“Civilization - a Personal View”
by Kenneth Clark
Episodes 1 to 5

John Gavin
CLS Spring 2018
Plan for Each 75 Minute Class

• 15 minutes: Introduction / Review
• 50 minutes: Video using subtitles
• 10 minutes: Discussion / Preview

I will post a subset of these slides on the CLS website

The Series in **MONUMENTAL** and anything monumental must skip a lot of detail and can be criticized.
Eight of Thirteen Episodes

1. **The Skin of Our Teeth:** Dark Ages, 500 to 1100 AD.
2. **The Great Thaw:** 12th century, Early Middle Ages.
3. **Romance and Reality:** 14th century, Late Middle Ages.
4. **Man: The Measure of all Things:** 15th century, Early Renaissance.
5. **The Hero as Artist:** 16th century, High Renaissance.
6. **Protest & Communication:** 16th century, the Reformation.
7. **Grandeur and Obedience:** 16th and 17th century, Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation.
8. **Heroic Materialism:** 20th century. This is actually **Episode 13,** Clark’s summation. Didn’t want you to miss it.
Introductory Notes

• Kenneth Clark - Art Historian

• **Western European Civilization** after Fall of Rome
  – Not Ancient Greece and Rome or Asia or Africa etc

• **Art and Architecture** dominate the series
  – tangible evidence of what a civilization created

• Series was created **50 years ago**
  – “in the last 50 years” means 1915 to 1965

• Clark prefers **Civilization** to **Barbarism** !!!
Civilization Series

• Introducing Color TV to the United Kingdom.

• **Goal: entertain** the audience with intelligent, beautiful and **Colorful** material.

• Series presented **on location:**
  – Visits 13 countries; 117 locations
  – **Music** is an essential part of the series.
  – Filmed in **35 mm** cinema quality

• An **Englishman** talking to an **English** audience.
Three Opinions Are Important

1. Kenneth Clark’s opinion
2. My opinion
3. Your opinion
   – unfortunately we will have little time for discussion
I can’t define Civilization, but I can recognize it when I see it.
Roman Empire: 117 AD
After the Fall of Rome – 526 AD
Western Civilization

Roman Civilization / Roman Catholic Church
- Latin Bible; Latin Authors (Cicero, Virgil)
- Fall of Rome to the Germanic Tribes – 500 AD

Dark Ages: 500 AD to 1100 AD
- Monasteries: Latin Schools
- Copying Manuscripts

Modern Western Civilization
Episode 2
“The Great Thaw”
My Bio

• Saint Anthony School: Bronx 1960
• Fordham Preparatory School: Bronx 1964
• City College of New York – BA 1968 (Political Economics)
  – Thanks to CCNY for required art and music courses
• NYC Public School Teacher: 1968 – 1973
• Traveler / Wanderer
• Ohio State U: 1978 MS (Computer Science)
• IBM: 1978 – 2009
• Teacher: Ohio State, DCC, Vassar, IBM
• Marist CLS after a long waiting list. Yeah !!!!
• **Hero Worship:** Kenneth Clark, Bob Dylan, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, James Joyce, Albert Camus, the Impressionists, Henning Mankell, etc, etc
Western Civilization

Roman Civilization / Roman Catholic Church
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Dark Ages: 500 AD to 1100 AD
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Modern Western Civilization
Episode 2: Key Points

• Barbarians are destructively hostile to anything they don’t understand.

• Western Civilization survived for more than 100 years on the fringes of Europe.
  – Western means Latin / Roman / Western European.
  – Eastern means Greek / Byzantine

• Charlemagne (742 AD – 814 AD) was the first of the new post-Roman rulers in Europe.
  – King of the Franks (Germans)
  – Holy Roman Emperor (799 AD)
  – Brought literate monks from the British Isles.
Episode 2: “The Great Thaw”

- There was mostly “darkness” from 500 to 1100 AD
  - That’s pre-Columbus to today
- Monasticism: Benedictines, Cistercians, etc.
  - Latin Literacy, manuscript copying, advising kings
- Pilgrimages: Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela, etc.
- Crusades: church sponsored military campaigns (1095)
- Building Cathedrals: St Denis (1135 – 1144), Chartres, etc
- Gothic Architecture replaces Romanesque (St Denis)
  - Thin walls; more light; pointed arch; flying buttress
- Founding of Universities: Bologna (1088)
Monasteries

• Monasteries: spiritual centers
  – study of the **Latin Bible**
    • **Latin** was the **international** language of scholars and the Roman Catholic Church from Roman times until about 1750.
  – Monastery schools: monks needed to read the **Latin Bible**
    • Roman schools that trained civil servants had disappeared

• Monastery Scriptorium
  – create **copies of the Latin Bible** and other **Latin texts** (especially Cicero and Vergil)

