

TechNews

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF
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The mission of TechNews is to promote student discussion and bolster the IIT community by providing a newspaper that is highly accessible, a stalwart of journalistic integrity, and a student forum. TechNews is a dedicated to the belief that a strong campus newspaper is essential to a strong campus community.

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SUBMISSIONS

TechNews is published on the Tuesday of each week of the academic year. Deadline for all submissions and announcements is 11:59 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. Articles, photos, and illustrations must be submitted electronically to the TechNews website at technewsiit.com.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The editors reserve the right to determine if submitted material meets TechNews' policy and standards.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor may be submitted by anyone, but are subject to review by the editor-in-chief. All letters-to-the-editor become the property of TechNews upon submission. TechNews does not accept or publish anonymous letters.

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Maybe it's just me...

Naked lies, philosophy

By Chris Roberts

COPY EDITOR & LAYOUT EDITOR

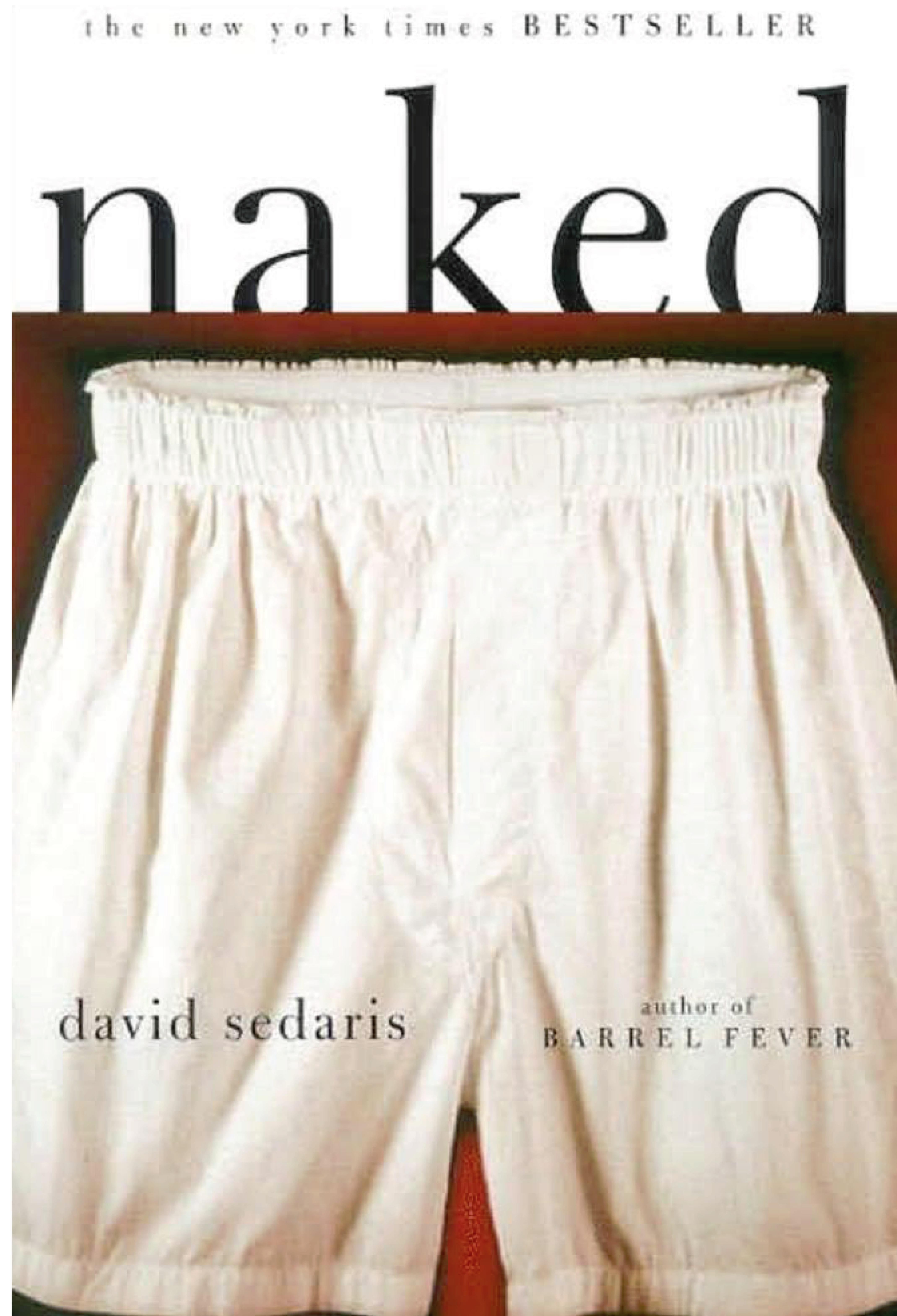
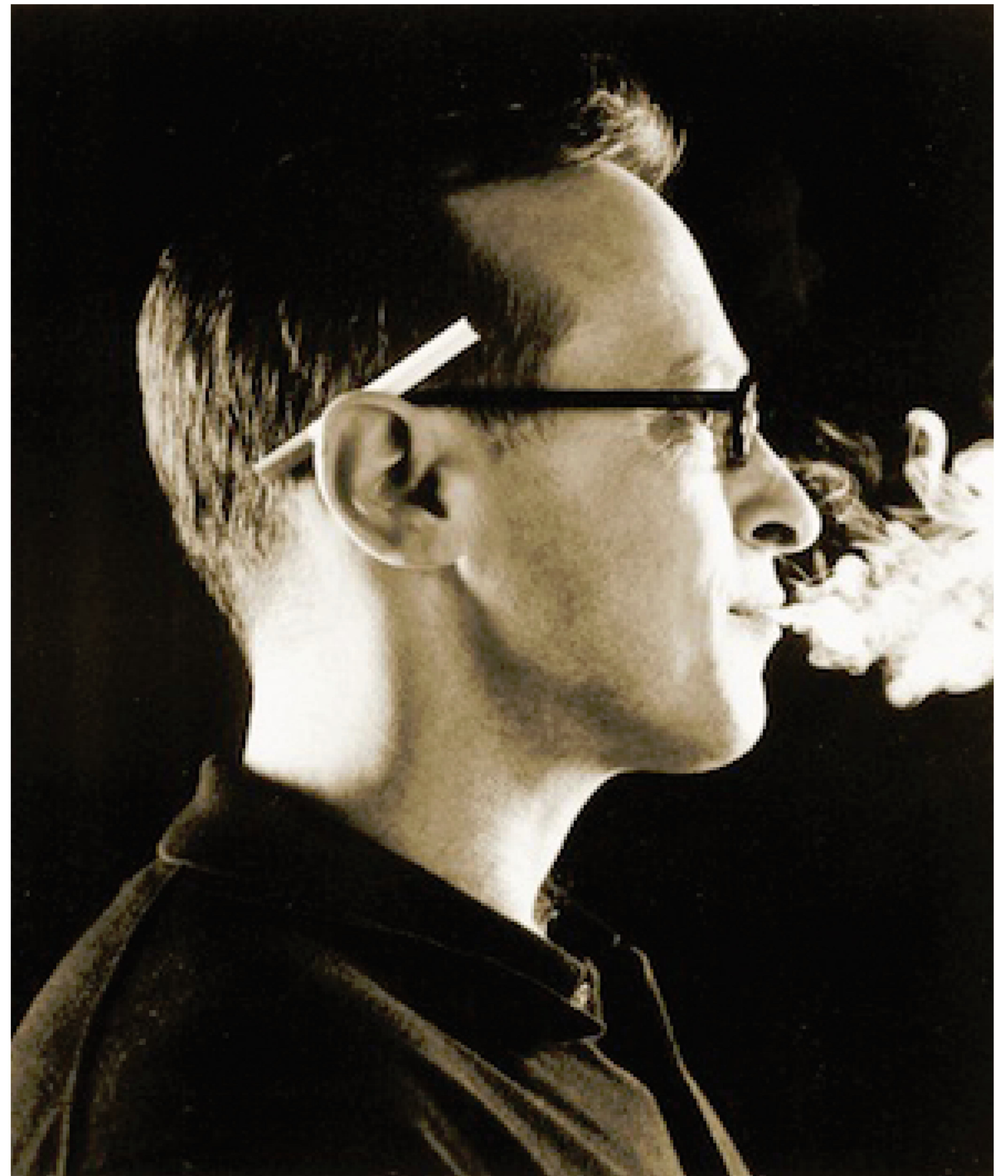
I had an argument with a (non-IIT) philosophy instructor last week.

