

Knowing Jeffrey for the past months has been quite a whirlwind of mind-bending experiences, ranging from politics and contemporary history to the nature of infinity to neural nets to international law – and to jazz, with Jeffrey joining in Valeria’s patient efforts to introduce me to a musical genre I’d known nothing about. I benefited from his explanation of how to appreciate jazz. It had some effect, though some of the concerts that Valeria has taken me to are still far beyond me.

Our first meeting with Jeffrey was at the Z ranch, along with Lawrence Krauss, the prominent physicist and public intellectual – and, as we learned, film actor. We’re eagerly awaiting his new film. We went on with Lawrence to his university for talks and discussion that should appear in print. Lawrence almost – but not quite – convinced Valeria that a universe can arise from nothing.

For both of us, highlights of the dinners that Jeffrey arranged later in his New York home were opportunities to meet Woody Allen and Soon Yi, for me, for the first time. I’d always been a great admirer of his marvelous work, and Valeria had had earlier and fruitful contacts with him, including introducing him to classics of Brazilian literature that he had come to appreciate (and I have also been a beneficiary of these efforts, and my education is proceeding). Meeting them several times was a delightful experience, and as an extra treat, Jeffrey arranged for us to attend one of the concerts of the jazz band where Allen plays clarinet. Again, new for me, though Valeria already knew the members of the band, having invited them on a tour in Brazil some years back.

At one dinner with the Allens the conversation shifted to the Oslo Accords signed by Israel and the PLO 20 years ago. Jeffrey picked up the phone and dialed a friend, Terje Rød-Larsen, the Norwegian diplomat who had played the major role in negotiating the accords, and then spent considerable time in the region as UN special coordinator in the occupied territories. It was a special pleasure for us to meet him not long after, at Jeffrey’s invitation, along with Kathy Ruemmler, legal counsel for the White House, for a lively and informative discussion of the background for the negotiations and his criticism of the (Norwegian) scholarship on the matter that I had cited in print, ranging on to general issues of international law and practice.

Complementary, in a way, were several meetings that Jeffrey arranged for us with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his wife Nili Priell, for frank and illuminating discussion of matters that I’ve been engaged in for most of my life, including the period of his tenure in office. Particularly interesting to me were his observations on the Camp David and Taba negotiations of 2000-1. And, rather as in Larsen’s case, his critique of the main (Israeli) scholarship that I had used in writing about these matters.

Independently of these meetings, we’d been discussing with Jeffrey work in linguistics and cognitive sciences, and the possible contribution of new developments in mathematics to this research. It was with these discussions in mind, I suppose, that Jeffrey arranged a meeting for us, at his home in New York, with the eminent mathematician Mikhail Gromov. We had an interesting but oddly inconclusive discussion about some core formal properties of language and

how they should be captured in a mathematical framework, turning on some technical questions that I'll put aside here, topics I hope to be able to pursue further.

Jeffrey also arranged several meetings for us with Martin Nowak's evolutionary dynamics group at Harvard. These led to quite lively and fruitful discussions with Martin, a remarkable scientist, and some of his young associates, which we have continued independently.

Altogether, quite an experience.