

LIFE TOGETHER • DOUG OLENA • 5/28/23 & 6/4/23

PSALM 115 AND CULTURE EXERCISES

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READ THE PASSAGES IN PSALMS.

— *Doug Olena*

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**WHAT IS OUR
PERSPECTIVE?**

WHAT IS OUR PERSPECTIVE?

"WE ARE MADE OF STAR-STUFF." - CARL SAGAN

- Our culture is rich in things that our forebears of 3000 years ago could not even conceive in their wildest imaginations.
- What do you think was missing of our perspective in theirs?
- Give me a list of things both material and non-material.

**WHAT IS THE WRITER'S
PERSPECTIVE?**

WHAT WAS THEIR PERSPECTIVE?

"WE ARE MADE OF STAR-STUFF." - CARL SAGAN

- The best we might be able to do is to understand what in our culture they did not have.
- What do you think was missing of our perspective in theirs?
- What did they have that we also have?

CHARACTERISTICS OF IDOLS

ANCIENT

"WE ARE MADE OF STAR-STUFF." - CARL SAGAN

- Silver and gold, made by people that have...
- ...Mouths, Eyes, Ears, Noses, Hands, and Feet, but these are non-functional, non-sensible organs.
- "Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them." 8

MODERN

"WE ARE MADE OF STAR-STUFF." - CARL SAGAN

- I don't think it can be said in the West that the ancient proscriptions about idols are of any use today.
- But, our idols are of a mental and social sort, having to do with our loyalties and commitments.
- Francis Bacon in *Novum Organum* described aspects of idolatry in the West we can identify with.

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THE REASON FOR OUR EXERCISE IN
PERSPECTIVES IS TO DETACH OUR MODERN
CULTURAL ELEMENTS FROM THEIRS.

— *Doug Olena*

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I BELIEVE THAT THE ANCIENT ISRAELITES
HAD ONE PRIMARY TASK, TO DETACH
FROM IDOLATRY, THE MODERNS, MUST
NOW DETACH FROM GOVERNANCE.