The argument began as a discussion about the work of writer and humorist David Sedaris, whose most recent work, "Naked," has been shown to contain many deliberate exaggerations and factual inaccuracies (or lies, as they used to be called) despite the fact that "Naked" was being marketed as autobiographical. Whole situations were fabricated; real people were given false quotes so as to more effectively convey points Sedaris wished to make, adding a greater emotional punch to a "true" story than an audience might otherwise have taken from outright fiction.

The discussion focused on whether Sedaris was justified in packaging falsehoods as facts (or rather truth... we will get to that later) in order to more effectively engage readers on an emotional level. As you may guess by my wording and tone, I am decidedly against Sedaris on this topic.

However, the discussion swiftly changed course when a college philosophy instructor took issue with my claim that things do not cease being what they are because of how one feels toward them. For example: loving Watchmen will not make it a documentary; disliking organic chemistry classes will not change the properties of 1,2-dichloroethane.

This instructor had a differing view. He claimed that things are ever only what humans feel about them. I tried to counter by pointing to physical realities which remain indifferent to the ever-shifting emotions of humans, to which he boldly replied, "objectivity IS a myth."



For a moment, I was stunned. Given the academic credentials of my opponent, I was expecting an epic duel in which I would be deftly disarmed and run through by superior knowledge and logic. Instead, I found myself feeling rather like Napoleon trying to invade Russia: vast emptiness as far as the eye can see, with no sign of any real opposition or enemy strategy in sight. The primary source of his argument was a video of two people discussing human consciousness, while apparently trying to see which of them could agree with the other the most times, a complete intellectual echo chamber.

It was brought to my attention that my opponent was likely relying upon solipsism: the notion that nothing can be adequately demonstrated to exist outside of any given human's subjective perspective. In other words, physical reality does not objectively exist. It was then that I realized that we were not two people having an intellectual battle at the same location. We were in completely different dimensions of thought, each wondering how the other could possibly believe what they were saying was true.

This confusing tangent succeeded in doing two things.

First, it demonstrated that, despite the diversity of education that my major, science journalism, requires, there is always new material to take into consideration.

Second, it showed that not all new material is useful. Not only is solipsism antimatter to what I do, talk about physical reality, but I suspect that on some level my opponent does not believe all of the implications of it himself. That is unless, instead of using his hands to type messages on physical computer hardware to be transmitted to me via an objectively-existent electrical network, he was using some sort of upgraded Care Bear Stare to convey his feelings directly to me.

Then again, maybe it's just me...

Images courtesy of thetaleofsirbob.blogspot.com & heebmagazine.com