

TRUTH SUPPRESSED: PILATE'S POST-MODERN PERSPECTIVISM

Jn 18:33-38; Rom 1:18-21; cf. Is 59:9-15

- I. NOMINALISM TRIUMPHANT**—cf. Orwell's 1984, with "Newspeak" & "doublethink" & Winston's tortured confession that 4 equals 5
- A. Richard Weaver, in *Ideas Have Consequences*, Fuller Seminary's Bernard Ramm; Rod Dreher, in *The Benedict Option* all trace today's deepest problems to Nominalism's growing influence
 - B. Perspectivism (Ockham to Nietzsche) now pervasive, especially in scientism; Nietzsche "wanted to replace the whole of Western philosophy with a position that held there are no facts, only interpretations, and no objective truths, only the perspectives of various individuals and groups"
- II. NOMINALISM EVIDENT**—Illustrations Abound
- A. Grammar: Words & Grammar/Syntax
 - 1. Words==arbitrary labels, **pasted on things**; thus: "When I use a word, Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." The question is, said Alice, whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be the master—that's all." *Looking Glass*
 - 2. Pronouns reformulated—thus "they" refers to individuals; re God "Mother," "Father," whatever! academics proposing "Zie/Zir" or "Xe/Xyr" to eliminate sexual dimensions
 - 3. Circumlocutions, euphemisms abound—thus "extremists" rather than Islamic Terrorists
 - 4. Momentarily *verboden* words: Indians; Redskins; Blacks; Man; "boys & girls" or "father" or "mother" replaced by "class" or "parent" in certain schools; "Chair" replaces "Chairman"; "birthing individuals" rather than mothers
 - 5. Traditional "grammar rules" discarded, allegedly to enable creativity, avoid shame
 - B. Logic: propositions, syllogisms, orderly thought, right reason, laws of thought
 - 1. A. McGrath: "logic is the enemy of truth"—thus stories, experiences, communal sharing guide
 - 2. "Logo-centrism" oft-derided as remnant of patriarchal past—need lateral, feminine perspectives
 - C. Rhetoric: writing, speaking effectively, communicating truth
 - 1. Literature: "reader response" important, actual text unknowable, unimportant; re Scripture what it means to you, not what it actually says
 - 1. History: cf. *Re-Writing Soviet History*; *The Killing of History*;
 - a. Hayden White, in *Metahistory*: "The aged Kant was right, in short: we are free to conceive 'history' as we please, just as we are free to make of it what we will."
 - b. "History Standards" celebrate Aztecs & indigenous peoples, ignore George Washington, over-emphasize McCarthy; consistently decry patriarchy and celebrate women; purpose of Standards, Gary Nash said, is to liberate students from the "prison of facts"
 - c. *I, Roberta Menchu* wins Nobel Prize, still assigned in universities despite mendacity
 - d. "New Atheists" (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens) egregiously malign OT
 - e. Biographies of Christ clearly resemble authors!
 - 2. Media
 - a. TV—news, documentaries (e.g. Katie Kurak re guns); dueling "experts" suggest no truth
 - b. Films—e.g. *Pocahontas*; *Dancing with Wolves*—environmentalists' fantasies
 - 2. Natural Philosophy: studying physical world, scientifically measured, philosophically understood
 - 1. Cosmos—restricting study to matter-in-motion; thus "Cosmos all" according to Sagan
 - 2. Darwinists disallow "design" of any sort (N.B. Richard Dawkins & Richard Lewontin)
 - 3. Feminists orchestrate replacing "sex" with "gender" & denying male/female distinctives
 - a. Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."
 - b. Subsequently, various "genders" (LGBTQQFAGPBDSM housing options at Wesleyan); current restroom controversies, athletic events; same-sex "marriage"
 - c. Military, "firefighters," police standards radically altered to insure "equality"
 - E. Ethics: personal/social principles, behaviors
 - 1. "Right you are if you think you are"—thus naming behavior makes it whatever it is
 - 2. Abortion "Rights" denies reality of what occurs
 - a. Misleading terms—"product of pregnancy," "fetus," "glob of tissue," etc.
 - b. "Reproductive rights," "choice," "woman's body," evading reality of killing unborn

