become a crime punishable by death. Therefore, the numerous original works of Grok and Blok were never released to the broader philosophical community, and were eventually totally lost in the shifting sands of history.

Although they are, officially speaking, only servants of the state; Grok and Blok have hidden agendas of their own as well: Blok, with somewhat less than wholehearted support from Grok, dreams of gaining political power, and eventually becoming a *philosopher-king* (Plato stole the idea) so as to rule the land with great wisdom. Through guile and manipulation, and by making himself useful, he is gradually accumulating to himself greater and greater civic responsibility, gradually working his way up into the echelons of power. Meanwhile, Grok dreams of starting a free school to expose members of the public to the many fascinating ideas of philosophy. Grok satisfies this itch by stroll down a sacred olive grove called the *Akademeia* periodically, when the weather is fair, to deliver lectures, in the cool shade of the sacred trees, to curious members of the public whom he recruits (Plato stole this idea too). This practice is frowned upon but tolerated by the domineering Blok, so long as the ideas being taught are not in the nature of state secrets.

Physically, Grok looks like the stereotypical ancient philosopher, with long white beard and toga. He has a gentle and wise expression, and kind eyes. He gets clearly enthusiastic when discussing interesting ideas. Blok is younger and sterner looking, with dark hair and a dark goatee and mustache contrasting with his pale face. We frequently sees the keen gleam of a calculating intelligence in his eye. He is the type that catches on instantly, and misses nothing. He is particularly clever at the rhetorical trick of twisting words around in such a way as to lead people on, and get them to look at things in a manner that is to his advantage.

[note to self: consider adding two new scenes at the beginning, and maybe call them “Act One:”

- (1) Grok enthusiastically teaching students some fun mathematics. First, the proof of the Pythagorean theorem – which was actually first proved by Āpastamba of India before either Grok or Pythagoras was born, but Grok had learned it during a visit to India and later taught it to Pythagoras; second, the proof of the infinity of primes; thirdly, the elegant, general proof of the irrationality of non-perfect squares using the Fundamental Theorem of Algebra. The sequence is a logical one since 2 is involved in proving 3, and 1 and 3 together tell you that the hypotenuse can be irrational. And then a few broader things about the objective existence and beauty of mathematical forms;

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530 B.C. in Croton, Italy... Pythagoras was inspired, via the impressive power, scope and generality of Grok and Blok’s far-ranging mathematical ideas, to adopt his Pythagorean credo, “all is number.”

(2) Grok and Blok get a visit from their old friend & colleague, Pythagoras of Samos, who is stopping in on his way from Samos to the Crotone colony in southern Italy, to which he is moving. Setting: A comfortable parlor in the Council's living quarters. Pythagoras expresses appreciation for things he has learned from the pair in the past that he has incorporated into his teachings. Grok and Blok together tell him of their latest exciting new philosophical theory, namely that the form of *any conceivable object* can be exactly represented in terms of mathematical structures, and that *any conceivable process* can be represented as a mathematical computation. This conversation is what inspires Pythagoras to start his religious movement in Crotone with the credo "all is number."

These two new scenes may be helpful to lead the reader through a little more of the prior conceptual developments leading up to the following scene.

## SCENE I.

*The stage setting is a wide balcony jutting out from an upper story of the Philosophical Council's headquarters; it overlooks trees and buildings of ancient Athens, in Autumn, and the backdrop suggests many people hard at work tilling and/or harvesting fields in the distance.*

*The curtain opens to Blok standing, leaning casually on the balcony by himself in late afternoon, near sunset, looking distractedly into the distance.*

*\*Grok enters from stage left\**

GROK: My dear and wise friend Blok, I have been thinking. Can I run this by you?

*\*Grok is looking pleased, and his excitement builds up gradually but steadily throughout his subsequent presentation\**

BLOK: *\*casually\**  
Sure thing.

GROK: I can conceive of an infinity of all possible universes, as part of a larger realm, that of all conceivable abstract structures and forms, of all sorts.

BLOK: *\*rather blasé – they've talked about similar concepts before\**  
Me too. *(He's thinking, "Yeah, obviously, so what?")*

GROK: I can also conceive of an infinity of different manners in which those various worlds and forms might undergo their process of becoming... For any one of those worlds, there are an infinity of all the different logically possible ways in which the structure of that world, or thing, might unfold itself to full fruition. These unfoldings may happen through an infinite variety of different

methods of arithmetic or of geometry, as well as via an infinite variety of other maths as yet undiscovered by man.

