

Professor Finlay Clinkscales

[1:22]

MC: Wow! What a story! And now we have another special guest, but a very different kind of guest. *(cups her hand by her mouth and whispers)* This one's a *professor*! Uh oh! Direct from Glasgow, Scotland, Professor Finlay Clinkscales, world expert! Come on out, Professor!

Professor Clinkscales enters. He is wearing a brown v-neck sweater with shirt and tie underneath, a sturdy belt, rough trousers and work boots. He carries a pipe, in which he is tamping down some tobacco. He appears quite jolly. In his vest pocket is a laser pointer.

MC: Professor Clinkscales, thank you so much for being with us tonight.

Professor Clinkscales: My pleasure indeed.

MC: Professor, could you tell us a bit about your area of study?

Screen: Professor Finlay Clinkscales, PhD, HHS
World expert in Horrific Human Stupidity

Professor Clinkscales: Why yes, certainly. I study stupidity.

MC: Stupidity? You have a PhD in stupidity?

Professor Clinkscales: Yes. I specialize in the study of Horrific Human Stupidity.

MC: But humans are intelligent! Your field must be very narrow.

Professor Clinkscales: Not at all. Horrific Human Stupidity encompasses most major fields: physics, biology, cosmetics, psychology, scientology, sociology, diet, nutrition and grocery shopping, linguistics, sports, the media, celebrities, breast and butt implants, politics of course, but most of all religion.

MC: I see. Professor, what will you be speaking to us about this evening?

Professor Clinkscales: Horrific Human Stupidity, of course. Didn't you hear me the first time?

The MC is taken aback by the professor's snappishness, and exits backwards, bowing.

MC: Sorry, professor.

Language Is not Reality

[2:02]

Professor Clinkscapes: Language is not reality. It may feel like reality, you may mistake it for reality, but language often represents the precise opposite of reality, and there are social reasons for this. All this time you thought everyone was playing the guitar right handed, but they were actually playing the guitar left handed. And in all these years...you never even noticed! Why?

Because not playing "right" would be...wrong. It would be "sinister."

He holds out his left arm.

Therefore left must be called right, even though it's...wrong!

The professor appears a bit angry at this point.

Screen: [images of instruments listed below]

Yet the aggressive misrepresentation of reality in language goes much deeper than than the labeling of playing guitar, or mandolin, banjo, ukulele, violin, viola, cello, all of which are also being played left handed while being called right handed.

Screen: [the ocean, below the surface]

Actors 1 & 2 enter, miming fish swimming along.

Professor Clinkscapes: Two young fish are swimming along one day.

Actor 3 enters from the opposite side, also miming a fish swimming.

An older fish swims by them and asks...

Actor 3: How's the water today?

Professor Clinkscapes: The two younger fish swim on past, then one turns to the other and says...

Actor 1: What's water?

Screen: sexism

So it is with human language, which is constructed to both refer to objects and concepts, but also to *suppress* awareness of specific aspects of reality, and often to suppress the most prevalent aspects of reality.

Professor Clinkscapes begins to become a bit agitated.

Screen: [Google nGram Viewer of "sexism"]

Professor Clinkscapes takes out the laser pointer, and points it at the chart.

For example, nearly all human societies up until fairly recently have been thoroughly and completely sexist. You would think that something with one hundred percent prevalence would have a word assigned to it, but look at this chart.

He directs the laser pointer to the beginning of the timeline, and begins to move the pointer along the timeline.

Even though all human societies had been thoroughly sexist up until only recently, the word "sexism" doesn't even appear in English until around...1960!

He turns to the audience, and takes a few steps forward.

If you don't have a word for it, then it must not exist, because it's "normal." You are also forbidden by your society to even be aware of it, but you are not even aware that you are suppressing your own awareness in obedience to society.

We will study more examples later. Thank you.

Professor Clinkscapes exits, reloading his pipe.

Why a cabaret?

[3:00]

The Mistress of Ceremonies enters quickly, taken aback by the bad temper of Professor Clinkscapes.

MC: Well, that was certainly...interesting. Ask a professor, get an answer...yikes! But we'd like to explain to you why we're here tonight. Why are we here tonight?

Professor Clinkscapes: (*offstage, shouting*) Because we're not dead yet, that's why!