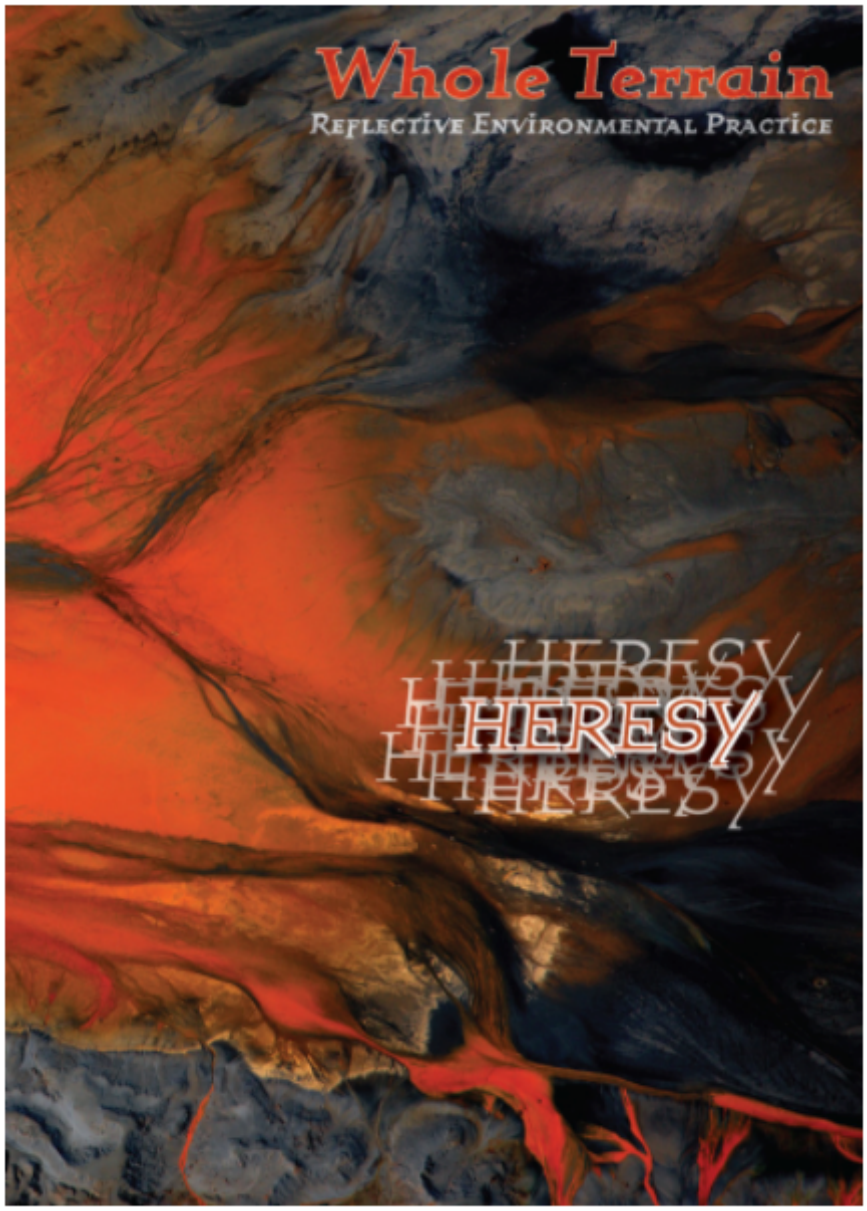
