



To Torture or Not to Torture



“What is all the fuss about torture, Professor?”

“Under the present circumstances it is not so much torture in itself, its many forms and styles but the fact that its practice has created a veritable curtain of falsehoods, cover ups and plain lies that will take a long time to remove from our collective consciousness. It has sullied the remaining vestiges of US prestige as an honest democracy where justice has no limits or preferences.”

He paused to butter one of Antoine’s mixed flour pancakes and gently applied some of that deliciously Somerset yellow butter. With his usual ceremony he then poured the golden syrup that not long ago inhabited a healthy tree in Asturias. I said:

“A harsh evaluation, Professor, but on target. Our record as an empire is beginning to recall other regimes in other times, some not too long ago, when basic principles were abandoned in behalf of expediency, greed, injustice and just plain ornery. Is this our future as an empire?”

The Professor, as he usually does when discussing a serious matter, removed his glasses, cleaned them with a Silicone-impregnated cloth and carefully placed them in its fine crocodile leather case. I had observed the routine countless of times and never commented about it. But, with torture in today’s menu I dared ask:

“Why must you remove your glasses every time we approach a serious subject? And go through that meticulous ritual of cleaning, folding and arranging the glasses in its fancy case?”

He looked at me and smiled. “Quite apropos, my friend.” He said and then:

“Your remark, in its own context, is a form of subtle torture that you are inflicting upon me. Let us examine it. Your observation is quite common. The adverb why, being the key premise frames it as a question. The fact that you describe my sequence in detail leads me to believe that you have analyzed such sequence previously. If such is the case, such menial action on my part, has more likely some offensive undertones to which you unconsciously object or that you feel I should avoid and if not, there should be some form of retribution against the perpetrator, that is me.. In which case, the question you asked infringes upon a habit of mine that, in your view, is offensive. In other words, the innuendo impacts me directly and profoundly and declares me guilty ipso facto. Therefore by asking such question you are creating in me anxiety, perhaps remorse and shame for having injured your delicate sensibilities. In other words you are torturing me!!”

All I could do was laugh out loud.

“Professor, pass the pancakes and I promise to cease torturing you!”
