

COSMOPOLIS — JUNE 26TH, 2019 — TRUMP 2019 CPAC SPEECH — SECOND VIEWING

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The interesting thing about working out President Trump's foundational stance is that, unlike Prager and Peterson, he is a highly controversial existential figure. Love him, or hate him, there's little ground between the two.

This is the challenge faced by any cosmopolis group, for to work out a preliminary foundational stance for such a transformational figure requires a shift in self toward a dispassionate and reasonable judge who can collect and weigh the evidence without bias.

But, we are not legal judges? True, but we have a more powerful set of norms for the work we are being asked to do, norms set out in Lonergan's chapter on Foundations in *Method*. From the data provided in the functional specialty of dialectics, which is where we turn our attention in our search for relevant evidence, we can move on to the discernment so essential to any foundational work.

As director of this little project, what I'm looking for are signs of such a dispassionate need to know. And in this case, this is more important than ever. For there is a fundamental dialectic playing itself out in American politics involving two quite different perspectives on what it means to be an American, two different positions that make it important to differentiate between what is position and what is counter-position. Your choice is your responsibility for the future of our civilization; be careful that you are making a wise choice based on careful reflection and not the passions of the day.

This can be a challenge, for you are being asked to make your own choices, your own decision. And one thing that humans do to make life easier is to outsource of decisions to society, taking what is common held to be true as truth. Few people have either the time or energy to keep up with the fundamental institutional changes currently playing out over the world, so it is easier to outsource one's opinions by adopting the judgments and decision of society rather than take the time and trouble to work things out for oneself.

For this conflict is probably the essential dialectic at play during this historical period, a pivot point where individual contributions are more important than ever. Be careful of what side you trust, what side you give your allegiance to, and keep in mind the question: How do you know if you have chosen the right party to associate yourself with? How do you know that the side you align represents a true position, or is a counter-position masquerading as a position? Deceit and deception is always a possibility, indeed is highly likely in any truly fundamental dialectical issue.

And this is where it becomes really interesting, for dealing with this issue requires a shift in one's transcended self from self-identification with positions/counter-positions to viewing both as downstream from one's true self, that conscious being caught between psyche and divine who is defined not by doctrines but by the transcendental method and its associated precepts that create such doctrines. Is it possible for people raised in traditional modes of thinking to make that transition to freedom? Only if there is great need.

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ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

There's the old adage that actions speak louder than words, so if you really want to know a person's foundational stance you have to pay attention not so much to what he or she says, but to what he or she does. This was not so much of a problem with either Prager or Peterson, for the video's themselves were actions in their own right. But not so for President Trump, where both speeches were categorized as political and hence by definition deceptive.

The implication is that if we want to truly understand his foundational stance we have to go beyond both speeches to ask about his actual performance in the two plus years since he became President of the United States. In effect, we have three "documents": CPAC, SOTU, and the public record. Now it's impossible for us to cover all this with our limited resources, so any conclusion is tentative at best as it was with both Prager and Peterson. But this is not a problem for us, for we have two primary interests in this part of our cosmopolis research project:

1. Developing a methodology for doing such work, and
2. Working on uncovering our own individual and collective blind spots in a program of ongoing intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

The latter is especially important, for in the end any conclusions to be drawn about the foundational stance of another depends of the foundational stance of the person making the judgment. Our own blindness is simply carried forward without either being noticed or corrected, and so decline continues in proportion to the degree of unseeingness at play.

One of President's trumps actions at the beginning of his Presidency was to initiate a review of the security risks facing the US. This was published as the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, by the White House. Copies may be found on the White House site: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. The report has also been attached to our web site, sabotshot.ca, where it can be found under Educational Projects/Foundations/Trump I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Prager spoke in defense of Western civilization and importance of the United States as a beacon in Western society. Peterson faced the "non-present presence" that somehow dominated the Q&A session. What about President Trump? What is the context within which his speeches have meaning?

One such framing that accounts for President Trump's unexpected support is given by Richard Fernandez in a recent article titled *Andy Ngo* posted in PJ Media on June 30, 2019.

Still the combativeness of the last few days alarmed those accustomed to regarding themselves as civilized. Nicholas Kristof tried to explain the savagery by explaining that the natural virtue of liberals had been infected by conservative hate and that consequently some were succumbing to their baser instincts.

I fear that Trump has made it easy for liberal activists to demonize conservatives and evangelicals. People are complicated at every end of the spectrum, and it's as wrong to stereotype conservatives or evangelicals as it is to stereotype someone on the basis of race, immigration status or sex. ... As a liberal, I mostly write about conservative blind spots. But on the left as well as the right, we can get so caught up in our narratives that we lose perspective; nobody has a monopoly on truth. If Trump turns progressives into intolerant agents of incivility, then we have lost our souls.

There was little consideration given to the possibility that liberalism — and Republican conservatism — had lost its soul long before Trump; that somewhere in the decades of media lies, PR myth making, money printing, cynical foreign policy, abortion and political flirtation with foreign tyrants the establishment had done a deal with the devil quite without the assistance of the Donald.

But how could it? The Western elite had been dominant for so long their virtue no less than their wealth was undoubted. It was as if Dorian Gray said of his portrait: that can't be me; I must have been infected by conservatives. The idea that the Thing Western society assured itself did not exist had come for them at last was totally unexpected as was the realization that all their tokens of virtue were not keeping it at bay.

Perhaps the magnitude of Hillary's 2016 loss is only now becoming apparent. Clinton didn't just lose the White House, she also lost the Democratic center to the radical ornaments. The diminution of Brooks, Stevens, Kristof and even Biden are the consequence of that defeat. The radicals who once served the useful purpose putting fear into the other side are taking center stage. It's not surprising that the French Terror began with the purge of the moderates and the urgency of virtue. As Robespierre put it, virtuous men have no choice but to employ any means necessary:

If the basis of popular government in peacetime is virtue, the basis of popular government during a revolution is both virtue and terror; virtue, without which terror is baneful; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing more than speedy, severe and inflexible justice; it is thus an emanation of virtue; it is less a principle in itself, than a consequence of the general principle of democracy, applied to the most pressing needs of the patrie.

The Thing is older than one would think. And more voracious. The intellectual Old Bolsheviks thought their illustrious records would protect them from the ruffian Stalin. Bukharin who was eventually executed by Stalin once said "Koba, you used to be grateful for the support of your Bolshevik comrades." "Gratitude is a dog's disease," Stalin shot back.

<https://pjmedia.com/richardfernandez/andy-ngo/>