BLOK: That is true. *\*wondering where this is heading\**

GROK: Also, anyone who is as wise and logical as we are would be able to envision that VERY SAME realm, the realm of all possible forms and structures, and of all ways in which those structures could arrive at their form, *i.e.*, could take shape, be made, be in-formed.

BLOK: I concur. *\*starting to look interested\**

GROK: *\*building momentum\**

Therefore, it follows that this realm, of all the possible ways of unfolding each of the possible things that may be, is NOT merely a product of our imaginings, but is rather an *objective* realm, towards which *any* rational, enlightened observer may turn his gaze, and examine its features, using the very same logical and mathematical tools as we do, should they themselves happen to develop them.

BLOK: I declare, as you say it must be true. *\*genuinely fascinated now\**

GROK: *\*very excited\**

So, my friend Blok, can we then say that, due to its independence of the happenstance of our discovery of it, this realm of all possibilities is, in fact, the essential, fundamental basis of all existence? And that it must exist, *i.e.*, must BE what it is, by virtue of pure reason alone?

BLOK: Yes, indeed. *\*looks somewhat amazed\**

GROK: *\*gesticulating and speaking triumphantly by now\**

Does that transcendent realm not declare, in a voice so loud that every wise mind can hear it bellowing, "I AM THAT I AM," simply through the unassailable logical force of the above arguments alone?

BLOK: So it does. *\*now in a mood of jovial banter\**  
Now that you have mentioned it, I can hear it myself! It is quite deafening!  
*\*covers his ears theatrically\**

*\*Grok, smiling, gives him a friendly jab on the shoulder, and they share a laugh together\**

GROK: What then, my friend, should we call our future study of this vast realm of pure thought, that lies beyond the mere physical examination of our world?

BLOK: Clearly, we could call it meta-physics<sup>3</sup>, since that means “beyond physics.”

GROK: Meta-physics it is! And that infinite realm itself we shall call the Meta-verse, for beyond the universe.

BLOK: Quite excellent. *\*a little distractedly now; he's already starting to think about how he might be able to use this\**

GROK: *\*impatiently, not quite finished relating his train of thought\**  
But, my dear Blok, do you realize what all this *implies*?

BLOK: *\*quizzical\**  
What?

GROK: *\*index finger wagging sternly, lecture-style\**  
It is this realm beyond physics, this meta-verse, and NOT specifically the ancient gods, that is the true power behind the formation of our world, as we know it! *\*gestures around\**

BLOK: How so?

GROK: It is simply that, if *all* possible worlds exist there, in the realm of conceivable forms, then ours surely and necessarily exists there among them!  
*\*air of finality\**

BLOK: How true.

GROK: *I.e.*, we have discovered that our world *must* exist, as a consequence of pure logic alone!

BLOK: *\*restating for himself\**  
Simply because it is (obviously) a possible world, sitting nestled among all the others, out there in the objectively existing, infinite realm of all possibilities, with each of them constructible in an infinity of different ways...! Very nice... My friend, you never cease to amaze me...  
*\*squeezes Grok's upper arm in a congratulatory manner\**

*\*looks down and pauses thinking for a few moments, now pacing slowly, hand stroking his goatee. Meanwhile, Grok leans on the balcony, gazing at the developing sunset, looking pleased with himself, like a cat that just caught the biggest bird ever.\**

BLOK: *\*suddenly, a rather worried look\**  
Uh-oh...

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<sup>3</sup> Greek: *ta meta ta fusika*, τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. Aristotle was the guy who later ripped off this notion.

GROK: What is it?

BLOK: *\*dourly\**  
The people will not like this.

GROK: *\*looking stricken\**  
Whyever not, for Olympus's sake?

BLOK: That's just it. From what we've just learned, together with all our previous investigations into natural philosophy, it's abundantly clear now that we no longer need fanciful mythologies in order to understand why this world was created and has the particular nature that it does. Our world is in general just a kind of evolving abstract sculpture, out of the infinite variety of such Forms that may be borne of purely mathematical processes; so it's not necessarily being shaped or controlled by any capricious deities. As they come to understand the logic of this, the people may lose faith.

GROK: But the people love their gods! Especially our wise lady Athena!

BLOK: Exactly... The people are in awe of her and Zeus and the Titans and the other ancient gods because they believe they are central to the story of how this world came to be the way it is. As of now, we know that the gods really didn't need to have anything to do with it. Even without them, the whole world would exist anyway, as one of the possible dynamically constructible Forms, just by pure logic.

