

Prepared Questions

Visions, not Interests

Constrained vs. Unconstrained

1. Dialectic? Positions/Counter-Positions? (Good vs. Evil?)
2. Which is which, and why? (Conversion, or the lack of it)
3. Rationalization of "Power"?
4. Why a persistent divide over thousands of years?
5. Markers: explanatory theories?
 - Poverty
 - Social differences
 - Human Nature
 - War
 - Law
6. Markers: Open vs. Closed Societies?
 - Totalitarian impulses
 - Closing down individual freedoms to choose?
 - Corruption?

White-board Notes

- > Both visions have to do with an **image of what it means to be human**.
- > **Perceptual**: this image is experienced as being out there to be known.
- > **Involves power**, or the search for power, or justifying occupying a position of power.
- > **Is the marker one of an open dialogue** between the two visions?
- > **Do the two visions divide along the lines of human power**, e.g., between limitless human control over others vs. limits to the exercise of human power, be these limits grounded in the desire to avoid tyranny or in an over-riding transcendent God?
- > **Does society's ability to create wealth remove limits** that otherwise might constrain human endeavors, tempting those in power to consider themselves omnipotent when it comes to human affairs?
- > These two visions are **not all that clear-cut categories**.
- > If there is a fundamental conflict, than that conflict must have its **origins in intellectual, moral, or religious conversions**-or lack of them.
- > **The "life-cycle" theory leads to a fundamental dialectic between "good" and "evil"**, where both are considered as life-affirming or life-denying recurring schemes of operation. Within in this broad human dialectic, constrained would be isomorphic with a world created by God while the unconstrained would fit a rebellious world that in effect rejects God in preference to their own ability to make themselves whatever they would make of themselves.
- > **Life-affirming examples** are Judaism and Christianity, both of whom tend to have children; **life-denying examples** are totalitarian governments including Islam, where gas-lighting, domination, revolutionary activists, and abortion or infanticide are common.
- > **Cyclic vs. linear time**, where the notion of development is possible only in non-traditional societies that postulate a beginning, middle, and end of time.
- > **The fundamental question: is this a society of laws or not?** This is a key marker, for if the laws can be rewritten on the fly then no one can anticipate what the judgment is likely to be before going into court.

Takeaways:

1. **Markers are indicators** of something happening--or not happening (events, as a set of recurring schemes of operation). At most they are signs whose significance depends on the meaning assigned to them.
2. **Markers themselves have no significance** outside of the abstract theory of progress/decline/reversal that gives them meaning.
3. **To signify that a marker is significant is to refer back to the realm of interiority** of the individual making that judgment, i.e., the orientation (or foundational stance) of the subject.
4. **So what is important at this stage is not the marker itself**; that comes later when we take up the task of sorting through these brainstorming sessions. **What is important is the question behind the marker**, i.e., objectifying the reason for considering this feature to be a marker in the first place.

The Emergent Cosmopolis Project

Brainstorming markers for progress/decline

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Thomas Sowell

A Conflict of Visions: Constrained vs. Unconstrained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGvYqaxSPp4&t=1s>

November 4, 2008, 37:38