TRUTH DECLARED: JESUS' PERENNIAL PROCLAMATION

Jn 18:33-38; Jn 14:6; Heb 1:1-4; Jn 1:1-14

- I. REALISM ESSENTIAL:** Prerequisite for *perennis philosophia*
- A. Aristotle: “To say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true” (Metaphysics)
 - B. Both Hebrew *emet* and Greek *aletheia* both mean fidelity and conformity to fact; (*aletheia* means unveiling, unfolding, opening up the inner essence of things, thus seeing what is); in biblical perspective, “truth” means entering into (i.e. understanding, not merely describing) reality
 - C. Propositions, declarative statements, rightly describe/define what is real, establishing **correspondence** between mental and extra-mental—*correspondence* differs from *coherence* view (as in mathematics when imaginary or negative terms OK) and from *pragmatic* view (as in mechanics, testing to see how something works), and from *skeptic* view (denying anything knowable—believe rather than know)

II. JESUS' TRUTH

- A. He **Came** bearing Witness to the Truth (Jn 18:33-38)
- B. He **Declared** “I am the truth” (Jn 14:6);
- C. He **Is** the Exact (i.e. True) Image of God (Heb 1:1-4)
- D. He **Informs** (as The Word) all that Is (Jn 1:1-14), thus providing forms we discern when our thoughts correspond with what Is Real

William Alston: “I believe the question of how to think about truth is crucially important for intellectual issues generally. It is hard to overemphasize the amount of mischief, in this century especially, that has resulted from confusions, false assimilations, and sloppy thinking concerning truth” (*A Realist Conception of Truth*, p. xi). “Hence *alethic* realism,” Alston says, “implies that what makes statements true or false is independent of our thought and talk” (p. 84). He concludes: “But in the final analysis whether what we say is true is determined not by anything we do or think, but by the way things are--the things we are talking about. This vulnerability to the outside world, this ‘subjection’ to stubborn, unyielding facts beyond our thought, experience, and discourse, seems powerfully repugnant, even intolerable to many. As a Christian, I see in this reaction a special case of *the* original sin, insisting on human autonomy and control and refusing to be subservient to that on which our being and our fate depends, which for the Christian is God” (p. 264).

Etienne Gilson: “Shall we say, as St. Thomas Aquinas was to answer, that since God has made man a rational animal, the natural light of reason must be able naturally to perform its proper function which is to know things as they are, and thereby to know truth? Or shall we say with St. Augustine, that truth being necessary, unchangeable, and eternal, it cannot be the work of a contingent, mutable and impermanent human mind interpreting unnecessary, changeful and fleeting things? Even in our minds truth is a sharing of some of the highest attributes of God; consequently even in our minds, truth is an immediate effect of the light of God” (*The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, p. 54).

To focus on *thought* rather than *being* is the fatal flaw of all false philosophies. “Man is not a mind that thinks, but a being who knows other beings as true, who loves them as good, and who enjoys them as beautiful” (p. 317). Great metaphysicians—Aristotle, Aquinas—find ways to apprehend the Real, ways to discern truth about the Real. Their approach, what is often called the *perennis philosophia*, is almost identical with philosophical *realism*, the guiding assumption that there is an independently existing realm of reality which we can know as it is, not as we choose to construct it. To Gilson, St Thomas Aquinas said “things so obviously true that, from his time down to our own day, very few people have been sufficiently self-forgetful to accept them. There is an ethical problem at the root of our philosophical difficulties; for men are most anxious to find truth, but very reluctant to accept it. . . . In short, finding out truth is not so hard; what is hard is not to run away from truth once we have found it. When it is not a ‘yes but,’ our ‘yes’ is often enough a ‘yes, and . . .’; it applies much less to what we have just been told than to what we are about to say. The greatest among philosophers are those who do not flinch in the presence of truth, but welcome it with the simple words: yes, Amen” (p. 61).