

Against the grid  
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By Neal Ross

Unlike most animals, we humans tend to live our lives on two different levels.

The first and most basic level concerns physical survival -- food, shelter, warmth, and not being eaten or otherwise killed.

Overlaying the meat-and-bone level, and coloring what we do about it, is a self-reinforcing system that I like to call "The Grid." The Grid contains all of the religious, political, moral, ethical and other methods we use to "make sense" of our existence. Unfortunately, The Grid is so all-encompassing that many people mistake it for the first level.

(If this sounds confusing, picture two maps of the world. One shows land masses, polar caps and oceans. The other is thickly illustrated with political borders and country names.)

To the keen and disinterested observer, one problem with our split-level development becomes immediately apparent: How can people living in different grids get along? Especially since some grids say the others are wrong?

For example, take the anti-gay marriage initiative Proposition 22, which voters will decide on March 7.

Proposition backers seem to think there's something wrong with admitting that two people with the same type of genitals can have a committed, loving relationship.

I say that deliberately, and without meaning to offend, because that's what's really at stake here. Prop. 22 isn't about marriage at all: it's about the proponents' idea that some consenting adults are loving the wrong people, and that the government shouldn't let them.

And as if this couldn't get more absurd, the authority for banning all this alleged misbehavior isn't even recognized by everybody potentially affected by Prop. 22.

It's a religious system. One of many that humans have developed during the past 10,000 years or so, and one in which a lot of people have found and continue to find a good deal of meaning. But it's not the only one -- and it's by no means authoritative under the laws of this state or country.

(Oh, there's that other false argument that gay people shouldn't get married because they can't have babies. Of course, my wife and I can't have babies either. But at least we're not gay, so I guess that makes us legit.)

This brings us back to The Grid. Homosexuality, as far as we can tell, seems to be as hard-wired a biological trait as brown eyes or blonde hair. But reactions to homosexuality are all part of The Grid.

Prop. 22's author, Sen. William Knight (R-Palmdale), lives in a grid that says homosexuality is a Bad Thing. So bad, in fact, that Knight has tried to pass three other anti-gay measures since 1996.

In October, Knight's son, David, wrote a guest editorial in the Los Angeles Times tracing his father's apparent obsession with homosexuality to the fact that Knight's brother died of AIDS, and that David is himself gay.

Knight told the Associated Press the next day, "I regret that my son felt he needed to force a private, family matter into the public forum through an editorial."

Now, this begs the question: Why is Knight continually trying to "force a private, family matter into the public forum" through state legislation?

If this doesn't make any sense to you either, vote no on Prop. 22. And let's leave the lawmaking for issues that really matter.