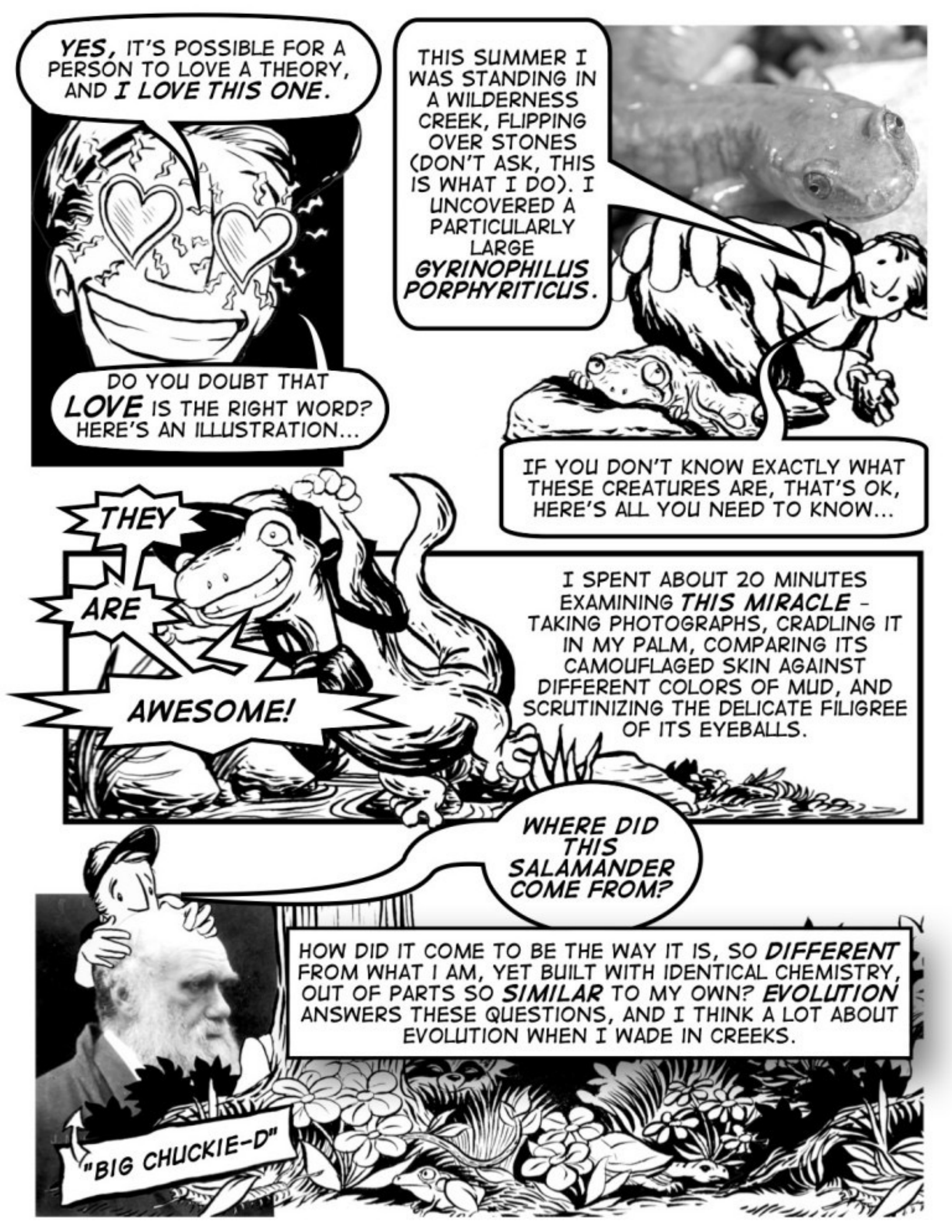
