

COSMOPOLIS MEETING JUNE 13, 2018

Intro to final “marker” video and the truncated subject

Dennis Prager, *Dennis Prager Sketches the Future of Western Civilization* (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, YouTube, 48:00)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORmW68YmLM4&t=0s&index=39&list=PLo1Jq23H_s5XVxAseMKYJA4aH3cOI07si

- 00:00—Autobiographical stories: first publication, William Buckley Jr., brains are wildly overrated, goodness is more interesting than brains, Myth of the Andalusian Paradise, a visceral hatred of lies, the more people know about you the more they trust you, TSA agent story, as an observant Jew staying sane via the Sabbath, loves large topics.
- 11:40—Two horrific ways the American mind and culture have been enfeebled starting after WWII: television and universal college education; good as meaningless—everyone has done something good; TV morally bankrupt; PhD’s think they are brilliant without actually being wise.
- 17:15—Pessimism; how to be happy and yet pessimistic; not much a reason for optimism for the good guys are loosing;
- 19:15—*Victually everything good in the human species has come from Western civilization.* Lots of evil, yet evil is ubiquitous.
- 20:00—*Mature people, which disqualifies most professors, don’t ask or say “look at all the evil”, they say, “Why is there any good”;* good is the outlier, not evil; why have evil been eradicated in certain areas of the world; people are not basically good.
- 23:38—Western civilization had evil like any other, but it also had a unique good: universal human rights, human equality, democracy, abolition of slavery, the greatest music and art and architecture, wealth, modern science, a universal god; and yet we are dismissing Western culture.
- 26:42—Open letter: *I don’t care if you are secular or religious, but I do care if you dismiss the indispensable significance of god and Judeo-Christian religion to America’s possible survival.* Objective good or evil without God? Cannot survive godlessness; Something has to control human passions, be it the nation or God. When god-based religions are rejected, you get other religions like Communism or Nazism, feminism or environmentalism, etc.
- 33:40—Consequences of secularism: demise of marriage, the end of the will to fight evil, moral confusion, no borders in personal relations, no children—the will to survive is dead. Marriage and children are values. Public nudity? The age of feelings.
- 43:15—*If there is no revival of the “American trinity” (e pluribus unum, liberty, in God we trust), that’s our tripod.* The left has destroyed all three legs.
- 44:45—How do you stay off anti-depressants if you have this bleak view? Normandy beach: you don’t fight if you’re winning, only if you’re loosing. *This is what you have, and this is what you have to do.*

Bernard Lonergan, *The Subject*, 1968

Our investigation into “Rationality Rules” epistemological position places him as a conceptualist with empiricist criteria for determine what is true. Lonergan points out three fundamental failures in such a “truncated” self that will be of help not only for assessing the horizon and intentions of others but for our own intellectual conversion. Note that Lonergan also discusses other developmental failures such an immanentism or existentialism.

THE TRUNCATED “CONCEPTUALIST” SELF

Such subjects suffer from an incomplete development of who they are due to a heavy reliance on the belief that only concepts are real and any reference to internal “subjective” realities are only that: subjective. This position for judging what is or is not true leads to three fundamental blind spots.

1. *A-historical.* Conceptualists or logical positivists fail to recognize that the concepts they use are not full-blown or complete but the result of ongoing inquiries that have primitive roots and quite possibility future refinements. (Truth is out there objectively real.) The reason for this is that to recognize the historicity of concepts requires an acceptance of the internal questioning mind—and those operations, by definition, cannot be real. Therefore any historical consciousness is always constrained to individual subjectivity rather than a common reality. Even though Utopias anticipate a beautiful future, they are particularly susceptible to an a-historical mentality that stands outside time and space and therefore cannot be modified.
2. *Flawed Abstraction.* For those with a truncated self, abstraction is a matter of creating a map based on a territory, a process that starts with the whole and gradually removes insignificant features. Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Apistotelian Systems and General Semantics* (3rd edition 1948) deals with the problems associated with this approach, for conceptualist abstractions can quickly loose touch with reality. Again, this is the best conceptualists can do. For in casting aside the “subjective” cognitive operations of the conscious mind they place

outside their horizon the very phenomena of an insight. Insights themselves are abstractions, but they do not lose their connection with reality. (Insights are a combination of image, concepts and relationships all encapsulated in a definition.) Instead, through an insight, the subject finds form in the phenomena at hand, and from that form asserts its reality through an act of judging. This deeper understanding of abstraction maintains contact between concept and experience.

3. *Being.* Conceptualists have a notion of being, but it’s a very abstract. Once the subject opens up to and objectifies his or her dynamic and open-ended (unrestricted desire to know) consciousness, *being* is no longer static but very much a dynamic, questioning, seeking being in a world mediated by meaning fully aware of how that world is created and maintained by one’s very self. Such an experience of pure being encapsulates an authenticity grounded in honesty (intellectual conversion), courage (moral conversion), and charity (religious conversion). Sin is a failure to attend to the norms of this inner self and as such is incomprehensible to any conceptualist and empiricist mentality. (Unlike guilt, that pertains to a failure to meet social standards.)

There’s also another appreciative failure for conceptualist: Safire maintained that language while incredible variable is yet still bound by three things it cannot conceptualize: higher mathematics, music, and God.

Why is all this important? Because truncated subjects suffer from a scotosis from which they cannot escape without recognizing the reality of “subjective” operations of the intentional conscious mind. Given a truncated world mediated by meaning with its flawed orientation, it is no wonder that evaluations often miss the real symptoms of decline, that the diagnosis of the root cause of whatever has been identified as problematic is suspect, and finally any assessment of what needs to be done simply misses the point. The result is a world full of unexpected “black swans” and unanticipated results of whatever plans and policies are put into place.