— *Doug Olena*

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FRANCIS BACON

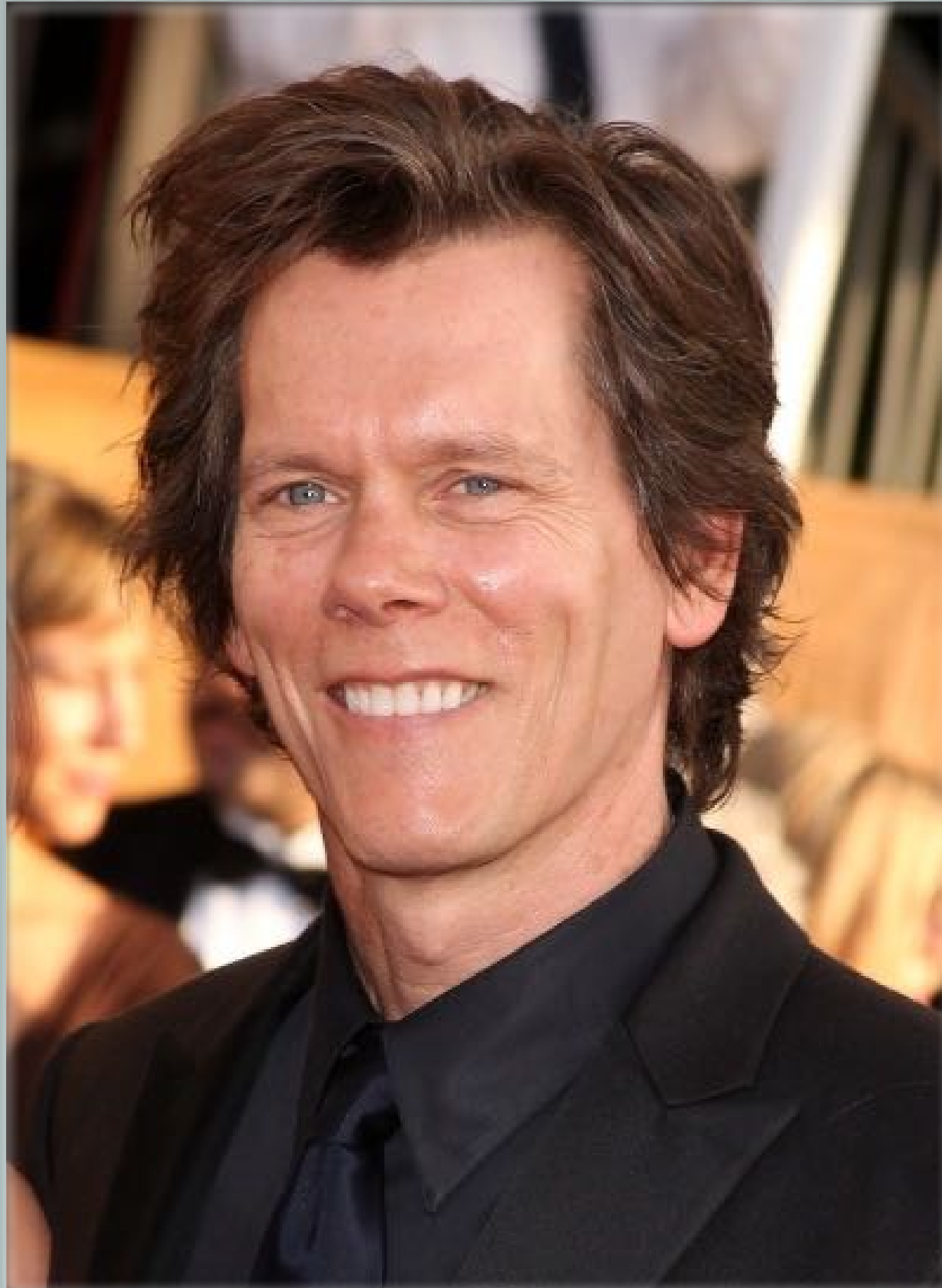
The Age of Reason 1500-1800



Francis Bacon 1561-1626

- [In The New Atlantis, Francis Bacon outlined the ideal society.
- [Science would provide the key to human happiness.
- [Bacon is a great example of the Enlightenment thinker in believing that individuals should be free to explore nature unencumbered by Church polity.

The Age of Reason ;-)



Kevin Bacon

- [Bacon discusses the pursuit of knowledge around four great themes.
- Knowledge grants power (charity).
- Theology and Science are separate fields of knowledge.
- Induction is the means of creating systems or methods of inquiry.
- The system should be dynamic, i.e., continually examined.

The Age of Reason ;-)



Randy Bacon

- [**Four idols** that obstruct knowledge:
 - 41 **Tribe**—what we assume to be true is always a perspective or what we prefer to be true
 - 42 **Den**—private fallacies from background, education
 - 43 **Market**—association and communication, use of words
 - 44 **Theatre**—dogmas of philosophies and institutions like the Church

ONE LAST THING

FROM LAST WEEK

PSALM 115:17

"WE ARE MADE OF STAR-STUFF." - CARL SAGAN

- "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, nor any who descend into silence."
- This penultimate phrase in the psalm equates those who are physically dead with idolators who are for all intents and purposes spiritually dead.

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IDOL: IMAGE, WORTHLESS, DUNG,
HOUSEHOLD GODS, FALSE GOD, ADJUNCT
TO DIVINATION, “PLACING ANYONE OR
ANYTHING BEFORE GOD.”

— *Mounce's Expository Dictionary 349-351*

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SO, IDOLATRY IS BAD!

TWO FORMS OF BEING

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- To substitute one for the other is a mistake:
 - of perception
 - of attribution
 - of interpretation
 - of practice
- Reason needs schooling here.

OF PERCEPTION

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- As a perception, idolatry too quickly gives credence to some experience.
- Perception is not simply seeing what is there.
- Expectation, habit, culture, physics, and memory play a part in what we can perceive.

OF PERCEPTION

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- Everything is filtered through a complex set of organs, under conditions that do not permit singularly perceiving what is there in a simple correspondence with reality.
- What makes up our perception?
- How does Bacon's *induction* help us?

OF ATTRIBUTION

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- Of every event, our mind struggles to categorize.
- How would a person attribute to God some effect of the universe?
- How would one attribute to the universe some effect of God?
- Is there a way to distinguish between these?

OF ATTRIBUTION

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- Or is this a categorical mistake?
- Is it always possible to distinguish between the acts of God and the acts of the universe?
- What are some things that are easy to categorize and some things that are not?

INTERPRETATION

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- Since both physics, culture, and language are intermediaries to interpretation, how can we know if we've got it right?

OF PRACTICE

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

- You've heard of Christians who are practically atheists and atheists who are devoted to God.
- How could this happen?
- How does Christian maturity play into this distinction?

INEVITABLE ILLUSIONS

Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini

INEVITABLE ILLUSIONS

MASSIMO PIATTELLI-PALMARINI

- Why should we be most skeptical when we're most confident we know the truth?
- Why do we often think we should have foreseen entirely unpredictable events?
- Why do conclusions that seem eminently logical turn out to be totally irrational?

INEVITABLE ILLUSIONS

MASSIMO PIATTELLI-PALMARINI

- Chapter 7. "Seven Deadly Sins" :: Examples?
 1. Overconfidence (usual mode of reaction, no work)
 2. Illusory correlations (magical thinking)
 3. Predictability in hindsight (easy to see how that happened)
 4. Anchoring (reverting to first impressions)
 5. Ease of representation (ex. all the wrong descriptions of the trinity)
 6. Probability blindness (fear of flying)
 7. Reconsideration under suitable scripts (think 21st century politics)

HOW DO ALL THESE THINGS
RELATE TO IDOLATRY?

HOW DO THESE THINGS RELATE TO IDOLATRY

ONE TRUE GOD!

- What we take for granted, may be an irrational construct. We need to be more circumspect.
- People are incomplete, as is all of nature. Fulfilling our Christ-like destiny is a matter of sorting out true from false, worthy from unworthy, useful from useless, and beauty from ugly.... Discernment is paramount here.

HOW DO THESE THINGS RELATE TO IDOLATRY

ONE TRUE GOD!

- True, Worthy, Useful, and Beautiful things are the product of work on ourselves.
- “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Paul

**MY SUGGESTION:
CRITICAL REALISM**

CRITICAL REALISM

BEING FAIR-MINDED

- Roy Bhaskar
- Alister McGrath
- Charles Taylor and Hubert Dreyfus

CRITICAL REALISM

BEING FAIR-MINDED

- Commitment to the real world, even though our perceptions and cognitive state are constructs, artifacts: our phenomenology.

CRITICAL REALISM

BEING FAIR-MINDED

- Saying "God is real" becomes a construct of the many-faceted features of our humanity...