

The Paradigm Discourses

“A Title Without End”

Today I invented a new word – plagiarism.

It was a nice restaurant. Actually, very nice, and...very Chinese. The team sat around a large round table with an enormous lazy Susan in the center. All the dishes had arrived in large bowls, and in front of each were their own sets of dinner ware, complete with cloth napkins wrapped in a metal holder that looked more like an arrowhead than a napkin vice.

Conversation had been excellent, jumping from one topic to another, and the team was well satiated. But when the servers started to take the plates and leftovers away, Paradigm asked them to leave the napkin holders. For some reason, all conversation came to end, something Paradigm didn't quit clue into.

Dogma looked at Curiosity, then at Reason and finally at Understanding, eye-roll implied if not actually achieved. Understanding leaned forward, elbows on table, which pretty much set the tone. Every eye was on Paradigm who suddenly moved, placing his napkin holder on the edge of the lazy Susan in front of him, pointed to the left. Then he grabbed Reason's napkin holder and placed it on the edge of the lazy Susan in front of Reason, also pointing left, and did likewise with Curiosity's. There were now three napkin holders all pointing left, one in front of Reason, another in front of himself, and the third one in front of Curiosity.

He looked at the other seven members of the team as if they were dim witted. After a brief pause, he just shrugged. Understanding grinned. He grabbed his napkin holder and placed it on the edge of the lazy Susan in front of him, turning it so it too pointed to the left. He motioned to the rest of the team, who, some more reluctantly than others, followed suit.

Then, there they were, ten napkin holders all pointing to the left. Paradigm put the lazy Susan into motion, a stately rotation, not so fast as to allow centrifugal force to overcome friction, so they all stayed put and just went round and round, until the lazy Susan came to a gradual halt.

Paradigm didn't say anything, just let a grin naturally take over his face.

Dogma was the first to break, “Well?”

Reason laughed, slapped Paradigm on the shoulder, “Does your little exercise have a purpose other than torturing Dogma?”

“I think so.” He paused. “For some weeks now, I have been arguing that we don't really understand self-reference. I was just wondering if we understood infinity any better, and if we don't, if the reason might be the same in both cases. What if,” he looked around the table, “what if, self-reference is just a shorthand for infinity?”

Curiosity, “If we don't understand the one, we won't understand the other?”

Reason, “No, he in typical fashion, is claiming something stronger. They have to be understood together.”

Mathematics, “If you are claiming that infinity and self-reference are the same thing, I think that is overreach, but we do have this conjecture that *potential* infinities, (I can just add one more)

might be different from *completed* infinities (the set of integers). The latter might map to self-reference, one-to-one – maybe. Theory, any thoughts?”

“Yes, but it is hardly professional – I was just musing how Experiment would test any theories about infinities, of any kind.”

“Oh, challenge accepted my noble nemesis.”

Logic reached out and removed one napkin holder. “Now there is an odd number. Since they kind of look like NOT gates, let them represent NOT gates for the moment, each one feeding the next – with 10 the form was indeterminate, but with 9 it is paradoxical.”

Reason reached out, fast as a snake, and removed another, “Not anymore, now it’s indeterminate again.”

Theory and Experiment, with uncanny synchronization, each removed another napkin holder, and in near unison, “Still indeterminate.”

Understanding reached out but didn’t touch one, just waited, but pointedly looked at both Curiosity and Proof. So compelled, they both reached out and following Understanding’s lead, also removed another napkin holder. That left three. Back to being paradoxical.

Dogma, “Well that clinches it, our understanding has not improved one iota. You claimed a completed infinity then proceeded to demonstrate that it was both paradoxical and indeterminate all at the same time. Thank you for clearing that up for me. What an epiphany.” He reached out and gave the lazy Susan a hard spin, this time hard enough to eject the remaining napkin holders, “Problem solved, no more self-reference, no more infinities – the way it should be.”