

☞ *What really pisses RR off?*

This video lays out a battle between “rationality rules” and RR’s understanding or interpretation of Jordan Peterson’s views on “religion” as mythological truth. In this, RR plays a game of “King of the Mountain” by demonstrating “beyond all doubt” the superiority of “his” position as laid out both by himself and those he chooses to advance his case. On the other side, there is only Jordan Peterson trying to present his perspective on truth but clearly failing to make an impression. The result is a mishmash of ideas where the same words are being used, but being used with completely different meanings by different participants. The result is ever increasing levels of frustration and tension on the part of Jordan Peterson and smugness on the part of his “opponents.”

The key question is why is RR so intent, so focused, on destroying JP’s position—or rather, RR’s understanding of JP’s position, for it is clear that RR is not actively listening; there’s no questioning or answering, or other forms of exploration.

Preliminary Conclusion

RR’s reaction seems so extreme that the issue for him must be an existential one. By now it’s clear that his position as a “realist” is empiricist. Such an horizon cannot consider as real either the transcendental realm of meaning or the realm of interiority. This meaning that for him the highest form of truth is scientific; all else is subordinate. Yet we know the transcendent is a fundamental feature of all human life, so his devotion to realism becomes for him a transcendent “religion” without actually being acknowledged as a religion. JP threatens his very religious beliefs.

Detailed Analysis (9:18-10:26)

- 1. Weinstein: Scientific truth is at the top of the hierarchy.** Scientific truth is objective, not subjective, i.e., a matter of “perception.” As such it stands outside human interest as a truth not subject to human motivations or beliefs. While such people may acknowledge the “subjective” impressions of others, these impressions cannot be real in the sense of being an objective scientific truth. Within such a horizon, neither the transcendental realm nor the realm of interiority can be “real” for they cannot be empirically verified.
- 2. Functional specialty’s “truths.”** There are different truths that result from different epistemologies; there are different truths arising out of a fully differentiated mind; are there then truths arising out of Lonergan’s functional specialties? After all, each specialty has its own specific type of question, its own proper methodology, and its own distinctive output. Can we speak of taxonomical truths? Interpretive truths? Historical truths (facts)? Dialectical truths (conversion)? Foundational truths? Etc.?
- 3. “Peterson is conflating one perception of reality with reality itself.”** (9:18) Reality itself, for RR, is scientific truth against which one’s subjective perception of “truth” has no validity. Perception is automatically considered subjective while scientific laws relating on thing to another is automatically true. Note that the empirical sciences are not and cannot be concerned with ethical questions of ought or should, as they would fall into the realm of the subjective. Note also that this subjective labeling effectively eliminates the need to take the other person seriously.
- 4. Dominance game.** That RR is playing a dominance game, a “king of the mountain” game, is clear when one observes that there is no give or take, no questions to clarify meaning, no attempt to understanding Jordan Peterson’s point of view, his experiential training, his objectives as a clinical psychologist, his world view. It is not understanding that is being sought, but the elimination of the other as a threat.
- 5. A crumbling society.** What seems to be at stake for RR is not only that the question of truth is the issue, but that mistaken beliefs can destroy a society. In this sense, RR is defending not only his own position but the position of “rationality” in human affairs. And what can be of more importance than the role of religion in human affairs. This accounts for RR’s instance at the beginning of the video that this is a religious

matter. The problem he will face is that his conceptualization of religion will be truncated by his epistemological position around which his foundational horizon is constructed, maintained, and enhanced.

- 6. Harris: external objective truth.** (9:50) Scientific truths are objective, external to human interests. But Lonergan maintains that though intentionally truth is meant to be objective “out there” ontologically it exist only within the individual. Furthermore, empirical truths only relate one thing to another, a difficult task that requires a highly technical language, lexicons, and research methods to act as control mediators. The realm of common sense relates to world to human interests, and it is this realm that the great ethical and moral questions have their roots. As a result, Harris shifts from objective truth (the woman can be objectively verified to having had an affair) to common sense ethical questions of whether or not the husband had to commit suicide. And he is not even aware of having made such a shift. Curiously enough, this is where Jordan Peterson’s approach can start to make sense for the simple reason that he in his professional practice deals with ethical and moral problems all the time—but not as a moralist, only a therapist. Therefore, “truth” to Peterson is what works as a therapeutic tools, i.e., “survival.”
- 7. Intelligibly claim.** Scientifically validated truths, so that it is possible to claim the woman cheated on her husband, but the “fact” that the husband killed himself because of this cannot in any way be empirically verified. This is where an interesting shift takes place in the “conversation” between Harris and Peterson, for all of a sudden there’s a dramatic shift in context from the scientific to common sense as it relates to marriage, to selecting a partner, to maintaining a relationship, etc. all of which involve ethical considerations. To Peterson, the experiential reality of human relationships is real in a way that Harris cannot apprehend, even though Harris is also a human being facing such ethical questions in his own life. This suggests a dangerous hubris on Harris and RR’s part, a “superior” stance that brooks no opposition for the reality is there for all people to see.
- 8. More than rationality.** There is more to common sense living than rationality. Of equal and perhaps greater importance are the dramatic narrative story-telling of human beings that can be expressed through myths, the aesthetic dimensions of feelings that allow for quick responses to changing conditions, and biological imperatives of reproduction and survival.