

1

Frydowski, as you know, is writing an epistolary novel. He is writing fiction in order to better tell the truth. The letters in this novel will emphasize their own fictionality. These letters will include an explanation of the project. They will explain why epistolary fiction was “necessary.”

2

My own guess is that he’s trying to circumvent the pretentiousness of some and the hatred of others. The pretentious, in this context, are those connected to institutionalized philosophy. The haters are those intimidated by philosopher, who tend to protect themselves from this willful ignorance with sophomoric relativism. The first bunch is tangled in what Frydowski would call a “positive transference.” The second bunch is tangled in the negative version.

3

Frydowski can come off at times as anti-institutional, but I claim that he is not. Institutions can guarantee mediocrity. They filter out the complete fools. They sometimes support the best, and perhaps most of the best are funded by such institutions. But there is nevertheless a crucial gap between any finite institution and a rationality which is always “ideal” and “transcendent.” (Or philosophy really “is” just “opinions,” so that the “really” here is the cry of an infant.)

4

The “problem” for Frydowski is that he is serious. He is even a “rationalist” in some sense. He is shamelessly a “foundationalist” in an age dominated by “the partisans of nonsense.”

5

What amuses me, as someone who has followed his work from the beginning, is that he started on the other side. He embraced the most slippery neopragmatism imaginable, taking Rorty for granted and trying to push the project farther. Before becoming an close reader of Rorty, he was a passionate reader of Nietzsche. He wrestled with the complicated and

self-opposed spirit of Nietzsche as if he were wrestling with an angel. He thought of himself as something like a “Shakespearean ironic mystic” or a “transcendental buffoon.”

6

If you read his writings as he transitions into a more “serious” (rationalist, foundationalist) mode, you’ll see that the motive was “ethical” or “aesthetic” in some sense. It is a matter of self-deception or self-confusion to do one thing while believing that one is doing something else. *The intention of the philosopher is scientific.* The goal is to tell the truth. This involves sharing beliefs that are as adequate and tested as one can manage. Crucially, one presupposes a single authoritative logic that philosophers as such must respect.

7

The difficulty is that the common sense of the bumpkin is a classic foil for the philosopher. So even sophomoric relativism (which can manifest socially as open-hearted tolerance, as virtuous) seems like an advanced position – to the bumpkin who has just left that bumpkinism behind. It is easy to continue down the road of this sophomoric relativism, as versions of it become more and more rich and intimidating. Let it be said that many “relativistic” philosophers still include valuable insights in their work. This makes the situation more confusing. Philosophers who even belong in the canon include insufficiently criticized absurdities along with such insights. In an age that is in love with inversions, critics who notice these errors are interpreted and dismissed as bumpkins.

8

The word “pomo” is often used as pejorative shorthand for self-mystified purveyors of the latest flavor of irrationalism. I think it’s fair to see Frydowski as “anti-pomo,” but he is also “anti-bumpkin.” His “anti-pragmatism” is essential. Ethically or whatever, this is the key. Science is “pure.” It is not political. And utility does not imply truth. It is not pro or anti utility. It is not fascist or communist, conservative or liberal. It will not save the world from scientism or crude religion. It is not therapeutic. All of that is burned away in its white flame.

This is another reason to fuck with the novel form. Frydowski, as a “pure” theorist (of, among other things, pure theory) is suspect in an age of resentment and impatient pragmatism. The “will to truth” is “foolishness to the geeks.” The “ego ideal” of the pure perceiver is not cool, not in fashion. Yes, Socrates was historically given poison. But it’s more important to read the death of Socrates as part of the structure of society. “Bracketing” involves the omission of the typical focus on the practical consequences of one’s thoughts. The “true” philosopher is a useless or irresponsible “dreamer.” At best ! In a society ruled by fanatics, the philosopher is hated as one who is able to articulate why a faddish irrationalism is confused. The shrewd unbelief of the philosopher is a thread to the faith in the faithful. Worse even than the opposed fanatic are the cold eyes who view the topical issue itself as foolish (or too sad and low and anxious for rational conversation on the topic to be possible.)

## 10

In other words, there is something “amoral” in the theorist. More exactly, the theorist (as such) is faithful only to rational (scientific) norms. The theorist as a human being may be a loving husband, etc. But Frydowski defends the largely forgotten “purity” of theory which is something like what Schopenhauer calls “genius.”

## 11

It’s worth noting that Frydowski is related, in this sense, to those who insist on a fundamental reality of “atoms and void.” Frydowski himself was this kind of thinker at one time. Now, of course, he insists on the radical priority of the lifeworld as forum. As you surely have noticed, most of those who insist on this lifeworld as either phenomenologists or religious thinkers of some kind. As in Husserl’s time, today some religious thinkers are using phenomenology to support the creation of a new spirituality (a return of the sacred.) While these people aren’t Frydowski’s enemies (they at least recognize the lifeworld after all), they “contaminate” an otherwise strictly scientific critique of “scientism” (bad ontology) with nakedly “spiritual” intentions.

Of course Wittgenstein mixed the spiritual into his brilliant early work, but he was admirably “negative” in this regard. And, crucially, *Wittgenstein jettisoned the transcendental ego*. This ego residue is what Frydowski objects to in Husserl, who is otherwise one of his heroes. And Husserl’s rhetoric of crisis suggests a role for Husserl, at that time, analogous to the role of Jordan Peterson today. Did you see that Frydowski’s post on this in the Phenomenology Reddit was removed ? While his other posts were left alone ? To me this looks like hero worship. And Husserl is a greater figure than Peterson, of course. But this does not mean that he could not make a similar mistake. We all know that Heidegger was a complete fool when he switched in the mode of the Therapist for his society.