The Logic of Love
Chapter 18: The Geometry Analogy

John the Builder, architect for the Tower of Babel(5), was calmly introspective as the workers, speaking incomprehensibly to each other, left the construction site. The foreman, David, was nonplussed. In exasperation he turned to John and said, "We hoped this would bring us into the presence of God, but instead our search for God has only incurred his wrath. Are you not even the least bit disturbed to watch all that we have dreamed of creating be laid to waste?"

"This is not God's wrath," admonished John. "Rather, it is his loving protection. Our reach now exceeds our grasp. But one day, when we have more fully grown as a people, we shall experience what we now seek. The nourishment of meat is not given to babies, nor does God allow us to experience greater spiritual stature before we can gracefully experience the lesser state.

"Besides, God has still left us with one language in common—the very language by which I conceived this enterprise. To some degree, we all still speak the language of mathematics. Someday, when we build with greater love than we have available to us today, this language will once again be used to complete that which we have started."

Note 5: The story of the Tower of Babel comes from the Old Testament. It says that at the dawn of human history everyone spoke the same language. The people tried to build a tower high enough to reach God. For the presumptuousness of their endeavor, God punished them by making them each speak a different language. Genesis 11:4-9.

One of the beauties of mathematics is that once we understand the language, it does not tend to suffer misinterpretation. Though the language of mathematics is limited in scope, within its circumscribed realm, we enjoy a precision of mutual understanding that is not found with any other form of communication. Because mathematics enjoys such universally consistent interpretation, this language provides the potential for creating wonderfully precise analogies. This precision is especially useful for considering subject matter that is highly subjective and easily misinterpreted. For this reason, the language of mathematics, more specifically the field of geometry, will be used to clarify the nature of our relationship to the gnostic paradigms—atheism, agnosticism, and theism.

In geometry there are three different models for mapping three-dimensional space. Using these models to understand the gnostic paradigms is valuable because just as the existence of God cannot be proven, neither can it be shown that any one of the geometric models reflects objective reality better than the other two. In order to appreciate the analogy, only an elementary understanding of these geometric models is necessary. This will not be the least bit complicated. Anyone left with emotional scars from a past course in geometry will not have to relive those horrors!

First, let's look at plane geometry. Plane geometry uses the "x," "y," and "z" axes for the purpose of mapping three-dimensional space. The "x" and "y" axes create the horizontal plane by quantifying breadth and depth. The "z" axis quantifies the dimension of height. (See Illustration 1.)
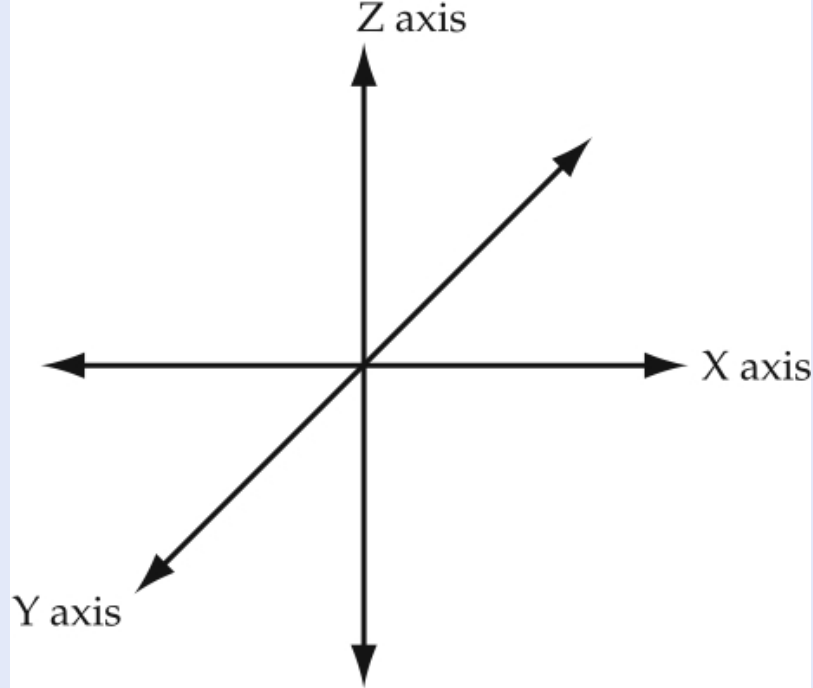
Illustration 1