GROK: Well, then I suppose we need to find new roles for Athena, Zeus, and the others, since it seems that that this universe that we see around us was never truly their responsibility, and in fact is only an insignificant corner of a much vaster Meta-verse – Olympus and Earth now seem a much less impressive dominion.

BLOK: Yes, that's right... Hmm... *\*chin in hand\**

GROK: What are you thinking?

BLOK: To make the gods seem more important... What if... What if we tell the people that all the other worlds in the meta-verse are "merely" POSSIBLE places (and we'll say "possible" with a sneer, as if *being* possible was already something bad), but that OUR world is more than just possible -- it is *special*, better than all the others.

GROK: How so?

BLOK: Let's make up a special new property, some magical characteristic, and declare to the people that our world has it, and no others do.

GROK: What shall we call this new property?

BLOK: Oh, anything. It doesn't matter. Any old word will do. Why don't we just say "our world has MEEBLE" for now while we're talking about it, until we think up a better name for it.

GROK: What is this "Meeble?"

BLOK: Nothing. It is meaningless. But we'll just say, our world has it, and all the others don't.

GROK: Brilliantly simple. Now, how does that help with Zeus and the other gods?

BLOK: Well, we can say, from among all the possible worlds in the Metaverse that unfold from the void, the earliest gods chose ours to live on, and later Zeus blessed it with the mystical property of MEEBLE. This makes our world special again. And it gives Zeus something important to be responsible for.

GROK: How do we convince the people that our world has MEEBLE, and all the others don't?

BLOK: Well, the quality of MEEBLE must always be presented to the public in such a way that it will come to seem like it's unquestionable that our world has it.

GROK: How can we do that, when MEEBLE is just a made-up nonsense word?

BLOK: Well, how about this: We'll say to them, if you can simply see something right there in front of you, then that *by itself* constitutes proof that it has MEEBLE.  
*\*loudly proclaims, gesturing\**  
If you can see it, it must have MEEBLE!

GROK: Well, yeah, that would certainly apply to our world. That is, it's right there, plain to see. And even the parts of it that you can't see right now, you know that you could go see them if you really wanted to, and tried hard enough.

BLOK: And, even more important for us, Grok, all the other universes in this whole vast new metaverse we've discovered *aren't* right there for everyone to see, especially not for those who are less insightful than you and I.

GROK: So the alleged implication of that being (when speaking to the public), is just because we can't see those worlds in front of our faces, they must not have this made-up MEEBLE property? Even though that doesn't logically follow?

BLOK: Yes, exactly.

GROK: But Blok, there's a flaw in how you're approaching this. The people in the other worlds, they can, perfectly well, have their own suns in their sky; they can look around their world too, and see *it* sitting in front of them, plain as day. So they, too, would conclude, based on the declaration you just made, that their world has MEEBLE, as well.

BLOK: Yes, but look, *you and I* don't have to worry about what the people in the other possible worlds might say. They won't even hear our proclamation, and they *won't* be shouting out to our people, and telling them, "Hey, wait a minute, not so fast there, our world has MEEBLE too!"

GROK: True. Since all the different possible forms, the different universes, are entirely separate and independent of each other.<sup>4</sup>

BLOK: Yes.

GROK: But won't our people eventually realize anyway that the people in other worlds should be able see their own worlds around them?

BLOK: Nah. They don't think that deeply. Once they have started looking down on all the other universes as being inferior because they don't have MEEBLE, they won't even bother contemplating what the people in those other worlds are thinking, and whether they might really be able to see their own worlds or not. Who spends a lot of time wondering about what the bugs in the dust are seeing and thinking about? Probably only you and I.

GROK: You are right, I suppose. Still, I worry that they might eventually question it.

BLOK: Well, then we need to think of some way to get them to dismiss the notion of the other worlds entirely. That way it won't occur to them to think about this.

GROK: How will we do that?

BLOK: Well... Whenever you and I dismiss some experimental theory of logic or geometry we've been tinkering with, and eliminate it from any further consideration, why it is that we do that?

GROK: Well, we do that whenever we discover that the theory is inconsistent... It produces self-contradictory results. It shoots itself down.

BLOK: Yes, exactly...

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<sup>4</sup> Grok isn't considering that someday, our distant descendants may have access to computers so powerful that they *can* observe other universes through simulation, and even converse with their inhabitants.



GROK: But, our picture of the Metaverse *isn't* inconsistent... In fact, by its very definition, in terms of possible worlds, it consists entirely of those worlds that *can* be validly constructed.