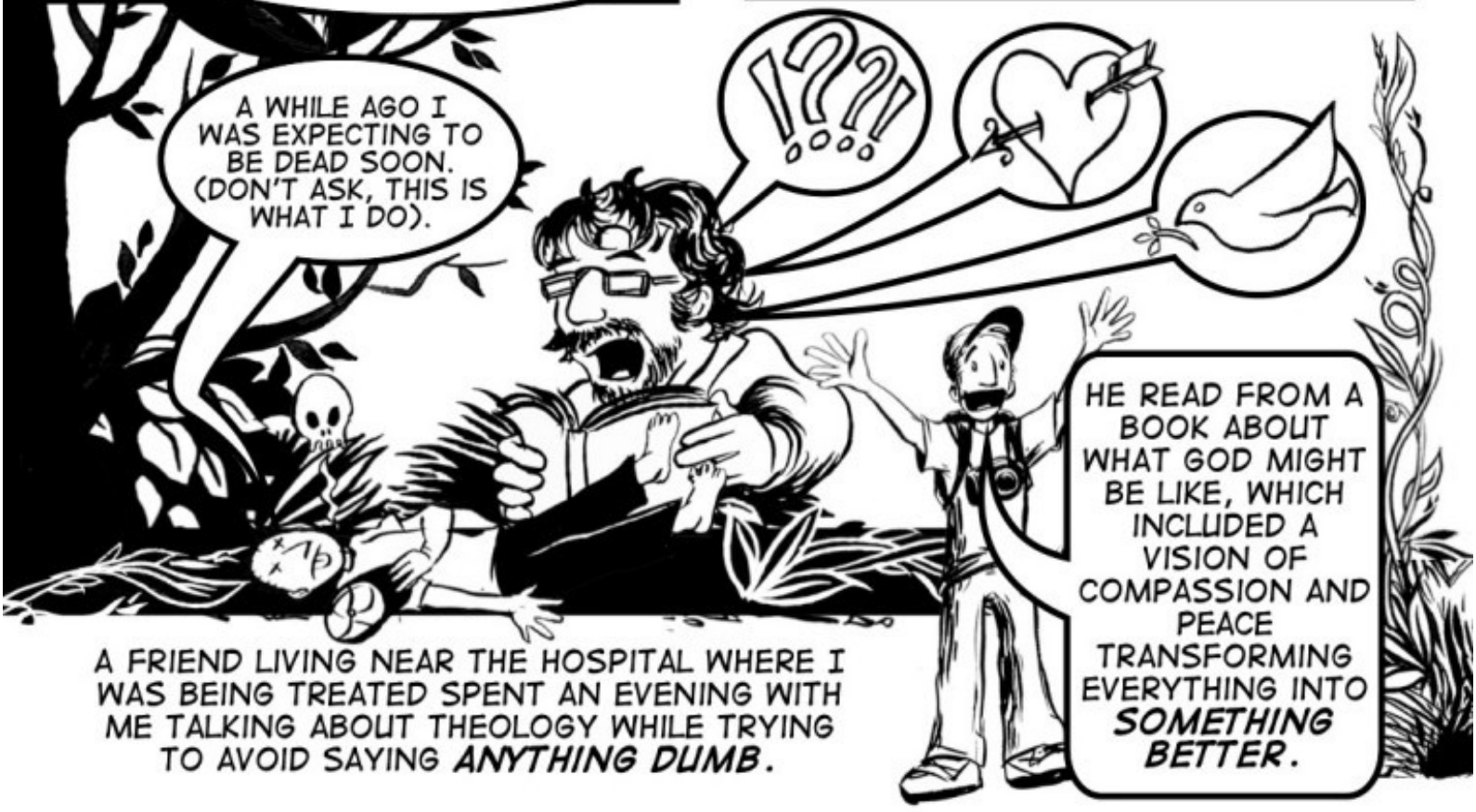