Axioms are propositions that are accepted as true without proof for the sake of studying the consequences that follow from them. There are certain axioms associated with plane geometry. From this set of axioms, certain things can be deduced. For instance, using the axioms of plane geometry, we can deduce that the sum of the angles of any triangle will always equal exactly 180°. Plane geometry works great for activities such as framing a house. As long as the distances involved do not approach global or universal proportions, getting out your protractor and measuring the angles of any triangle will always yield a sum of 180°. (See Illustration 2.)
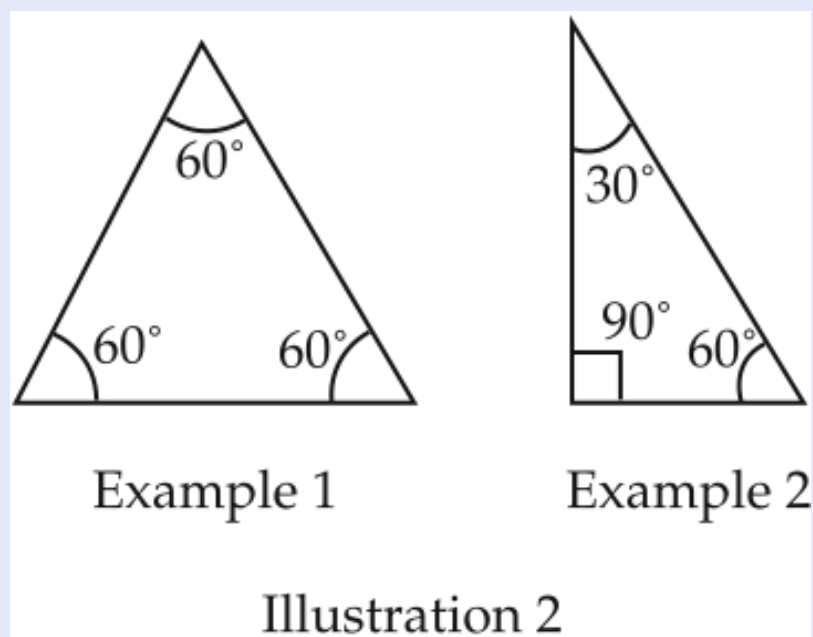

Example 1   Example 2

Illustration 2

Another type of geometry is called spherical geometry. When distances reach global proportions (or when a sphere is being used to represent a plane), measurements yield results consistent with spherical geometry. Here the plane is defined not by an "x," "y," intersection of axes, but rather by specifying a point and a radius. By rotating the radius in all directions around the point, a plane is defined in the shape of a sphere. Different planes can be defined by lengthening or shortening the radius. (See Illustration 3.) From the axioms of spherical geometry, we can deduce that all triangles will have more than 180°. Consider a globe. Starting at the North Pole, imagine a line going down to the equator; travel any distance along the equator, then head back up to the North Pole. Note that the two angles from the equator up to the North Pole each equal 90°. Therefore, the total number of degrees in this triangle will be 180° plus the number of degrees in the angle at the North Pole. If we are sailing around the world or otherwise using the surface of a sphere as a plane, then the axioms of spherical geometry are very well suited to our needs. (See Illustration 4.)
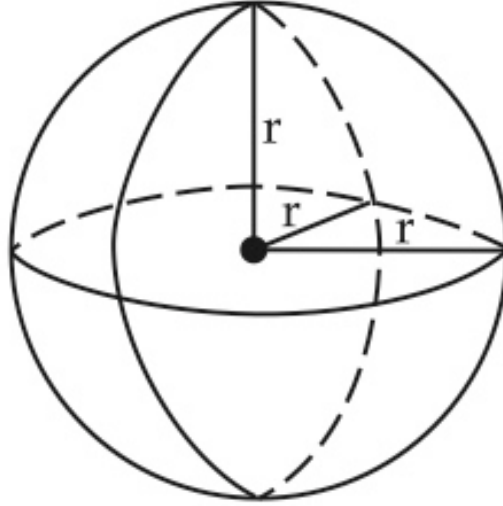
A sphere with a one inch radius.

