

## SCISSORS

Lonergeran talks about upper and lower blades of a scissors used to understanding. The upper blade consists of theory where high level operators anticipate what there is to be known; the lower blade consists of the concrete data at hand.

For our purposes, *the upper blade* is Lonergan's notion of conversion as it applies to the functional specialty of foundations. This allows us to anticipate what there is to be known about Peterson's foundational stance by directing our investigation to what is or is not significant. *The lower blade* is the one video we are using as a source of concrete data from which we may be able to make a preliminary objectification of Peterson's perspective. It takes both abstract theory and concrete data to reach any sort of conclusion.

The theory we are using relates to the realm of interiority, that body of intentional analysis that when appropriated leads to a heightened awareness of how we come to know and decide. In short, intellectual, moral, and religious conversion all relate to this heightened awareness of this realm of interiority now objectified in an objectification of Peterson's foundational stance.

## TWO MODES OF UNDERSTANDING

Lonergeran's *transcendental method* objectifies the core structure of human understanding and deciding as it applies to an individual human being. These are the four levels of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, where the first three relate to knowing while the last one relates to doing. Truth is what is intended when we ask the question: Is it so? Value is what is intended when we ask the question: Is it important?

Individuals are constrained on what can be known through direct experience. Most of which we know and rely upon in our daily lives is a matter of *trust*. How we identify who is trustworthy and who is not is key, as is the associated question of to whom we give our allegiance. To answer these questions we need to know not only our own foundational stance and the generative principle we use to build it, but the foundational stance of those we encounter. (For the religious converted, there are two generative principles in a dialectic between good and evil: life-affirming or death-embracing.)

But since Mannheim's "Ideology and Utopia", it's clear that there are collective processes that establish a communal world view. Those that study this field of sociology of knowledge are aware of the historical emergence of knowledge as certain insights are accepted, others rejected, and the good of order constructed. Combine this with the fact that what is currently known transcends the possibility of any one

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### PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS AND TENTATIVE ANSWERS

#### 1. Does Peterson have a strong foundational stance?

Yes. Becoming a public personality has not shifted him from his professional interests in truth and healing.

#### 2. Does Peterson have the fortitude for moral conversion?

Yes. He's operating outside his normal professional realm but has taken up this task out of an obligation to tell the truth.

#### 3. Does Peterson ground himself in God?

No. He's still a materialist, though he does appreciate both value and transcendence.

#### 4. Is Peterson a critical realist?

Yes. But not formally. He's aware that reality is not "out there to be seen" but in some sense is created by words.

#### 5. What does Peterson value?

Honesty, human dignity, thinking things through.

#### 6. What fundamental institutional changes are taking place?

Rails against a totalitarian ideology (Utopian; progressive) that is sweeping Western society.

person knowing all, then we have a problem of regulating this collective world mediated by meaning.

This situation becomes unstable when either a culture no longer becomes normative or the one effective collective methodology of the hard sciences truncates human experience. What criteria are to be employed, in this collective creation?

Lonergeran's solution is his *eight functional specialties*, each related to each other in such a way that progressive and cumulative progress becomes possible. The key insight was that the four levels of cognitive operations specific to the individual could be extended in two different ways in the collective: the mediating worlds mediated by meaning and the mediated world by meaning. The former consists of coming to know and understand all known worlds mediated by meaning that communities have developed over the centuries; the latter is the world mediated by meaning that comes about through an individual or group taking a position, taking a stand.

Research, interpretation, history, and dialectics all have to do with coming to understanding all these mediating worlds; foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications are all grounded in the foundational stance or position taken.

*A sound world mediated by meaning depends on the degree of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion of the individual.* Any mediated world grounded in the unconverted only leads to decline as counter-positions rather than positions dominate the public sphere.

It is here that the transcendental injunctions located within the individual come into play in understanding and assessing this collective body of knowledge. For *each individual lives in a tension* between his or her own knowing and deciding, and the collective world mediated by meaning that dominates the good of order in any specific culture or civilization. A totalitarian society seeks to eliminate such tension through the application of coercion, deceit, and domination--but that tension is never fully eliminated.

## PUNCTUATION

In the communication field, there's a phenomena known as "punctuation" that affects the meaning given to any stream of history Punctuation has to do with the *selection of the starting point* in any meaningful story; the selection of where you start your story will affect the story itself.

The clearest expression of this comes from the field of mathematics. Take a series S such that:

$$S = a - a + a - a + a - a + a - a \dots$$

What does this series mean? To answer this question depends on where you start the story, and in this case there are two quite different answers that are incomparable.

$$S_1 = (a - a) + (a - a) + (a - a) \dots$$

$$\text{Since } (a - a) = 0$$

$$S_1 = 0$$

But,

$$S_2 = a - (a - a) - (a - a) - (a - a) \dots$$

$$\text{Since } (a - a) = 0$$

$$S_2 = a$$

*The same sequence has two completely different meanings depending on where the series is punctuated.*

The same applies to the stories, the narratives, we create to understand the world in which we live. For example, if your story starts with the election of Trump, then that's the origin points and all that follows rests on that election. If your story starts with the development of the Progressive movement with Woodrow Wilson, then your story starts with the bureaucratic take-over of the political sphere--in which case Trump can be considered a socio-political remedial event. But let's start our story with the Enlightenment. Now our story has to do with the rise of "rationality" and "science" over the density and texture of a Christian-based world view in which humans are by their nature flawed.

Progressives deny this flawed nature, take the Enlightenment point of view that God not only does not exist but such religious beliefs are dangerous, and seek a system or collective approach to solving problems.

## EXISTENTIAL

Each of the four cognitive levels of Lonergan's transcendental method corresponds to a different and distinct mode of being in the world.

*Experiencing is being intentionally open to the world.* Awareness of being an experiencing-er is an intentional act: we intend to experience, and that intentionality anticipates what there is to be known that is of significant to the knower. This is not a passive operation, but a highly dynamic and intentional affair.

*In seeking to understand, we become a detective.* This too is intentional, for those who seek to know seek to know something of interest or importance to them. In other words, the detective has a question and that question leaves him or her in an internal state of tension until the question is resolved. It is as a detective that we first bring meaning into the world.

*To answer the question "Is it so" requires a shift to being a dispassionate judge.* To judge requires the skills to collect and weigh the evidence and finally make a call based on what is known. It also requires a sound knowledge of what it means to make a judgment.

It is at this level that a shift to critical realism is essential, for this epistemology lies at the core of human understanding. But there's a fourth level, one that is not concerned with knowing but with acting.

*Deciding has to do with being an actor in the world.* Now being an actor requires sound knowledge. And knowledge depends on the quality of experiencing/understanding/judging. Failure to meet the transcendental injunctions results in intellectual garbage flooding the culture. Any culture that has lost control of meaning, which is to say its common beliefs are no longer connected with reality, lives in a dangerous world of myth and magic where unexpected events are common place and the situation heads into long periods of decline that seems immune to reversal.

*Garbage in/garbage out.* This is why Lonergan's functional specialties are so important, for they provide the only way of controlling meaning in a progressive other than imposing a normative culture or utilizing a hard science methodology that by its very canons cannot comprehend the complexity of the human condition.

*As actors, human being encounter each other.* In this encounter, human beings create themselves in a process of mutual self-mediation. Mutual Self-mediation may well lie at the core of the sociology of knowledge. But even so, the functional specialties are a necessity for any complex dynamic civilization if they are to set a firm foundation for moving into the future.

[Note: Two contrasting ecosystem images: survival of the fittest (conflict) vs. cooperation among individuals and species.]