2013, "Heresies," *Whole Terrain vol. 20,* Antioch University New England
© Dave Huth (Writer, illustrator)

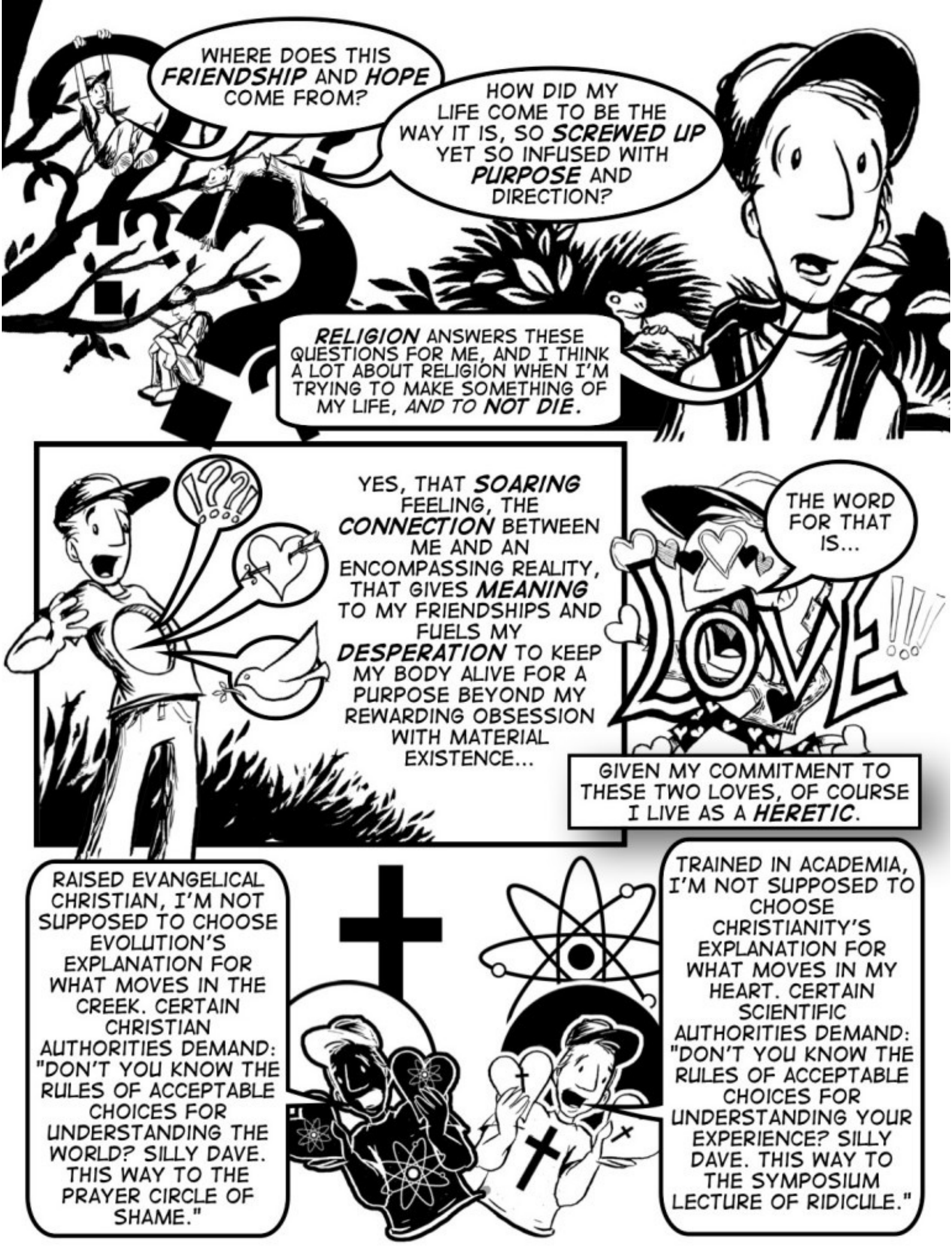
I'M TOLD THAT THE GREEK WORD "HAIRESIS" MEANS "TO CHOOSE." IT'S WHERE WE GET THE ENGLISH WORD "HERESY."
I'M SURPRISED BY THIS...
I'D HAVE GUESSED THE ROOT OF HERESY TO MEAN "EVIL" OR "RAT-NASTY" OR "SPIT UPON BY THE GODS" OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
HERESY
BUT A HERETIC IS SIMPLY SOMEONE WHO'S MADE A CHOICE.
THIS IS ME TALKIN' AT YOU!
SURE, THE CONNOTATION IS USUALLY "THE WRONG CHOICE." BUT STILL - I'M HAPPY TO KNOW THIS, CONSIDERING THE PROFOUNDLY HERETICAL LIFE I LIVE.
HERESIES
" A WORDS & PICTURES STORY BY DAVE HUTH "
LOOK AT ME!
I'M DESCENDED FROM A COMMON ANCESTOR WITH MONKEYS - TURTLES - PALM TREES - E. COLI!
HERESY, YOU ASK? OF COURSE NOT! THIS IS ORTHODOX SCIENTIFIC THEORY.
AND I LOVE IT!!!