r = one inch

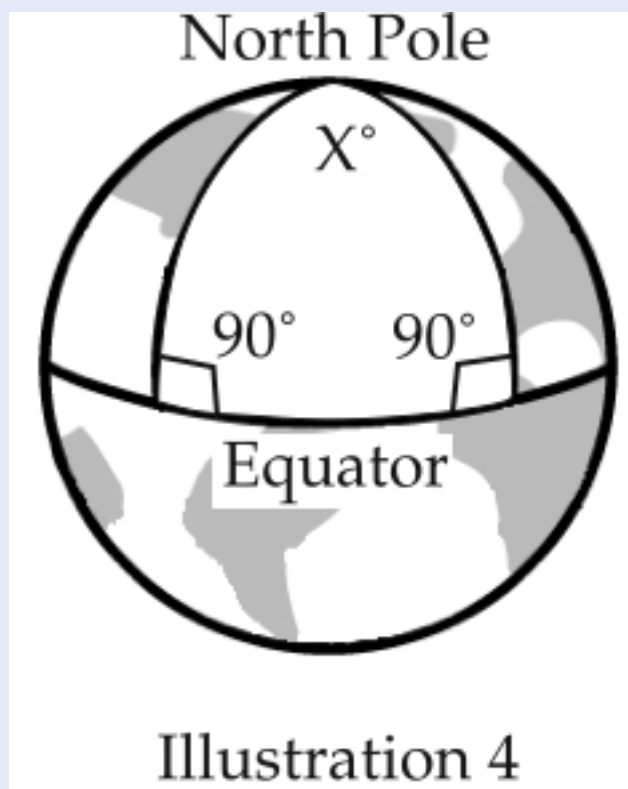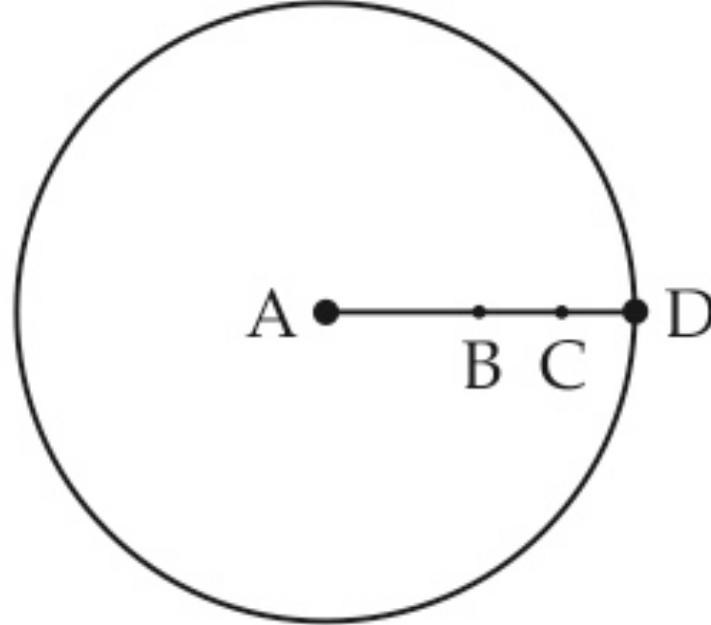Illustration 3

North Pole

X°

90°   90°

Equator

Illustration 4

The third type of geometry is called hyperbolic geometry. Hyperbolic geometry defines the plane as the interior points of a circle. The interior points of a sphere define three-dimensional space. In this geometric model, distance is "compacted" as you get closer to the outer edge. To see how this works, we need to define four points. The first point, "A," will be the center. The second point, "D," will be a point on the edge of the circle. The third point, "B," will be at the midpoint between A and D. And the fourth point, "C," will be the midpoint between B and D. In hyperbolic geometry, the distance between A and B is understood to equal the distance between B and C. Distances become condensed as we approach the edge of the circle. (See Illustration 5.) In this geometry, all triangles have less than 180°. When measuring distances that approach and exceed galactic proportion, the measurements will be consistent with hyperbolic geometry.

distance AB = distance BC

Illustration 5

The important thing to remember about these geometric models is that even though each one is internally consistent, they are also mutually exclusive. Due to the way terms are defined, there can be no common language between them once one has chosen to use a particular model. Although the concept of the triangle exists in each of the three models, an actual triangle is quite different in each model. A triangle must have 180°, more than 180° or less than 180°; these concepts cannot be combined in any meaningful way.

At this point, all we have done is to think abstractly about the different geometric models. We have not applied them to any real world situation (and we're not going to). The preceding discussion has been a metalanguage discussion–a language used for the purpose of explaining the three different languages of the geometric models.

Having developed a sufficient appreciation of the three geometric models that can be used for mapping spatial relationships, we can now compare and contrast these models with the gnostic paradigms.

The first similarity is that both the geometric models and the gnostic paradigms, as collectives, are comprehensive, all-inclusive, and mutually exclusive. The geometric models are comprehensive in that they each fully satisfy the requirements for mathematically mapping the coordinates of three-dimensional space. The gnostic paradigms address our fundamental relationship to life as it relates to the nature of objective reality; this is as comprehensive as comprehensive gets. The geometric models are all-inclusive in that neither real world experience nor abstract reasoning suggests that any other comprehensive geometric models exist. The gnostic paradigms are all-inclusive because, given the question of whether God exists, "yes," "no," and "I don't know" exhaust the possible answers to that question. The mutually exclusive nature of the geometric models has already been addressed. The mutually exclusive nature of "yes," "no," and "I don't know" is self-evident.

