

The Curvature of Truth



Richard

d Weaver

by Carl Nelson

As Roger Kimball notes in a recent essay in American Greatness, "[Richard M. Weaver's 'Ideas Have Consequences' at 75](#)":

"In "The Ethics of Rhetoric" Weaver has penetrating and original things to say about Lincoln's speeches, Milton's rhetoric, and the legal arguments deployed in the Scopes trial of 1925. Particularly noteworthy is his discussion of the way certain words acquire a positive or negative charge that lifts them out of the precincts of ordinary semantics to a realm of moral inviolability. Consider the word "progress." Weaver nominates it as "the god term of the present age" which can "validate almost anything."

...

"It works the same way on the negative side of the lexicon: certain terms seem unredeemable. One of the primary "devil

terms" in modern times is "prejudice," a term that once meant "prejudgment" but now, as Weaver says in his important essay "Life Without Prejudice" (1957), is primarily "a flail to beat enemies." Just so, Edmund Burke praised "just prejudice" as that which "renders a man's virtue his habit." For us, the word is synonymous with bigotry. Prejudice in the old sense, Weaver notes, was a "binding element" in society. And that is precisely why—at least, it is one reason why—the attack on prejudice occupies such a prominent place in the strategy of the Left."

I'm a few months from 75. Matters which for years seemed straight ahead, when viewed over the period of 50 years betray a curve – rather like the earth seems straightforward and flat, until a view is taken from very far away, when just the tip of a matter's sails can be seen. Some matters when viewed from the separation of 50 years show just the tip of the truth, whereas, initially it seemed the whole matter was very upfront and plain for all to see.

Perhaps my opening metaphor is describing the inverse of what I intend. But it does seem that the world, as it was framed for my young self those many years ago, was a fabrication, a pretender to the throne pushed forward under full sail, and not the true thing, of which I now fear that I am viewing just the most tip top portions. (Who can contemplate the full evil?)

For example, in my youth we had been instructed to avoid stereotypes of all sorts, especially ethnic and racial slurs. We were to attend to each racial and ethnic failure as if mothering a burgeoning possibility, and that censoring, or calling out, these failures was as if murdering babies in their cribs. Crime, for example, was taken as a natural human response to an unfair system. We must understand the roots of it as if it were an undernourished baby. Racial and ethnic slurs were taken as real things which had crippled whole

populations, holding them back, preventing their participation in the American success story.

The fact that the incidence of crime rose as the economy improved was perhaps a first indication to me that our morals were being graded on a facetious curve. Calling Negroes "Blacks", hadn't much effect either, and in fact, things seemed to deteriorate further as society switched to "Afro-American", then back and forth in wobbly fashion. And declaring that a black person couldn't be racist, because they hadn't power, wore poorly right from the get-go.

It has occurred to me recently that perhaps doing away with calling out the various racial and ethnic groups by way of humor and slurs was not a good thing – as these are the ways one group criticizes another, forcing it to hold a mirror up to itself. And beyond that, and on a more positive note – is a way one group salutes and cements its virtues. For example, I would suppose when Blacks call Whites uptight and white bread, they are simultaneously embracing their own flexibility, and natural "whole grain" resourcefulness in eluding the deracinated standards of the ruling class.

Since we've done away with these practices, it would appear the societal brakes have been removed and the bad actors of all races and types have enjoyed a field day. White bread for example has really gone to seed, gotten stale and moldy, eschewing their own culture for reveling in slovenliness and laxity of near every moral guide. While Black Live Matter so much now that they can steal and assault with impunity in the Bluest cities, take stuff right off the shelves without fear of prosecution, even murder their fellow Blacks at an alarming rate. It's moral flexibility and criminal resourcefulness on steroids.

And, by the way, its cousin, Islamophobia, is currently burning down most of Europe. We're to blame for that, likewise. In fact, I've been currently watching, "Hidden

Assets” on Acorn TV – a series underwritten by contributions from the European Union – whose plot follows that line. According to the plot line, white corporate interests in have been importing incarcerated Latin Americans in order to implant them as faux Islamic terrorist bombers in order to increase the populist vote, allowing the nationalist candidates to privatize the leading port for windfall profits. Talk about a narrative blowing bubbles out of a fictitious ass! But there it is.

What with the hindsight of 75 years, some cultural criticism would now seem back in order. And if it isn’t nice, or pleasant, or polite... after 75 years it seems due time we’re back to “calling a spade a spade”, a crime a crime, and doing it more loudly than ever. I’ll give up my White Privilege, when you put back that stolen TV.