

Origins of Galactic Law

By EDWARD WELLEN

When you go on an *interstellar journey*, be sure to take along this handy little legal guide.

Illustrated by STONE

Principle of self-punishment: provided the court concurs, any person pleading guilty to a crimemay choose the punishment he deems fitting. (People v. Kilgore, 3380, 84 Un. 793) PAUL KILGORE was a Terran pilot who was scheduled to make the first solo hop, in a faster-than-light craft, from Pluto to Alpha Centauri. Celebrating the coming event at the Universal Joint, a spacemen's hangout on Mars, he met a former shipmate. He testified at his trial that, after a nebulous number of Venus vapor cocktails, he agreed to drop his friend off at Pluto.

Kilgore said that while they were passing through the Asteroid Belt, between Mars and Jupiter, he discovered that the flap of the kit attached to his uniform was open. Anxiously, he felt in the pocket. It was empty. His doppler pills, compounded especially for his projected flight, were missing. He testified that he searched the entire ship and failed to find the pills. Then, with growing suspicion and rage, he looked at his snoring passenger.

He shook the limp figure of his friend and angrily asked if the latter had swallowed the pills. The friend made no answer except a foolish grin. Kilgore claimed that this was too much for him. Vengefully, he jammed his friend into a spacesuit and dumped him on one of the 50,000 or more mile-thick asteroids. Each pill, Kilgore testified, would hold up metabolism across 130 light-years. Long before the drug wore off, Kilgore said he believed, someone would come across his sleeping friend. Still fuming, Kilgore returned to Mars for a new supply of the pills. His first stop was the Universal Joint. He testified that the bartender seemed glad to see him and handed him a small pill box. The bartender said that Kilgore had dropped it there.

When it came time for the judge to pronounce sentence, Kilgore asked to be allowed to impose his own punishment. The judge was surprised, but he heard Kilgore out. And he sanctioned the penalty, a harsher penalty than *he* had intended to impose. Kilgore spent the remainder of his life hunting the sleeping body of the man he had marooned on one of the myriad asteroids.

Psychic guilt: fitting the punishment to the criminal supersedes fitting the punishment to the crime. (People v. Nica, 3286, 70 Un. 1245)

IN the lobby of the Jovian hostel at which he was staying, Bor Nica, a Sagittarian, brushed against another guest, an Antarean. The Antarean, being unused to the gravity of Jupiter, fell and bruised himself considerably. When he had struggled up again, however, instead of rebuking Nica for jostling him and not offering to assist him to his feet, he passed the incident off lightly. He was about to hop on his way again when Nica, in an insane rage, felled him with a blow. This

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harbored no hatred for him, and had indeed forgiven him.

Infuriated, Nica broke out of his cell, located the widow and killed her, too. Again he waited beside the body of his victim. And again he not only did not resist arrest, but seemed to welcome it.

Smiling, he pleaded guilty to both murders and listened eagerly for the verdict. But the judge deferred passing sentence until sociologists could go into Nica's background for a clue to his seemingly illogical actions.

They found that Nica's society had stabilized itself on a mass psychosis. Because of atrocities his people had committed in their history, they had piled up a vast unpaid debt of guilt. This

weighed so heavily on them that every normal individual in Nica's society had a compulsion to seek punishment. The judge studied this report. He reasoned that the greatest punishment Nica could receive would be *no* punishment. Any penalty he could impose would only gratify Nica instead of punishing him. Therefore he set Nica free. Frantic, Nica appealed the court's judgment, but in vain. The Galactic Tribunal held that he could not place himself in double jeopardy. The Jovians deported Nica to his home planet. There he remained an outcast because of his humiliating failure to obtain the punishment they all sought. His honor was not restored until he bribed a passing Cygnian to shoot him in

a carefully contrived hunting accident.

Pro rata sentencing: terms of penal servitude are to be based upon comparative life expectancy. (People v. Gund, 3286, 70 Un. 1245)

In the park on the vacation satellite orbiting around Altair VII was the body of a Vegan, beaten to death. Beside him lay the carcass of his pet ululu, also beaten to death. Erdo Gund, a Procyoni, voluntarily gave himself up. At his trial, Gund's deposition, which he had signed by impressing his noseprint, was offered in evidence by the prosecutor.

