

The Pangloss Society

“Seeking the best of all possible worlds.”

It is a measure of the Pangloss Society that a surprising number of its lowest-ranked acolytes do not quite realize that Professor Pangloss is a fictional character, and that his adoption as the guiding light of the Society was a cynical joke. It is also a measure of the Society that the aforementioned cynics who formed it were shoved out of leadership positions a decade ago, to be replaced by celebrities with more money than -- pretty much anything else, really. Although, to be fair: under the celebrities' leadership the Pangloss Society has been fairly benign. Or at least mostly harmless.

It all started when the idea that Infinity Unlimited's discovery of new timelines was being somehow affected by people's subconscious expectations of what those timelines should look like made it out into the general population. A couple of fairly unscrupulous promoters, upon hearing this, concluded that there was money in convincing the rubes that they could create the world of their dreams by simply wishing hard enough. And there was also a lot **more** money in encouraging this fantasy among the idle, yet unskilled and gullible, rich. So the two

created the Pangloss Society, came up with some attractive-looking promotional material and a feel-good, vacuous “positive timeline visualization” program, and went looking for celebrity recruits.

Of course, they found quite a few. It helped that the Pangloss Society was and is strictly neutral on the subject of **other** belief systems; the original promoters were scrupulous about never bad-mouthing any of the other scams out there, if for no other reason than professional courtesy. Pretty soon the Society had deep tendrils in the entertainment industry, with a strong showing among the more wild-eyed genre writers. After a certain point, the Society started encouraging both factions to come up with a shared vision of their ideal worlds, on the principle that having contradictory “visualization objectives” would handily explain away for some time any failure of Infinity to discover either faction’s best of all possible worlds.

That, of course, is when disaster struck. Infinity announced, six weeks after the formal start of the Pangloss Society’s two rival projects, the discovery of Realities [Incognito](#) and [Fanboy-1](#). Incognito was everything that a movie star or aging rocker might desire: a world with customs almost exactly like Homeline’s, but where nobody knew who they were. And Fanboy-1 was a

book reader's and writer's dream; a place where all the books that should have been written in the Twentieth Century, *were* written. And since each faction had been studiously wishing for more or less these results, well: *clearly* their efforts had worked.

There was a quiet reorganization in the Society, after that: the original organizers wisely allowed themselves to be eased out of the leadership (with suitable golden parachutes) rather than deal with the probability of a later crash. And it's likely that there will be a later crash: the Pangloss Society has been cruising on these two successes for about six years now, with no further conclusive successes to show for it. Admittedly, getting five Society members these days to agree on a single desired Best of All Possible Worlds is flat-out impossible, but eventually the membership is going to come up with a consensus world to wish for, and the membership is not going to be happy when it doesn't materialize. And the people who are Society members these days tend to be the kind of people who get expensively petulant when they don't get what they want. They might even, in fact, blame Infinity, because of reasons.

Note, by the way, that all of this assumes that organized wishing that Infinity find a particular world *doesn't* really

work. If it does, though? Well, given the people running the Pangloss Society these days, perhaps granting them their desire may not not be the most wonderful thing in the world, either.

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