

The man, newly chosen, newly elected, walked down the street. It was not a street. It was a hallway in a building he owned. He owned many other buildings, though many of them he did not own. Those other buildings were owned by other men. Those other men knew that it was to their advantage to put the man's name on those other buildings, so that other people would notice them. The man would go to any length to ensure that things with his name on them were noticed, no matter the cost. Thus the placing of his name on things initiated a cycle. The man believed the cycle was virtuous. It was a cycle but not virtuous. It was a hallway but not a street. The buildings were owned but not owned. The man walked down the street of the building, acknowledging these contradictions not at all.

A cold day kept him warm, because it made him think of all the people who were even colder than he was.

“Buy the kid a dog.” That was Steve again. Steve had a thing for dogs. He explained to Steve that he didn’t like dogs, and since he didn’t like them, it stood to reason that the kid didn’t like them either. “That doesn’t stand to reason,” Steve said. “That’s not what reason means.” He humored Steve by looking at a few dogs, tried to get eye contact so he could take a measure of their inner self. One of them seemed like a great guy, stared right at him calmly, didn’t blink. One of them kept dropping his head like he was going to be a problem. A third ran to the front of the cage, put his paws on the wire, and made the strangest laughing noise. He hated that third dog, and yet it was the only one that interested him.

Long before he was in politics, there was another guy who was in politics who said that there are known knowns, which are things we know we know; known unknowns, which are things we know we do not know; and unknown unknowns, which are things we don't even know that we do not know. Everyone made such a big deal when the guy said it. They thought it was smart in a way but also dumb in a way. His smart son-in-law said that it was “quote considered either a masterpiece of postmodern epistemology or a master class in evasion unquote.” His smart son in law actually said the quote and unquote out loud, which probably meant that it was something that someone else had said that he was repeating. Personally, he didn't see what was so master anything about the quote. He didn't agree with it. For him, there were only known knowns, and then a whole bunch of garbage piled outside the door. He snapped off two squares of the chocolate bar he was holding and ate them, not one after the other but both at once.

He had only one memory of his childhood: he was standing over another kid, who was stretched out on the ground. He did not know if the other kid had fallen or he had pushed him down. He did not know if he was about to extend a helping hand or put the toe of his boot into the other kid's ribs. When he was asked about his childhood, he would invent other memories, but that was the only real memory he had, and he treasured it.