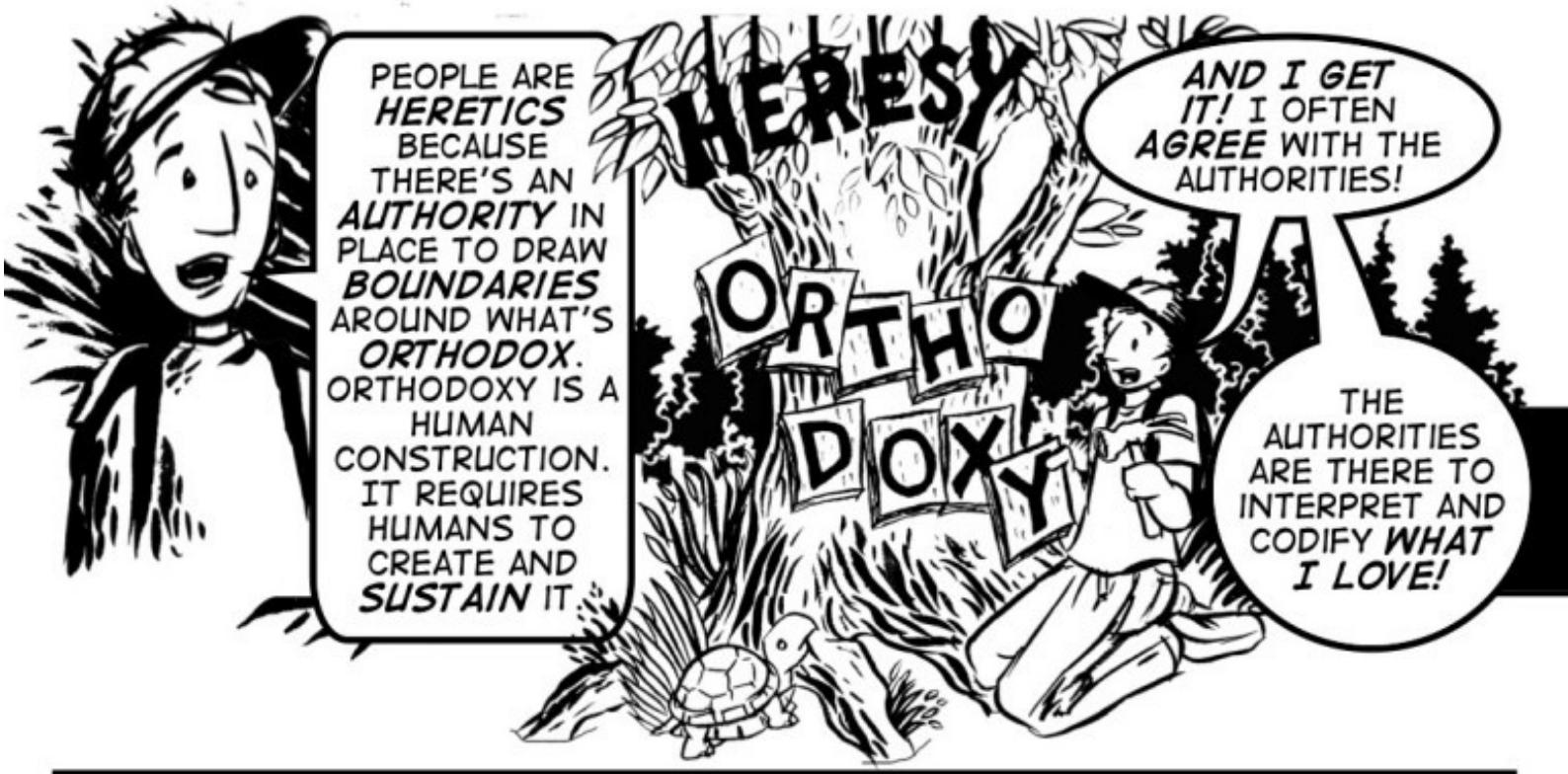

YES, IT'S POSSIBLE FOR A PERSON TO LOVE A THEORY, AND I LOVE THIS ONE.
DO YOU DOUBT THAT LOVE IS THE RIGHT WORD? HERE'S AN ILLUSTRATION...
THIS SUMMER I WAS STANDING IN A WILDERNESS CREEK, FLIPPING OVER STONES (DON'T ASK, THIS IS WHAT I DO). I UNCOVERED A PARTICULARLY LARGE GYRINOPHILUS PORPHYRITICUS.
IF YOU DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THESE CREATURES ARE, THAT'S OK, HERE'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW...
THEY ARE AWESOME!
I SPENT ABOUT 20 MINUTES EXAMINING THIS MIRACLE - TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS, CRADLING IT IN MY PALM, COMPARING ITS CAMOUFLAGED SKIN AGAINST DIFFERENT COLORS OF MUD, AND SCRUTINIZING THE DELICATE FILIGREE OF ITS EYEBALLS.
WHERE DID THIS SALAMANDER COME FROM?
HOW DID IT COME TO BE THE WAY IT IS, SO DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I AM, YET BUILT WITH IDENTICAL CHEMISTRY, OUT OF PARTS SO SIMILAR TO MY OWN? EVOLUTION ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS, AND I THINK A LOT ABOUT EVOLUTION WHEN I WADE IN CREEKS.
"BIG CHUCKIE-D"

I'M *TESTIFYING* THAT THE SOARING FEELING EVOLUTION PROVOKES, WHICH *OVERWHELMS* ME WITH THE INARTICULABLE SPLENDOR OF LIFE, SIMULTANEOUSLY SITUATING ME IN CONTINUITY WITH THAT SPLENDOR, PRODUCES *A TRANSPORTED CONDITION* THAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED USING THE WORD...