• **Literacy:** priests and monks were just about the only people in Europe who could **read and write Latin** for several hundred years
  – Literacy was a skill that popes and princes needed
  – **Dante** wrote the “**Divine Comedy**” in Italian in 1320
  – **Chaucer** wrote the “**Canterbury Tales**” in English in 1392

• Monasteries became temporal and political centers
History

• **Western Civilization inherited from Greece and Rome**

• The **Roman Church and Monasteries** were the only civilizing forces during the Dark and Middle Ages
  – Schools, Latin Literacy and Copying Manuscripts

• **Barbarians** settled down and became
  – French, Italian, Spanish, English, etc
  – Speaking vernacular Latin and German (English)

• **Dark Ages** ended before 1100 AD
Episode 3
“Romance and Reality”
1. **Dark Ages**: Barbarians in charge: CHAOS

2. **Great Thaw**: Europe wakes up: Cathedrals, Pilgrimages, Universities

3. **Romance**: Ideal & Courtly Love
   Idealism of St Francis of Assisi

   **Reality**: Trade, Banking, Cities, $$$$$$. 
Who is Kenneth Clark Guy?

• **Poor Little Rich Kid**
  – neglected by parents
  – abused at boarding school
  – sought refuge in art and architecture
  – born: July 13, 1903 in London, England (Scottish family)
  – Trinity College, Oxford (1925), modern history.
  – died: May 21, 1983 in Kent, England

• **Museum Director:**
  – Director of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 1931-3
  – Director of the National Gallery, London (1933-1945)
  – Keeper of the King’s Pictures: 1934 – 1944
  – Arts Council of Great Britain: 1945-1960
Who is Kenneth Clark Guy?

- **TV Broadcaster:**
  - Chairman of the Independent Television Authority (ITA)
  - ITV Arts Broadcaster: 1957 – 1966
  - Several other art shows for BBC: 1970 -1983

- **Writer**
  - “Leonardo da Vinci”: 1939
  - “The Nude”: a study in ideal form. 1956
  - “Civilization”: 1969
  - “The Romantic Rebellion”: 1973
  - Two autobiographies ...
Three Things

• Clark’s English pronunciations
  – “Capitalism” becomes **CA PIT AL ISM**

• **Plain Song** / Plainchant: a diverse body of chants used in the Catholic Church

• **Gregorian Chant**: Pope Gregory I (600 AD): reorganize chants from diverse traditions into a uniform and orderly whole.
Romance and Reality

Romance: the Gothic Medieval Mind

- **Ideal Love**: the ideal woman: Jesus’ mother Mary
- **Courtly Love**: dedicate your entire life to an unapproachable woman. Chivalry.
- **St Francis of Assisi**: possessions are the root of all evil or “money can’t buy me love”

Not Romantic

- **Marriage** was a property issue in feudal times
- **Crusaders** were away for years; Wife in charge
- **Small static feudal elite** that petrified
St Francis of Assisi

- Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone: born 1181
- Gave his possessions away
- Became a hermit and beggar (mendicant)
- Francis was not a Catholic priest
- Started the Order of Francis (Franciscans) in 1210
- Franciscan Order grew and Francis gave up control
- Beggars and Hermits (fanatics) became unpopular.
- Franciscan Order became very rich and powerful
Romance and **Reality**

**Reality**

- **Italian City States**: Florence / Urbino etc.
  - Not land based feudalism
- **Trade / Banking / City Life / $$$$$$$**
  - Making money is the goal of life
- **Not Democratic**: run by powerful families
- **Solid Reality**: no more ideal or courtly love
- **Patrons of the Arts**
  - Supported the arts: example Giotto
  - Make up for your sins: build a church / start a charity
Confidence: ongoing theme

• All great civilizations have CONFIDENCE.
  – They think they are correct
  – The future will be great

• PESSIMISM is the enemy of civilization
Episode 4

“Man: The Measure of all Things”
The Word “Gothic”

• Architecture of Saint Denis and Chartes was called the French Style.