BLOK: That doesn't matter. It's all in how we phrase it. Look, when we throw away a theory, Grok, what do we *say* about all the wondrous conceptual structures that we *thought* we'd built up within the context of that theory?

GROK: *\*a bit hesitantly\**

We... We say that they don't *exist* after all – *i.e.*, they are without Form, and void; they lack Being – by which of course we mean that their properties in the theory turned out to be self-contradictory, so that the very idea of them in the first place was just a self-deception, an illogical dead-end.

*\*frowns\**

I think I see where you're going with this...

*\*“...and I'm not sure I like it”, he's thinking...\**

BLOK: Yes... We'll tell them that if a universe doesn't have the magic property of MEEBLE, then it *doesn't even exist*. That way, they REALLY won't think about it much. Nobody worries about things that don't exist, like the square roots of negative numbers.

GROK: Speaking of which, I'm still not so sure about that one... I had a really interesting idea about how to handle those the other day...<sup>5</sup>

BLOK: *\*interrupts brusquely\**

Well, we'll worry about that later. For now, we've gotta solve this problem. What with all these wars Peisistratus has been waging lately, the populace is already getting restless. If the whole basis for their religion falls apart as well, the people will run rampant over the city's leadership structure – you know that. And who will sponsor our work then, if the Archons fall?

GROK: *\*looking a bit more worried himself, now\**

OK then, so the plan is, we'll start hailing the glory of Zeus because he blessed this universe with MEEBLE, or whatever we'll call it, and we'll say that it should be plain to everyone that our world does have MEEBLE, because anything you can see must have this magic MEEBLE quality in order for you to even be able to see it in the first place... And, we'll claim, all the other worlds in the realm of possibility must NOT have MEEBLE, since you can't see them... Even though logically of course that doesn't follow; if they're entirely separate worlds, you wouldn't expect to be able to see them anyway...

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<sup>5</sup> Yes, Grok had worked out the basic concepts of complex arithmetic in his head one day the previous week, while idly musing at the baths, but unfortunately, just as the last piece of the puzzle was about to fall into place, Blok rushed in and called him away to help with some emergency or other, and Grok never got a chance to write down his thoughts. As fate would have it, it would be about another 2,300 years before all of Grok's insights from that day would be reproduced by 18<sup>th</sup>-century mathematicians.

BLOK: Yes, but as you know, the people really aren't very good at distinguishing their logical converses from their contrapositives... So they'll just follow our lead, and assume without thinking that "Visibility implies MEEBLE" leads to "Invisibility implies not-MEEBLE." But if we stated that *too* explicitly up front, they might suspect that MEEBLE was merely a *synonym* for "visible," and so it wouldn't all that mystically significant any more – since they do know that there are other countries that lie over the horizon that we still must be concerned with.

GROK: ...And, the "crowning glory" of this whole wretched tale will be our claim that if something is, not merely over the horizon, but also doesn't even have MEEBLE, then it doesn't even *exist*, it's self-contradictory, illogical, and therefore it is nonsense for us to even think about it...

BLOK: Exactly.

GROK: ...*Even though* you and I just proved the opposite, that in fact, all the other possible universes do most *definitely* exist, because by definition they are part and parcel of the objective realm of all those things that can be consistently constructed by pure logic?

BLOK: It is a tad misleading, to be sure, my friend, but at least it will avoid shaking their faith in the gods' importance unnecessarily.

GROK: It still seems a little contrived though; how can we *firmly* convince them that a universe that happens to lack our fictitious MEEBLE quality must not even exist? They may realize, no, it's just another, more distant country.

BLOK: Well... *\*gets an evil grin, raises eyebrows, rubs hands together\**

GROK: Blok, I know how your mind works. What are you thinking now?

BLOK: It's so laughably simple, it just might work.

GROK: What is it?

BLOK: Well, remember, earlier in this discussion, when we were trying to figure out what to call the made-up "special property" that we'll pretend our universe has, and that no others have...?

GROK: Yes...?

BLOK: Well, instead of just making up some new word, like MEEBLE, and then trying to convince them that anything lacking that new thing they've never

heard of before must not even exist, so it's not worth thinking about (and yes, I admit that's a stretch), instead of doing that, why don't we just...

GROK: Oh, no... You wouldn't!