A FRIEND LIVING NEAR THE HOSPITAL WHERE I WAS BEING TREATED SPENT AN EVENING WITH ME TALKING ABOUT THEOLOGY WHILE TRYING TO AVOID SAYING *ANYTHING DUMB.*


WHERE DOES THIS FRIENDSHIP AND HOPE COME FROM?
HOW DID MY LIFE COME TO BE THE WAY IT IS, SO SCREWED UP YET SO INFUSED WITH PURPOSE AND DIRECTION?
RELIGION ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS FOR ME, AND I THINK A LOT ABOUT RELIGION WHEN I'M TRYING TO MAKE SOMETHING OF MY LIFE, AND TO NOT DIE.
!?!?!
YES, THAT SOARING FEELING, THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ME AND AN ENCOMPASSING REALITY, THAT GIVES MEANING TO MY FRIENDSHIPS AND FUELS MY DESPERATION TO KEEP MY BODY ALIVE FOR A PURPOSE BEYOND MY REWARDING OBSESSION WITH MATERIAL EXISTENCE...
THE WORD FOR THAT IS...
LOVE!!!
GIVEN MY COMMITMENT TO THESE TWO LOVES, OF COURSE I LIVE AS A HERETIC.
RAISED EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN, I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO CHOOSE EVOLUTION'S EXPLANATION FOR WHAT MOVES IN THE CREEK. CERTAIN CHRISTIAN AUTHORITIES DEMAND: "DON'T YOU KNOW THE RULES OF ACCEPTABLE CHOICES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD? SILLY DAVE. THIS WAY TO THE PRAYER CIRCLE OF SHAME."
TRAINED IN ACADEMIA, I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO CHOOSE CHRISTIANITY'S EXPLANATION FOR WHAT MOVES IN MY HEART. CERTAIN SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITIES DEMAND: "DON'T YOU KNOW THE RULES OF ACCEPTABLE CHOICES FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE? SILLY DAVE. THIS WAY TO THE SYMPOSIUM LECTURE OF RIDICULE."



ULTIMATELY, THOUGH, MY ALLEGIANCE IS NOT TO THE AUTHORITIES,

BUT TO THE FORCES FOR GOOD THAT EACH AUTHORITY REPRESENTS.

WHAT'S INARGUABLY, SELF-EVIDENTLY TRUE FROM MY SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE IS THAT I EXIST. THE TOTAL PACKAGE OF WHO I AM HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY BOTH EVOLUTION AND RELIGION.

WHAT AM I TO DO? WHAT WILL BECOME OF MY HERETICAL EXISTENCE?

I CAN IMAGINE *TWO POSSIBLE FUTURES.*

#1

MAYBE HISTORY WILL VIEW ME AS A *TRANSITIONAL ORGANISM*, EVOLVING TOWARD FUTURE RESOLUTION. *MY KIDS* MIGHT HAVE A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION AND A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF EVOLUTION, WHICH *INTEGRATE* VIA THE HINDSIGHT WE'LL CALL "PROGRESS."

the Future!

#2

OR MAYBE HISTORY WILL LOOK BACK AT ME WITH PITY. POOR, MALADAPTIVE ORGANISM. WANTING TWO MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WAYS OF BEING, ACCOMMODATING THE WORST IN EACH BY HOLDING ON TO BOTH. "HE IS EXTINCT. LET HIS FOSSILIZED BONES BE A WARNING: YOU CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS."

HOW CAN I KNOW WHICH IT WILL BE? IS MY BRANCH ON THE TREE OF LIFE GROWING TOWARD *SURVIVAL* OR *EXTINCTION*?

HOW CAN WE KNOW?

WE WAIT.

AND WE THINK.

AND WE LOVE.

HOW CAN WE KNOW?

OUR CHILDREN

OR OUR BONES

WILL ANSWER.