• Renaissance Italy Thought
  – Roman Architecture was great
  – Italian Renaissance Architecture is great
  – French Style was inferior
  – Italians began to call French Style GOTHIC, as in Barbarians. Name stuck, but the insult later disappeared
Halo for Holy and Sacred

• Used in Buddhism
• Used by Roman Emperors
• Signifies Holy and Sacred
• **Christian World**
  – First only applied to Christ
  – Extended to Mary
  – Extended to Saints
• **Halos went out of favor in realistic painting**
Man: The Measure of all Things

• Focus shifts from God ➔ Man
  – Man as an individual
  – Proportions go from Gothic HUGE to HUMAN Scale
  – Portraits begin to be more realistic
  – Making money was considered almost sacred

• Florence: a democratic Republic until 1434
  – The Medici ruled after in 1434 and democracy ended
  – The Medicis were great patrons of the arts

• Urbino: ruled by Federico da Montefeltro – 1444-82
  – Urbino was not democratic, but had a first class ruler.
  – Kenneth Clark: Urbino was Civilization itself.
  – Palazzo Ducale: one of the most important collections of Renaissance paintings in the world.
  – Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino was born in Urbino - 1483-1520

• “A man can do all things if he will”
Watch Episode 4
The Great Books of the early 1500s

• "The Courtier" by Baldassare Castiglione (1528 AD) describes the “perfect gentleman”:
  – Cool mind, good voice, proper bearing, proper gestures.
  – Warrior spirit, athletic, knowledge of humanities, the classics and fine arts.
  – Written in Italian, not Latin (in English 1561)

• "The Prince" by the Italian diplomat and political theorist Niccolò Machiavelli (1532 AD).
  – Immoral Means can are justified when used to achieve the aims of prince.
  – Written in Italian, not Latin (in English 1640)
“Premavera (Spring)” – Sandro Botticelli - 1480
“Birth of Venus” - Sandro Botticelli - 1485
A Civilization is a complex society:

- Urban development
  - Dependence on farming to feed the cities
- Social stratification
  - Development of a Cultural Elite with Leisure
- Culturally ingrained ideologies
  - Progress,
  - Our civilization is the best and everyone should conform to it willingly or ... unwillingly
- Monumental architecture,
- Taxation,
- Expansionism,
- Militarism

Civilization need not be democratic
Kenneth Clark’s Beliefs
“Civilization” pages 346-347

• Order is better than chaos
• Creation is better than destruction
• Knowledge is better than ignorance
• Human sympathy is better than ideology
• Gentleness is better than violence
• Forgiveness is better than vendetta
• We learn about ourselves from history
• Clark believes in the god-given genius of individuals
• Civilization is Fragile – Handle with care
Episode 5
“The Hero as Artist”
The Hero as Artist

• In 1500 Rome was:
  – a living museum of the ancient Roman civilization.
  – The Pope was a secular political ruler.
  – The Roman church was an international organization with a common language: Latin.

• Pope Julius II decided to tear down old Saint Peter’s and built a huge cathedral
  – new Romans wanted to outdo the ancient Romans.
The Heroes

- **Pope Julius II**
  - Boss and financier: 1443 – 1513
  - Pope: 1503 – 1513
  - Decided to tear down Old Saint Peter’s
  - Unintended consequence: Protestant Reformation

- **Michelangelo**
  - “David” and Sistine Ceiling: 1474 -1564

- **Raphael**
  - Papal Apartments: 1483 - 1520

- **Leonardo da Vinci**
  - Universal man. 1452 -1519

- **Bramante**
  - Architect of Saint Peter’s. 1444 - 1514
Back in Rome

Scale
• Gothic Scale was huge – Chartes Cathedral.
• Early Renaissance was human scale - Urbino
• Now think “enormous” – Saint Peter’s

Saint Peter’s Basilica
• Tear down Old Saint Peter’s
  – a very old and holy church
• Build even bigger than the ancient Romans did

Scale: not one painting or sculpture but
• An entire church (Sistine Chapel)
• The Papal Apartments
“DAVID” by Donatello
• 1430
• 5 foot 2 ¼ inches tall
• Bronze
“DAVID” by Verrocchio
• 1475
• 4 foot 1 inches tall
• Bronze
“DAVID” by Michelangelo

- 1504
- 17 feet tall
“DAVID” by Bernini

- 1624
- 5 foot 7 inches tall
- Marble
Scale
WATCH EPISODE 5
Composition
• 4 Corner Panels
• 8 Triangular Panels
• 2 End Panels
• 9 Central Panels
• 10 Edge Panels

Fresco: technique of mural painting
• Executed upon freshly laid or wet lime plaster.
• Dry-powder pigment is mixed with water
• The pigment mix is applied to the wet plaster.
• Then the plaster dries.
• The painting becomes an integral part of the wall.
• Smoke from candles and incense blur everything
Unrealistic: there will be a response

- **Michelangelo**: everyone is a muscle builder
- **Raphael**: everyone is handsome and aristocratic
- **Enormous** becomes overpowering

**Leonardo**: can’t be classified
- Man as a mechanism to be dissected and studied
- Curiosity
- Very few paintings survive
One Last Thing: Leonardo’s Horse

• Never created until 1999
• Project of Charles Dent, a United Airlines Pilot
• 24 Foot Tall
• Cast at Tallix Art Foundry in Beacon
• Now at Race Track in Milan
End Episode 5