In this deposition, Gund admitted killing the pet's master —but not the pet. In fact, he stated, his motive for killing the master was the anger he felt when he

saw the Vegan brutally beating the pet. He struck the Vegan down, when the cumulative effect of witnessing nearly two hours of the master's cruelty and the pet's pain had proved unbearable.

At this point the judge interrupted the reading of the deposition. He said he had understood other witnesses to state that the Vegan's fatal beating of the ululu had lasted only ten minutes at most. The prosecutor said that His Honor was correct in his understanding. But, he said, the deposition was accurate, too. He explained to the judge that, to the Terran-type observer, the Procyoni's span of life averaged two Earth years. In that length of time, the Procyoni lived — subjectively — as long as a centenarian

Earthman.

The prosecutor further said that in view of all the circumstances, he was of the opinion that Gund could not plead "not guilty by reason of temporary insanity." However, added the prosecutor, he would ask His Honor to be lenient and take into account the temporal differential.

The judge followed the prosecutor's recommendation and sentenced Gund to 30 Earth hours of psychic guilt.

Semantic jurisprudence: that branch of the law which systematizes forensic debate on questions of meaning. (U. of Venus v. Vac. Inc. et al., 2937, 63 Un. 8451)

VAC., Inc., was a Terran corporation,

supplying the vacuum of space for use in laboratory research. At its plant on Luna, it manufactured its product by welding two duralloy hemispheres lip to lip and thus sealing a vacuum inside the globe they formed.

One container in a shipment to the University of Venus proved to be defective. The University sued for damages resulting from sudden failure of the built-in valve. These damages included the tearing of the elbow-beard of a visiting Ganymedeian professor, which had been sucked into the globe. Attorney for the defendants asked for dismissal of the suit on the grounds that a vacuum was *nothing*, and that when both parties to the action had stipulated the

loss of a vacuum, the plaintiff in effect admitted losing nothing. In support of this contention, attorney for the defendants exhibited the advertising slogan of Vac., Inc., "Nothing —but the best!"

Attorney for the plaintiff countered the dismissal motion by stating that if this were true, then the defendants were confessing to the inequity of giving nothing in exchange for good hard cash. However, attorney for the plaintiff argued, no absolute vacuum exists in all space, there being a minimum of twelve molecules per cubic foot in the emptiest reaches. Therefore, she claimed, there 'is nothing in the Universe which one might name "nothing."

That last statement, attorney for the defendants replied scornfully, was self-contradictory. "Nothing" *exists*, he said; the space *between* the molecules is "nothing." Quickly, attorney for the plaintiff exclaimed that now her learned opponent was arguing on the side of her client by agreeing that "nothing" is something.

At this point the judge wearily recessed court, declaring that he intended to damp his brain waves with tonic chord therapy.

As soon as court reconvened, the judge asked if either party objected to the swearing in of a panel of semanticists. There was no objection. And so, before deciding on the dismissal

motion, the judge submitted the problem to the panel.

With a squad of burly bailiffs keeping order among the venerable semanticists, the question finally came to a vote.

The majority decided that a vacuum is "something."

The judge denied the defendants' motion for dismissal, heard the case, and found for the plaintiff. He awarded to the University 40 million credits. But legal expenses and the adverse publicity bankrupted Vac., Inc.

It paid nothing.

Law of identity: any judgment of the court is a true judgment in all succeeding cases where the circumstances are the same. (Smith

v. *General Teletote*, 3016, 24 *Un.* 612)

JAK SMITH, a clerk in the Titan branch of the First Solar Bank & Trust Co., filed a civil suit against General Teletote. He sought to recover damages for, injuries he had sustained while utilizing the facilities of the passenger division of that firm.

Under a governmental Class F priority (his heart could not stand the strain of spaceship travel), he had returned to his native Terra via teletote. He charged General Teletote with garbling him in transmission. General Teletote admitted that its tri-dimensional scanner had reassembled Smith improperly. The firm also conceded that its Terran operator had been out on a *panjo* drunk, leaving

the receptor controls untended and incorrectly adjusted — permitting electronic snow to piebald Smith. But though it acknowledged its carelessness, General Teletote firmly disclaimed any liability. It produced the customary waiver that Smith had signed prior to transmission, absolving General Teletote of all responsibility for mishap in transit and/or upon reception.

Smith replied that as he was now obviously not the same individual who had signed the waiver, its terms were not binding on him.

General Teletote answered that if Smith was not the same individual, he could not claim damages in the other's name.