BLOK: Yes!! Let's just appropriate, for our own purposes, this word that everyone already understands much like we do, namely the word "EXISTS," *i.e.*, to be, to have form, *i.e.*, to not just be a figment of some paradoxical, malformed concept, and we'll declare that THAT property, *i.e.*, existence itself, is, indeed that special, magical property conferred upon us alone by the Gods, *it* is the mystical blessing that our universe has, and no others! That way, all the other possible worlds in the Metaverse will be assumed to have remained unformed and void, and so the Gods can retain their crown as masters of our universe, which is the only part of the Metaverse that, as we'll say, is really real.

GROK: But Blok, we *know* that an infinity of other abstract structures DO exist, *independently* of our universe; we know this because we have examined their properties in detail in our geometry and our number theory. Any theorem we prove must be an actual, eternal Truth, regardless of whether we mere mortals happen to write down its particular figures and formulas, or not! Does the ideal perfect circular form, which we so admire, cease to *Be* in the realm of geometry, every time the surf washes away some crude, approximate representation of it that we happened to draw in the sand with a stick?

BLOK: *\*impatiently\**

Yes, yes, I know all that; but how many of the people actually study geometry, or any philosophy at all, for that matter?

GROK: *\*sighs dejectedly\**

Not many, I must admit. Attendance was way down at the Academy this year, what with all the new harvesting shifts we added – the people are too busy.

BLOK: Not only that, our stuff is too dry and long-haired for most people. They'd rather spend all their free time planning their idiotic antics for all those silly, noisy religious festivals.<sup>6</sup> *\*sneering, looking annoyedly out at the streets, where we can hear tavern patrons already starting to shout and laugh drunkenly\**

GROK: I suppose that is true, too...

*\*gets a very sad look in his eyes for a few moments as he gazes out in the direction of the Theatre of Dionysius – he remembers a happy time, long ago in his youth, when he loved to go and watch all the plays held during the Grand Dionysia with his friends...*

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<sup>6</sup> These included rural *Dionysia* traveling festivals in the Winter, the city's *Great Dionysia* festival in early Spring, the *Olympieia* to honor Zeus in late Spring, and the *Panathenaea* in the summer. We see from his words here that Blok's a pretty serious guy, and he isn't much of a party animal.

*But, ever since he started hanging out with Blok, all of his other friends seem to have drifted away...He can't even remember when he last had any non-intellectual fun...\**

*\*Shakes the sad thoughts from his head, recovers his focus.\**

OK, so, to recap, we'll say to them, that our universe, out of all the possible universes, only has MEEBLE - I mean, only EXISTS – because, we'll say, it was blessed with it by the gods; They selected it, from among all the possible universes, as being the only one worthy of this so-called “EXISTENCE” property, which suddenly has nothing to do any longer with the fundamental question of whether a thing is even meaningful or not...

And, since our world “obviously” *\*finger quotes\**

has this magical new kind of EXISTENCE,

and all the others “obviously” *\*finger quotes again\**

don't, their forms, albeit equally well-defined as

ours, don't count for anything at all; and it's not worth even thinking about them.

BLOK: *\*looking askance\**

Uh, yeah, we'll say *something* like that, just not quite as sarcastically...

GROK: *\*frowning\**

I still find it distasteful... Won't this diminish the public's overall interest in abstract geometry and numbers? We have so many beautiful geometric constructions and mathematical theorems that they could learn to appreciate, and even make practical use of within their household ventures... But, if we make them think that existence is only a property of what can be immediately seen, and then they stop believing that abstract forms have their own eternal Being as well, i.e., are non-entities, then they might not care as much about studying our logic and our maths, no matter how useful they may be.

BLOK: *\*sniffs derisively\**

The people were never all that interested in learning that stuff anyway. Besides, you know as well as I that what our math has *really* been most useful for, is for designing grand new temples and fierce war machines – that's what really brings in the *drachmas*.

*\*mimics rubbing coins between his fingers\**

If we make sure that the only people who know how to use the most advanced kinds of mathematics, and all of our new empirical methods, are those of us in the Philosophical Council, then that will help steadily solidify our authority and our political standing when it comes to advising the Archon regarding magisterial-level activities like civil planning, and even military strategy.

GROK: I don't know, Blok... I always thought that knowledge should be free for all...

BLOK: In an ideal world, maybe so, but we *can't* pull the rug of the people's precious faith out from under them. If they weren't worried any more about being

punished by the gods, why would they obey all the laws any longer? You know as well as I do that the state can't afford to police them all just yet.

