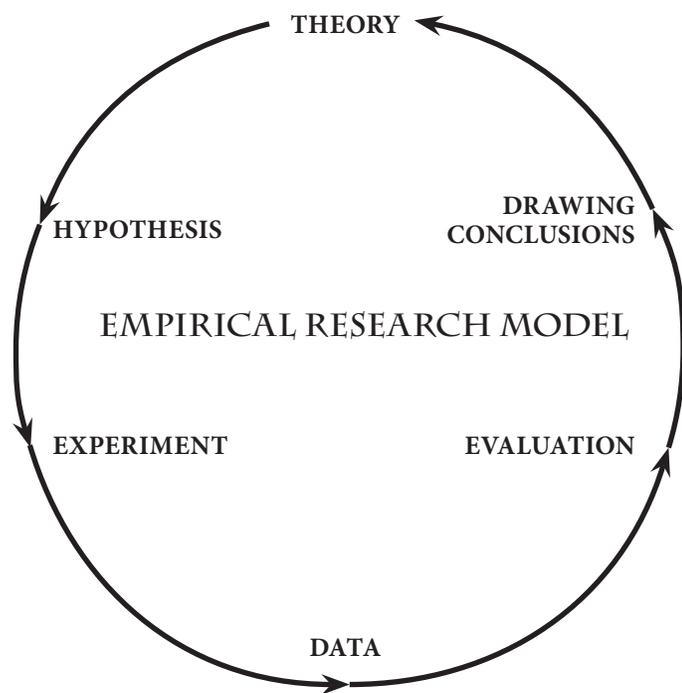


**OBJECTIFYING DENNIS PRAGER'S FOUNDATIONAL STANCE**  
**A Cosmopolis Educational Project: Prager's Foundational Stance: Methodology**  
**November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

*Is our methodology (for objectifying Prager's foundational stance) sound?*

There are two fundamental mediators in the empirical sciences: energy and control. The energy mediator is the human mind engaged in trying to understand not particulars but general principles expressed in classical equations and statistical probabilities; it is an innovative search for explanatory theories involving universal principles. The control mediator consists of the variety of research methods used to check the development of theory, for such theories have to explain the physical world and if they don't have to be set aside in favor of other models. For example, the initial adoption of Einstein's theory of relativity depended on a single experiment in astronomy. His theory proposed that light would bend around a star due to the star's immense gravitational field that would distort space itself. It took time to convince an astronomer to undertake such an experiment and the initial results were inconclusive. But eventually a solid methodological sound experiment was carried out and the findings followed Einstein's prediction (hypothesis). The rest is history.



**1. THERE IS A THEORY TO BE TESTED**

Someone has proposed what could be a better theory to explain significant features of the physical world.

**2. TESTABLE HYPOTHESIS DRAWN FROM THE THEORY**

If any theory is to be accepted by the scientific community, it first must be testable. An hypothesis is a statement drawn from the theory that is not only significant but testable.

**3. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENT**

The next task is to work out the actual form the experiment is to take, if the required test of the theory is to be held a valid test.

**4. COLLECTING OR AMASSING THE DATA**

Once these are in place, the next task is to go out in the field (sensible world), conduct the experiment, and collect the data according to the criteria set by the experiment.

**5. Evaluating the Data**

Can the data be trusted? Are their questions that can be raised that would leave the data vulnerable and unreliable?

**6. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE THEORY**

Finally, the researchers are drawn back into the abstract world of theory, the realm of the energy mediator, where the theory is given a boost or downgraded in its task of making sense of the physical world.

However, there is one problem with using this model when it comes to objectifying a person's foundational stance: the ultimate determination of truth depends on the foundational stance of the person carrying out the experiment. It is the authenticity of the "researcher's" own degree of conversion and differentiation of mind that enables him or her to properly understand the foundational stance of another. Failure to meet these standards, or at least to be free to work toward them (ongoing conversion), only truncates whatever objectification is put to paper. For example, a person who cannot accept the existence of God—who has not fallen in love with the Divine Mystery—cannot possibly understand the transcendental realm of meaning that another person has achieved. Also, the failure to achieve a degree of intellectual conversion that involves a differentiation of mind as well as a shift away from naive realism, empiricism, conceptualization, or any other epistemology that fails to reach up to the standards of intellectual endeavors leaves any objectified foundational stance vulnerable to questions that are not even brought into consciousness.

All this is not to say that we either start with a blank mind (we start where we start) or are fully converted before the investigation starts (equally impossible), but that we are willing to grow, to change our own foundational stance when the work suggests that we are deficient and need to move to firmer ground. As such, it is a problem of interpretation, i.e., hermeneutics.

The methodology that we have been using is not derived from the empirical sciences but from the invariant structure of the human mind (Lonergan's transcendental method) and the collective methodology derived from it (Lonergan's functional specialties). To get a taste for the methodology being employed we need to go no further than the third level of the invariant structure of the human good: terminal value. It is here that the proper methodology for working on foundational stances can be found, starting with the actualization of whatever potential a person has for being truly free and unbiased, an immersion in personal relationships among relatively free people who are concerned with both personal improvement (mutual self-mediation) and decisions involving deciding upon an appropriate and reliable terminal value.

What does this mean in practice? The first practical consequence is that we cannot step outside the "experiment" with an "objective" stance; whether we like it or not, we ourselves are part of this experiment. The second is that providing an objective statement of another's foundational stance cannot be an individual effort but instead the work of a group whose various biases and distortions can cancel each other out through open and free discussion on the part of those who monitor their own realm of interiority, their own coming to know. The third is that individuals of any group that takes up this task must have a clear idea of what is involved, i.e., a personal familiarity with the methodology being employed that allows for the kind of self-monitoring and engagement in a collective effort that is required for this kind of work. The fourth is that brute intelligence, no matter how brilliant, can live up to this task; what is far more important if not critical is the person's own honesty, courage, and charity.

Finally, it is this kind of work that has the potential and expose cultural blind spots that have come down to us through the wide and various efforts by those seeking power to rationalize and justify their "special" status to exercise power, authority, or influence over others. Unless, like any cosmonauts (Lonergan's cosmopolis), we seek to free ourselves from the beams in our own eyes we will not be able to excise the motes in the eyes of others. Promoting long term progress as well as avoiding the inevitable decline due to common sense bias is not possible without this kind of foundational work.

**FREEDOM.** *It is interesting that Lonergan's third level of the human good (terminal value) has as its subject human freedom and liberty, explicitly the freedom to move to a better orientation (foundational stance) in our lives. We may not be able to change the circumstances of our lives, circumstances that are not only constrained by lower levels of intelligibility but sublated by higher ones as well. We do have the advantage of the sublating influence of the Divine Mystery, whose primary purpose seems to be human freedom of choice (Exodus).*