Having studied the briefs, the Galactic Tribunal ruled that even by the signing of a waiver, an individual cannot divest himself of his inalienable right to his own identity.

Smith had just won his case when the "ghost image" of Smith came forward, pressing claims for a like award. To prove these claims, the ghost image produced witnesses who testified that Smith had emerged from the receptor shortly after Smith , although records failed to show any other transmission scheduled for that time and place.

Smith struggled for sole possession of his identity. He sided with General Teletote in its attempts to disprove

Smith 's physical appearance by saying that the latter was merely a partial albino who saw a good chance to cash in on the accidental resemblance.

The battle ended suddenly one day in court when the judge intervened, pointing out that both had equally good evidence, that there was no doubt that they were the same man, and asked them to effect a compromise. Otherwise, the judge explained, the case would result in a deadlock. Smith and Smith, quickly came to a settlement.

The two set up a partnership with the credits they collected and established a firm which became the foremost competitor of General Teletote.

Doctrine of excusable fraud:

deception, when welcomed by the victimized party, comes within the realm of caveat emptor. (Based on a quashed indictment, 3426 U.E.)

UNTIL he worked his great coup, Conway Limbeck was a minor criminal preying on the gullible-minded and larcenous-hearted. He sold interests in a formula for synthesizing ambidextrose sugar. For years he thrived on this formula, which was more than his victims could claim. At the time he dreamed up his brilliant stroke, he was chief steward aboard a Sirius-bound liner. Thanks to forged credentials, he was making a getaway in the most comfortable style.

While the liner was approaching

Sirius XIII, a passenger gave Limbeck a fifty credit tip. Limbeck examined the note. It gave him ideas. He stole into the chart room and trimmed the blank edges from the astronomical maps. These plastic strips had the official heat mark imbedded in them. Then Limbeck burgled enough photo supplies to counterfeit the strips into notes amounting to Cr. 3 trillion. When the liner landed on Sirius XIII, Limbeck hastened to the Presidential Shack. Convincing credentials vouching for Limbeck as representative plenipotentiary of the Io Trading Trust gained him immediate admittance. After the ceremonial somersaults were exchanged, Limbeck announced that the

Trust had authorized him to negotiate for that season's output of tumul.

The President was hard-of-smelling until the interpreter wafted that Limbeck had finally raised his offer to Cr. 21/2 trillion. When he gave vent to his great satisfaction, the President nearly bowled Limbeck over. Limbeck chartered a vessel with his remaining Cr. 1/2 trillion and took off with his precious payload. His vessel had hardly come out of synergy when the Siriutes realized that Limbeck had jetted a fast one on them. A Sirius XIII patrol intercepted and boarded Limbeck's vessel. Limbeck's heart sank as he faced the boarding party. Then to his amazement he scented that the Siriutes were emitting friendly

laughs. Their leader passed over a new agreement for Limbeck to sign. It was a contract for tumult futures.

In bewilderment, Limbeck read the terms. They were extremely favorable to him—especially the explicit condition that he was to make payment in counterfeit credits only.

The Siriutes told him they valued the counterfeit more than the genuine. This fetish of theirs, they explained, stemmed from the darkest age of their history, when a tyrant had set himself up through fraud. The revolutionary fervor with which they at last overthrew him fired in them a passion for skepticism. For this reason they treasured symbols of disbelief.

Limbeck was more than happy to sign the contract.

But news of the Sirius situation outsped his vessel and the GBI nailed him. However, the Galactic Government had no evidence with which to pin the counterfeiting charge on Limbeck, as the proud possessors of the fakes had hidden them and would not yield them up. The most that the government could do was to put a brake on his future activities: It enjoined him from counterfeiting. Sirius XIII demanded that Limbeck fulfill the contract. The Galactic Tribunal ruled that the contract was illegal and invalid.

But the Secretary for Galactic defense privately informed Limbeck that he was anxious to see the deal come off, as

tumul was vital to defense. Limbeck, of course, was equal to the problem. He arranged a secret rendezvous in deep space. The Siriutes and Limbeck exchanged tumul and currency. After Limbeck's departure, the Siriutes noticed an inscription beginning to appear in each of the notes. The inscription read: GENUINE—PASSED AS COUNTERFEIT.

This double fraud doubly delighted the Siriutes and they gratefully bestowed upon Limbeck their highest award.

The medal, of course, was made of synthetic platinum.

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