GROK: But, for us to have only just discovered the grand infinity of Metaversal existence, and then to hide it from people before they even get the first chance to learn about it... It just seems wrong. *\*looks crestfallen\**

BLOK: I know, dear friend... *\*pats him on the back reassuringly\**  
But don't worry... We've made up so many different new gods and mystical notions in the service of the state already, what difference will one more little tweak to the language make? All we're doing is repurposing just one little innocent word. A thing's "EXISTENCE" will henceforth just be redefined to be another mystical property, among the many others that the Gods are already thought to confer, and in particular, to be one that is held by our own universe, and no others, making us unique among all the possible worlds in the Metaverse. So that way, the people will think we still owe it to the gods that they have chosen Earth to receive that special blessing of Existence.

GROK: *\*holding his hand palm up in appeal\**  
But Blok, for us, the word "EXISTENCE" always had real MEANING before, it wasn't just a made-up nonsense word applied arbitrarily to only the most superficially apparent things around us... It was the difference between consistent theories, and garbage ones... It was the difference between the beautiful structures that worked, and the ugly, malformed ones that we found could never be useful, because they were self-contradictory... Between the theories about hypothetical phenomena that we confirmed by our direct observations, and ones that had to be abandoned as mere superstition because they were clearly contradicted by the facts in front of us. All these uses of the word EXIST have been vital to the progress of our philosophy. Grok, by Zeus, if you redefine this crucial word in the way that you're suggesting, then in effect, you are stealing Truth, and Beauty, and even Science from the people, just for the sake of building up our political power...!!? *\*looks angry now\**

BLOK: *\*folds arms, with a look of grim determination\**  
Grok, we knew when we first got into politics, a long time ago, that it would be a dirty business. If we ever want to be philosopher-kings like we talked about back then, we've got to keep working on consolidating our authority... And, while we're at it, tone down all that public education crap... Giving people access to our beautiful ideas for free is all well and good, but it makes them restless... I that know you enjoy giving your little lectures down at that old orchard,<sup>7</sup> but I've seen that after you depart, many of your students tend to

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<sup>7</sup> "That old orchard" is the *Akademeia*, formerly called *Hekademia*, which was a sacred olive grove dedicated to Athena, which was used to supply oil for the Great Dionysia festival, as well as for staging various religious rituals and celebrations. A century and a half after Grok's early efforts to start a school there, Plato came across Grok's notes about these efforts in a classified scroll down in

waste far too much time lingering and chit-chatting with each other under the trees, feeling empowered by that royal road to Truth that you showed them, and then dreaming up all kinds of subversive notions, like that silly jabber going around now about Democracy. It's dangerous, plus it distracts those plebes from their harvesting and other work. And they really need to get cracking; it is going to be a cold winter this year, I'm sure of it.

GROK: *\*sarcastically\**

Because the "gods" told you so?

BLOK: That's what we'll tell *them*, *\*tips head towards the rural areas\**  
of course, but you and I both know  
that it's just because we've been studying the bird migration patterns. The swallows flew over early this year. The people will be impressed that we predicted the cold winter correctly, and then they'll believe us more easily next year when we tell them what the gods "revealed" to us.

GROK: *\*shivers involuntarily\**

Blok, sometimes, I just don't know why we're doing all this...

BLOK: Remember, it's for their own good...  
You know that *they* *\*points towards magisterial buildings\**  
could never plan and schedule the  
harvest as well as *our* hand-picked *\*gestures at the council building\**  
team can do it using the revolutionary  
methods we developed.<sup>8</sup>

GROK: Well... That's true...

BLOK: And remember, our ability to predict eclipses helped us to retake Sigeum<sup>9</sup>  
from the Mytileneans a while back... That was a glorious triumph for Athens!

GROK: I know, I know... *\*frowns grimly\**

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the City Archives, and thought, "Hey, that's a really good idea," and then he founded his much more famous and successful Akademia school, from which our modern word "academy" derives.

<sup>8</sup> Among other things, Grok and Blok had invented a highly effective method for optimizing crop rotation schedules to maximize yields, based on a systematic analysis of data garnered from the city's extensive records of tax receipts from over a century of past harvests.

<sup>9</sup> Cape Sigeum was the site of an ancient (possibly *the* most ancient) lighthouse, at the mouth of the channel to the Black Sea near Troy, first taken by Athens circa 620 B.C., but subsequently taken by colonists from Mytilene, capital of the Isle of Lesbos. It was eventually recaptured by Athens during Pisistratus' reign. Perhaps Grok and Blok arranged for the arrival of the Athenian armada to coincide with a lunar eclipse, so as to swoop in by surprise in the dark, on a night when the bright full moonlight would normally have prevented it. Upon seeing the moon vanish, and the Athenian ships appearing out of the murk, the defending forces might have been panicked by this apparent blessing of divine favor to the Athenians. We know that Thales of Milete had already successfully predicted a solar eclipse back in 610 or 585 B.C. – although, knowing Blok and Grok, it is likely they had improved on his methods.

