
THE PROSECUTION

Prosecutor:

“Your honor, we call Dr. Sidney Freud to the stand.”

(The witness takes the stand and is sworn.)

“Dr. Freud, do you know the defendant Flat-Earther Elliot?”

Dr. Freud:

“Yes, Elliot has been a patient of mine for the past few weeks.”

Prosecutor:

“Can you elaborate on Elliot’s condition? Exactly why does he need your professional help?”

Dr. Freud:

“Elliot lacks the normal cognitive ability to focus on the daily tasks of living and could be a danger to himself or others. From his own admission, he spends most of the day sitting at his computer looking for information on various conspiracy theories. Most of these theories are rooted in denialism. So in Elliot's case, he denies not only the planet Earth, but the solar system and almost everything known to science.”

Prosecutor:

"Doctor, how did this case come to your attention?"

Dr. Freud:

"From the official report, it was about three weeks ago that our local fire department responded to a fire at Elliot's house. Apparently the defendant’s stove was burning. When the paramedics arrived, they found Elliot unconscious and slumped over his computer keyboard.”

Prosecutor:

"And were there any other pertinent circumstances of concern?"

Dr. Freud:

"The report did mention that the house was cluttered. They found quite a few empty bottles of a product called *5 Hour Energy* and also empty packages of *NoDoz* near his computer, which was still running."

Prosecutor:

"OK, and what type of material had he been viewing?"

Dr. Freud:

"The sheriff's report stated that he had last viewed a website called the *International Flat Earth Research Society*."

Prosecutor:

"Flat Earth So-ci-ety?"

(The prosecutor pauses to reflect on the apparent oddity of that name.)

"Alright doctor, what is your psychiatric diagnosis for Elliot's condition?"

Dr. Freud:

"Right now it's entered as an Unspecified Mental Disorder. I've been told that our psychiatric manual will soon include a specific diagnosis for flat-earth disorder in as much as a growing number of people are now at risk for this condition. It's really an altered state of consciousness where individuals see themselves in a flat domed world, isolated and protected, like a moth in a cocoon."

(The prosecutor agrees by nodding his head up and down, letting the jury ponder this scenario.)

Prosecutor:

"Did you say a flat doomed world?"

(The doctor laughs.)

Dr. Freud:

"No not doomed, domed--like those geodesic dome homes

that some preppers buy. Flat-earthers are like preppers in that way. They're like conspiracy theorists who search the Internet, incessantly looking for survival tactics. In Elliot's case he believes he is perfectly sane, but of course that fact only confirms his insanity. It's also important to note that Internet addiction is clearly a secondary issue here. In his hours on-line, Elliot has managed to fool quite a lot of people, and this naturally feeds his superiority complex."

Prosecutor:

"How so?"

Dr. Freud:

"Well, Elliot's YouTube channel is loaded with material critical of the heliocentric planetary system and NASA. His NASA conspiracy theories appear to be a growing subject that has attracted even more science deniers. It's clear that his growing list of YouTube subscribers only nourish his false view of reality."

Prosecutor:

"Dr. Freud, what is your recommendation for Elliot's future treatment?"

Dr. Freud:

"Elliot requires careful observation, more brain scans and testing for possible chemical imbalances. We anticipate six weeks at our Chattahoochee counseling center to complete the necessary tests and therapy."

(Flat-Earther Elliot suddenly stands and points to the doctor. He appears agitated.)

Flat-Earther Elliot:

"I know your treatments, Olanzapine and then scramble my brains with your electro-convulsive zapper, like they did to Stephen Hawking when he found the truth, right?"

(Snickers erupt from the court gallery. The bailiff adjusts his holster and steps cautiously toward the defense

table. The judge slams down his gavel and bears down on the defendant.)

Judge:

“Order in the court! The defendant will sit down and remain silent until spoken to. Do you understand, son?”

(Dead silence follows.)

“Mr. Prosecutor, proceed.”

Prosecutor:

“No further questions for Dr. Freud. Your honor, we call Dr. Russell I. Weinstein to the stand.”

Defense:

“Objection, Judge. We object to this witness. Not to his qualifications, but his career and livelihood are intimately intertwined with the heliocentric theory. Therefore, we believe he has a strong incentive to bias his remarks in favor of the state.”

Judge:

“Counsel, I trust the doctor’s objectivity. Let’s see what he has to say before we judge him.”

(The judge motions to the clerk to proceed with the oath. The witness is sworn. The prosecutor holds up a book.)

Prosecutor:

“Dr. Weinstein, are you the author of this book, *The Fundamentals of Science?*”

Dr. Weinstein:

“Yes sir.”

Prosecutor:

“Doctor, the study of astronomy and physics has dominated science for hundreds of years. Can you explain to the court why we know the planet Earth is a sphere rotating in space and why Flat-Earther Elliot labors under the invalidated hypothesis of a flat and stationary earth?”

Dr. Weinstein:

“Certainly, the doctrine of Earth’s convexity was established by Eratosthenes almost 2200 years ago. Copernicus, Brahe, and Kepler further refined the concept. Newton made sense of the planetary system by defining gravity. Bessel and Gill refined our measurements. Einstein’s relativistic cosmology showed us that the sun also moves throughout the universe, so technically, heliocentricity is now a-centricity. Today we have evidence from NASA that confirms this heliocentric theory proposed by the early physicists.”

Prosecutor:

“Thank you doctor. You say the roots of our scientific knowledge extend back more than 2000 years to Eratosthenes. I believe you have prepared a brief demonstration of his experiment proving Earth to be a celestial globe?”

Dr. Weinstein:

“Yes indeed.”

(A large white globe is rolled in view of the judge and jury. Two small sticks are protruding from the globe a few inches apart. The courtroom lights are dimmed. Dr. Weinstein’s assistant shines a flashlight directly over one of the sticks.)

“Here we see how Eratosthenes viewed an illuminated stick at 12 noon. Of course it produced no shadow as you see here. He wondered if the sun at noon in some distant part of the world would produce the same effect. Well, through a lot of effort he discovered what we see here. The first stick has no shadow, but the second one has a slight shadow caused by the curve of the planet. From this insight, he measured the angle of the shadow of the distant column and the used simple trigonometry to calculate earth’s circumference.”

Prosecutor:

“Very ingenious, but how can the common man be assured that all this science is accurate and we do indeed live on a spherical planet? After all, not everyone is a master of trigonometry and physics.”

Dr. Weinstein:

“Well, the common sailor has long realized that ships go out to sea only to disappear slowly over the horizon. First the lower part of the ship disappears, then the top mast finally fades below the earth’s curvature as the ship moves out to sea and around the globe.”

Prosecutor:

"Around the globe, very well. And just how did early scientists come to scientifically verify Earth as a sphere?"

Dr. Weinstein:

“Well, students of science know that Galileo’s observation of Jupiter’s moons, perceived to be spheres revolving around Jupiter, formed the basis for his verification of the Copernican theory that we do the same as we circle the sun.”

“Additionally, our own moon circles the earth approximately once per month. This gives great credence to our knowledge that we live in a cyclic system of revolving heavenly bodies. The fact that the moon shows Earth’s curvature during eclipses adds to the evidence that we live on a spherical earth in motion around the sun. I myself can confirm that the earth is indeed round, having flown around the globe several times going to various conferences.”

(The prosecutor looks at the globe resting on his table. He spins it as before.)

Prosecutor:

“Dr. Weinstein, are you saying that ships and planes demonstrate our spherical planet when they circumnavigate the earth?”