

THE WATERSHED

A crude metaphor to illustrate the shift from animal to transcendent control mediator is that of a watershed where the radical transformation of ongoing conversion resembles a rain cloud passing over a mountain range.

As the cloud approaches the mountain, the rain falls down the slope that carries the water down to things of human concern. All questions flow to, or are focused on, or intend human concerns.

As the clouds pass over the peaks, the rain falls on both sides. On one side, the water flows to human interests but on the other the water intends the transcendent. This is a state of tension where the cloud (the individual) is torn in two opposing directions.

Conversion takes the cloud over to the other side of the mountain range, where human interests and concerns become subordinate to understanding this transcendental reality with its Divine Mystery and universal perspective. The latter can never be achieved, for human knowing is always proportional to being human. Nevertheless, it does exist and can be sought—a shift that takes the person out of themselves.

THE SWAMP

Anthony de Mello, S.J., both trained therapist and spiritual director made the following distinction between the two disciplines:

1. Psychological therapy trained people to keep their nose above the level of the swamp, while
2. Spiritual direction sought to get rid of the swamp.

Born as animals, human beings grow up in a world of scarcity, lack, need, want, pain, and death—in short, a swamp.

But both Judaism and Christianity are grounded in the belief that the universe is innately good, whatever we might think about it. The world is not the creation of a lesser god, the **Dimiurge**, whose work is flawed. Given this foundational stance, the world is exactly what it needs to be and it is good—not because of any intrinsic value but because it was created by a God who could do so in no other way.

In short, the swamp does not exist. Or, to put it in another way, the swamp is a creation of our own flawed selves; it exists only in our imagination projected out into the world and this conceived as being real out there.

COSMOPOLIS—APRIL 24, 2019—PETERSON VIDEO—FOUNDATIONS (FIRST CUT)

PIVOT POINT

- ◆ a growing politicized movement that regards Gaia as being of ultimate value
- ◆ this means that if it comes down to a issue between human interests and the “interests” of the planet, the planet wins
- ◆ humans are considered to be a cancer of the face of the earth
- ◆ related is a preference to value institutions and states over individual human beings
- ◆ to “heal” is to appeal to the power of the state and not individual responsibility
- ◆ nihilistic
- ◆ death-affirming
- ◆ deceptive
- ◆ power seeking
- ◆ freedom vs slavery
- ◆ equality of outcome, not opportunity
- ◆ secular “religion” vs Judaism’s & Christianity’s revelation
- ◆ death-affirming generative principle vs life-affirming
- ◆ totalitarian vs open society
- ◆ no truth, only narrative vs intending truth
- ◆ morality is relative, not absolute

[CULTURAL WAR]

Non-Present Presence

Deciding
DIALECTIC — FOUNDATIONS

Judging

HISTORY

DOCTRINES

Understanding

INTERPRETATION

SYSTEMATICS

Experiencing

RESEARCH

COMMUNICATIONS

- ◆ human individuals are of intrinsic value
- ◆ you are not puppets who can create themselves but mysteries seeking meaning
- ◆ stands witness to the importance of thinking things through, of the dangers of superficial thought
- ◆ example of the dignity to be found in suffering
- ◆ moral courage in standing up against attempts to impose Utopian visions of reality upon the good of order at great personal costs

FOUNDATIONS

To shift to the mediated phase of Lonergan’s functional specialties is to take a stance, a position. The key question then is where this initial stance is sufficient to ground the selection of doctrines (basic world view, i.e., fundamental judgments of reality), the creation of theories to give meaning and expression to this doctrines, and finally the way in which all this is to be communicated to others not sharing this fundamental phase of being.

Note that systematics grounds communications, doctrines ground systematics, and foundations ground doctrines. In other words, any initial blind spot generated by

the lack of intellectual, moral, or religious conversion will distort all those specialties that depend on it. It is in this way that we can infer the foundational stance of any individual by objectifying various failures to set doctrines, to explain such doctrines, and to set the appropriate mode of communications.

To do this we use Lonergan’s “upper blade”, i.e., the high level operators that set the standards for such a comparison. Note however that these standards rests on the condition of one’s own foundational stance. Keep in mind that such self-transformations are existential, intensely personal, and utterly intimate.

- ◆ personal freedom, responsibility
- ◆ knowledge, wisdom; gnostic, Sofia
- ◆ individual humans are of intrinsic value
- ◆ secular; god does not exist, is not real

- ◆ equality of opportunity
- ◆ open questioning
- ◆ thinking things through
- ◆ archetypal myths
- ◆ no “life after death”, i.e., resurrection not “real”
- ◆ the “mystery” of our own being
- ◆ no need for revelation, for being held to a higher power

- ◆ Jungian psychoanalytical theory
- ◆ Theories of psychological therapy
- ◆ (maps of meaning)
- ◆ cannot construct a theological understanding of what it means to be human
- ◆ cannot account for grace

- ◆ therapy sessions: human encounters
- ◆ providing information to help people sort themselves out
- ◆ allowing people to make their own choices
- ◆ operates at the level of therapy not of spiritual direction
- ◆ suffering is to be endured with dignity
- ◆ expands human encounters to include all of human history

INTRINSIC VALUE

What is of intrinsic value? To refine the question, what have you decided is of intrinsic value for you? Similar to the question of, Whom do you trust? Or, To whom do you give your allegiance? The answer to the two latter questions involves the question of what you find valuable. For you will trust, and give you allegiance to, those who reflect the same values as yourself.

This is why the highest good in Lonergan’s invariant structure of the human good is that of **terminal value**. Decisions at this level, made among people relatively free to follow the good encountering each other in acts of reflective intelligence, affect not only the good of order but the choice in particular goods.

All decisions concerning value can be reduced to one dialectic, an unresolvable conflict between **life-affirming and death-affirming generative principles**. This dialectic form the high level operator when it comes to objectifying Peterson’s own foundational stance. It’s clear that Peterson follows a life-affirming principle where human beings are of intrinsic value.

“[We] may note that as conversion may be authentic or unauthentic, so there may be many Christian horizons and not all of them need represent authentic conversion. Further, while it may be possible to conceive authentic conversion in more than one manner, still the number of possible manners would seem to be far fewer than the number of possible horizons. It follows that our foundations contain a promise both of an elucidation of the conflicts revealed in dialectic and of a selective principle that will guide the remaining specialties concerned with doctrines, systematics, and communications.” *Method*, pp. 26-7.

With this form of analysis we extend our previous work into both the way in which a foundational stance sheds light on existing conflicts as well as sketching out the consequences of that stance for subsequent specialties.