

This is part 1 of a detailed analysis and evaluation of the video "Rationality Rules." It is undertaken as an exercise in heightening awareness of different epistemological positions as a means of understanding the type of confusions evident in this video and avoid such complications in our own efforts to dialogue with others.

Intellectual Conversion consists of a shift from limited epistemologies such as naive realism, idealism, or empiricism to that of Lonergan's critical realism.

1. Completely different horizons

- Naive realists believe that only objects that can be seen are real, so their horizon is restricted to the world of perceivable objects. This restricts intelligence to the sensate world and not toward understanding the world as mediated by meaning.
- Idealists believe that only concepts are real and "reality" is only a reflection of pure forms. Their horizon is restricted to that of (unverified) concepts and the "real world" is not really real but a reflection of the ideal.
- Empiricists believe only in an external world and in doing so set aside such cognitive operations as experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding as being subjective and therefore "unreal."

2. Completely different meanings

- There are no common objects within realism, empiricism, or idealism. The same words may be used, but the meaning given to them is quite different.
- Any dialogue between individuals holding different epistemologies soon becomes extremely frustrating, for participants may believe they are talking about the same thing but in reality they are in quite different worlds mediated by meaning.

White-board Notes

So often we think we are talking about the same thing, when in fact we are using the same words but unknowingly attribute completely different meanings to them.

- 1. Horizons.** Can we come to understand our own horizon? We can never set outside of ourselves for an "objective" understanding of our horizon, but what we can do is encounter the horizon of another and through that encounter come to objective certain features of our own awareness of how we experience, understand, judge, and decide the critical things in our lives. This is reflective intelligence at the third level of the human good, that search for freedom that allows for well-grounded decision concerning what is of terminal value.
- 2. Changes in Horizons.** There are two possible changes to one's horizon, one that extends who one is, the other radically redefining who one is. Horizontal expansion takes the existing horizon and expands it to include other areas of inquiry, while vertical expansion free the individual from lower level horizons to a higher perspective. But there is a third type of change, one involving intellectual conversion, in which the entire foundation of one's horizon is changed resulting in a totally different way of being in the world.
- 3. An Attack Video.** *Rationality Rules* (RR) has created an attack video that in effect presents his own reaction and position with respect to Jordan Peterson's view concerning religion. He does this in two ways: the first is to pull out the key passages in Peterson's presentations that challenge his own beliefs, while the second is to use other protagonists as foils for his own arguments. His primary stated focus is that of "religion", while his level of analysis is stated to be epistemological. He talks of "crucifying" JP, regarding him as "immoral" and "dangerous."
- 4. No One Knows.** It is soon clear that none of the actors have appropriated their own rationality through intellectual conversion to worlds mediated by meaning grounded in an epistemology of critical realism. Because

of this, they "debate" at cross-purposes, each holding to a position that the others consider invalid. In this case, there are only two primary positions: RR's (and his spokespersons) and Jordan Peterson.

- 5. Partisan Attack.** One repeated viewing, it is clear that RR has had a deep reaction to some of Peterson's work to the point where he produces a series of such videos to present his own perspective. While presenting himself as being "above" the others (as a true intellectual), it is slowly becoming obvious that his own epistemological position is reductionist in nature (Cf. Allan Bloom on *Love and Friendship* where he contrasts Nietzsche's rather sterile views with the rich dynamic understanding of human nature expressed in Shakespeare's writings.)
- 6. Ethical Question.** Good the equivalent of "rationality"? Bad as "mythic"? Both of these for RR are sited in "religion—that for us has some relationship to the transcendental realm, Lonergan's notion of theology as mediating between the Divine Mystery and human cultures, and the mystery of "sin" (as opposed to guilt).
- 7. Awareness** RR and the actors he parades across the stage are not aware of their own epistemological positions, although of all those being tried it is only JP that seems to be open to further inquiry. All the others appear rather dogmatic in their opinions, certainly far less open to exploring the issues at hand. But again, the material presented is highly selective.

Detailed analysis continued . . .

This is an attack video in which the narrator (RR) is highly disturbed by Jordan Peterson's "mythic" approach to religion. There are thus two epistemological positions to be clarified: that of RR and his allies as sparked or challenged by JP's comments, and that of JP himself. Note that we limit ourselves to what can be understood via the video itself, for what is important is not their positions per se but a growing awareness within ourselves of different epistemological positions being espoused by those around us who for the most part have not undergone what Lonergan's calls an "intellectual conversion."