BLOK: Face it Grok, our abilities are needed most here in the Council, where they will do Athens the most good. The people are better off just concentrating on their labor. Let them believe that nothing exists but what they can see in front of their faces, and also the gods that, as we'll continue to pretend, manage it all. It will help the people to focus on their work, and keep them from getting too out of line.

GROK: *\*suddenly feeling very tired and depressed\**  
OK, Blok, well... You're probably right, but, I'm not feeling very well... I'm heading home for the night... *\*he wobbles a little on his feet, looking a bit pale and shaken\**

BLOK: OK, *\*pats Grok's upper arm\**  
then I'll see you tomorrow morning at the weekly reading of decrees. When it's time for new civic announcements, we'll explain the new definition of EXISTS at that time, and tell the story of how our world was picked out from all the possibilities and was blessed with a special existence, and we'll say that without that, you couldn't even see the world. That will head off any thoughts about other possible worlds before they can even get started...  
*\*Blok wants to act fast, since he knows that Grok won't likely be able to sit on a discovery this big for very long\**

*\*Grok, his head down, does not respond, and exits stage right; he feels defeated at some very deep level, moreso than than he ever has before... Blok ignores him and turns back to staring out at the sunset, continuing his never-ceasing strategizing... the curtain falls\**

## SCENE II.

It is several hours later; Grok has stopped along at a tavern for some mead, and he enters stage left; he is trudging slowly homeward, along darkened city streets, lit only by occasional patches of moonlight, but largely in shadow from the many buildings and trees. There are oil lamps in a few windows, but this particular street is quiet and nearly deserted at this time of night. A pair of soldiers in battle gear walking briskly in the opposite direction happen to pass by; one of them looks disapprovingly at Grok, whispers something inaudible to his buddy, and then they both look back in Grok's direction and laugh; but they keep walking. Grok glances back their way briefly, but he's beyond caring about such trivial matters; he ignores them. They are soon gone, and the street is once again deserted except for Grok.

Grok is looking sad, but he is muttering softly to himself, narrating his own thoughts, in a tone that is as if is is delivering a lecture absent-mindedly... Though no one but himself is around... He keeps stopping to think and ramble, taking a slow step or two, then stopping again... (This keeps him on stage long enough to finish his discourse.)

GROK: I wonder... *\*looks up at the stars\**

Among the infinite other worlds out there... I wonder if there's one... Where I never got into politics? Where I just ran my academy full-time... And taught the people logic and math, physics and biology, and this new meta-physics... Where they experienced first-hand the joys of true understanding? A world where they will never be infected with this cruel new lie from Blok that claims EXISTENCE is some mystical quality that was bestowed by the Gods on our world and our world alone, just because he wants them to think that

*\*shaking hands like pom-poms\**

“rah, rah, we're the best, and our gods' dominion is all that there is”...

*\*snorts sarcastically and shakes head\**

...Is there a world where the people were shown the glorious truth that, what EXISTENCE really means is just this: Consistency with logical truth, Beautiful internal coherence, and logical self-consistency, and simple Natural Philosophies that don't fly in the face of the plain facts that we can measure? Where their vision of Being is unfettered by the blinders of what's right in front of our noses, and instead, is no narrower than the limitless reach of all that could ever be conceived that is so true and beautiful and right? ... Surely there must be... Surely, there must be a world where I was not so foolish as to take this path I took. Where the people don't have to push so hard to enrich the city coffers, where they can enjoy, like me, exploring the unlimited realms of unfettered thought and imagination, wherever the exercise of their reason can take them... Where they can see, on paper and in their thoughts, the shores of that infinity of other worlds besides our own, that grand realm that I glimpsed, on a day so bright, for a brief moment seeing a truth and a beauty that can never be surpassed....

*\*smiles to himself\**

Yes, I *know* that that world must exist out there... Because it is a well-Formed world... A happy world... A world free of the contradictions and lies that plague our own... If *any* possible world exists to a greater degree than any other, then it is THAT world that exists more, so right and so true... And it is our OWN world that is the contradiction, the mere shadow; it's like our early half-completed theory of geometry that had to be abandoned and left on the shelf, because it began to disagree with itself at every turn...