The second similarity is that the three geometric models and the three gnostic paradigms are each internally consistent. The internal consistency of the gnostic paradigms is admittedly not open to the same objective scrutiny that can be used for analyzing the geometric models. The ideas that have been presented in support of the internal consistency of theism cannot hope to attain the level of consensual appreciation attained with the geometric models. Additionally, as was stated in the introduction, the internal consistency of atheism and agnosticism is being assumed. For these reasons, the assumption of internal consistency for the gnostic paradigms may at first seem like too large a *philosophic leap*, one that can seriously weaken the analogy being made to the geometric models.

What we are looking at here, however, are choices about issues that cannot be proven. The only assumption is that people choose for themselves the paradigm that they find to be reasonably consistent with their view of life. Therefore, there is not a huge philosophic leap being taken by assuming the internal consistency of atheism and agnosticism. Rather, we are merely accepting that these positions are adopted by some and that for those who hold such positions, the internal

consistency of these positions is personally sufficient.

As for the internal consistency of theism, the question is not one of whether the material presented here satisfies the mind of everyone who holds a doctoral degree in philosophy. This is no time to look to "experts" for an answer. (Nor am I suggesting that you approach this material any less critically than someone who holds a doctoral degree in philosophy.) What matters is that, for whatever reasons, you are satisfied with the internal consistency of theism. It is *your experience* and *your reasoning* that are relevant. Because of the alogical and subjective nature of some of the concepts associated with theism, and because of the profoundly personal nature of this aspect of our lives, it is imperative to apply all of our tools for understanding–logic, intuition, and experience.

The third and most important similarity between the geometric models and the gnostic paradigms is that no logical proof can establish any of them as representing objective reality. Therefore, the choice to use one of the geometric models or to choose one of the gnostic paradigms is based solely on personal considerations. There are no constraints, no requirements. Freewill reigns supreme. *Subjective values determine the direction we take.*

In some ways, however, choosing between the gnostic paradigms is exactly the opposite of choosing to apply one of the geometric models. For starters, in life we do not have the luxury of engaging in a metalanguage discussion as we can with the geometric models. We can talk about the models theoretically because we are not obliged to apply them to any particular situation. Because we do not have to be constantly applying the geometric models, we can engage in a metalanguage discussion about them. Our lives, however, are always applied lives. Life is not suspended while we ponder the nature of our existence.

Even agnosticism, which superficially appears to be a "non choice," really is a choice. Agnosticism suggests that it would be unwise to take a position on the subject of God's existence. This reflects a subjective interpretation and evaluation of life experience and, as such, is a manifestation of freewill choice. Because we have been inquiring into the wisdom of having faith in God, the language of agnosticism (the "I don't know" language) has been the language of choice.

The implication of this is that *our experience of life is conditioned by our choice.* Interpretations and evaluations of life experience are conditioned by the gnostic paradigm we choose to live in. This is completely dissimilar to consideration of the geometric models because they do not effect our interpretive experience of the essence and meaning of life. Geometric models are tools; theistic paradigms are a way of life.

The challenge with the geometric models is choosing which one will be easiest to apply in a given situation. There is no reason to pick any one of the geometric models as most representative of objective reality. Even though they are mutually exclusive on a paradigmatic level, on a practical level the value of each one can be enjoyed simultaneously. Their mutually exclusive nature does not diminish their independent value. Even if science proved one of the models to be the most accurate reflection of objective reality, we would still use one of the others when a particular application called for it. When that application was over, we would proceed with our lives happy that someone else had figured out the equations so that all we had to do was plug in the numbers.

Bouncing around between the gnostic paradigms on a daily basis is not so satisfying as jumping from one geometric model to the next. Unlike the geometric models, the gnostic paradigms are interpretive responses related to the essence and meaning of life. Even agnosticism is an applied wisdom. The gnostic paradigms take on the psychological dynamics of knowledge because they *are* applied wisdom. Consequently, there is a lot more at stake in choosing between gnostic paradigms than geometric models. The mutually exclusive nature of the gnostic paradigms makes it terribly hard on the psyche to vacillate between them. With the geometric models, the value of one does not exclude the value of the others. With the gnostic paradigms, to live by one we must personally (though not necessarily intellectually) forsake the value of the other two.