*\*Grok now appears calm, confident\**

It also follows, even, that in the unlimited Meta-verse, there must be a world wherein vast gods look down upon a miniature duplicate of this whole broad Earth, and see me here upon it, calling up at them, saying,

*\*beckons the sky\**

“Free me from this prison! Free me from this false theory, this inconsistent realm where the rich and powerful abuse their power to take all the truth and beauty and wisdom away from the poor and the meek using lies, manipulation, and treachery! Gods, transport me to that *other* realm I can see with my mind's eye, where the people are happy and free, and all knowledge and wisdom is freely shared, and each man's burden is naught but a gladly accepted labor of love, a light burden shouldered happily, for the benefit of the be-



loved family and friends and countrymen that they hold dear... Ye Gods, I know there is some world out there where you are hearing this call, and where you have the power to recreate me in that happier palce! Leave another copy of me the Earth, if you must, but I will die happy knowing that another version of me has risen up, and has left this harsh land in his dust, and has journeyed with his humble lantern of Truth to that other place, wherein his light may shine ever more brightly."

*\*As he says this, Grok walks finally into a bright patch of moonlight shining down between the trees, and stands, looking up at the bright stars, his arms outstretched... All is still, except for Grok's head and eyes, which are pleadingly scanning the skies for a sign, his eyes blinking in chaotic rhythm with his prayer... A subtle light plays on his body and face, its soft edges shifting slightly, and then the trees nearby suddenly begin to rustle gently in the breeze... In some nearby house, wind chimes softly tinkle...\**

*\*after a few moments, the background sounds cut off abruptly, and at the same instant, all of Grok's movements cease... There is absolutely no movement anywhere on the stage. Grok is still standing, gazing skyward, arms raised, but remains totally frozen, while the following words are heard \**

NARRATOR: And at that particular moment along Grok's subjective timeline, in an infinite number of possible worlds wherein vast and inscrutable beings with near godlike powers had been watching the drama of Grok and Blok unfold with exact precision on their information processors, an infinite subset of those beings were all quite moved by Grok's plea, and pulled from their vast databanks of interesting possible universes an alternate world extremely similar to Grok's own, but wherein certain key events in Archaic history had gone decidedly different. For most of these beings, it only took them an infinitesimal fraction of their vast powers to duplicate the data structure representing Grok's quantum configuration and splice another copy of it into the encoded wavefunction of that other world, a world wherein Grok himself had not previously existed. Meanwhile, they took the data array of Grok's old universe, put it in suspend mode, and shelved it in a storage area... Since the new world seemed certain to become a lot *more* interesting very shortly, now that Grok had joined it.

*\*on stage, Grok's body suddenly slumps to the ground, lifeless, and almost simultaneously, all of the stage lights go out, and the curtain closes.\**

### **SCENE III.**

*Curtain rises with stage lights already on to reveal Grok standing – in the identical pose as during the narration - motionless on a sunny, grassy hillock. A light breeze rustles the grass, there is a sound of wind chimes in the middle distance (though ones with a deeper, calmer tone than the previous scene's) jangling from somewhere nearby. Grok suddenly*

*unfreezes, starts a bit with surprise and is looking around... He looks surprised but pleased and full of wonder. A crowd of squealing children playing comes running in from stage right, but then slows and stops near Grok to look at him curiously... He watches their approach.*

CHILD: Hi. Who are you? I'm Leo.

*\*the other kids chime in with their names also, voices overlapping.\**

CHILD: Are you new here?

GROK: *\*still rather astonished by these events\**  
Yes, my child, I think I am.

CHILD: *\*tilts his head quizzically, looking a little puzzled by Grok's uncertainty\**  
"Why are you here?"

GROK: *\*a little hesitant at first, but then seeming to reach a new certainty, smiling\**  
"I... I am a teacher."

CHILDREN: *\*excited, talking quickly, voices half-overlapping\**

"Cool!"

"We love to learn stuff!"

"Can you help teach us math?"

"I like to draw circles!" *\*this one is only age 3 or 4, if casting permits\**

"The planting is already done for today!"

"Yeah, my Mom's really good at planning!"

*\*that one is from a girl about 7, looking proud of her mother\**

"Hey, you should come see the public school house!"

GROK: *\*nodding vigorously, smiling broadly, and choking back tears of pure joy, lets them lead him away by the hand, back the way they came\**

GIRL IN FRONT:

*\*skipping happily, calls out ahead towards an unseen house offstage\**

"Mom! Guess what! We have a new teacher! He knows math!"

*\*all exit stage right\**

*(final curtain)*