

RATIONALIZED CONDUCT

By

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Public Speaking 4C

Excellent, sir!  
I thoroughly enjoyed reading  
these papers - a lucid and  
at the same time readable  
treatment. The application  
makes for interestingness.

## RATIONALIZED CONDUCT

One day, while attending a certain class, I heard the professor in charge ask one of the students to recite. "I am very sorry, sir," said the student, "but I have a cold;" and he immediately slouched down in his seat imagining the matter concluded. The professor, who was not to be fooled, again urged the student to recite. The latter finally did so very well; and sat down feeling ashamed of his former excuse. Now! Was the excuse about having a cold the "real" one, or just a "good" one--that is, did his slight cold really and truly keep him from being able to speak well, or did he make himself believe that it bothered him? Mind you! I do not say that he was lying. The fact was, however, that he did not want to speak; and instead of giving this real reason, he "talked it into himself" that he had a cold. In other words, he rationalized. His reasoning was colored and prejudiced by the fact that he did not desire to speak.

There are a great many people who rationalize instead of reasoning logically--that is, they find "good" arguments and not "real" ones, for what they want to believe. Mr. Jones is jealous of his neighbor's new car. He immediately begins to reason with himself that he needs a new automobile, although he knows perfectly well that that is not the case. After a while, he finally convinces himself that a new car is very necessary. He came to this conclusion not because of his logical reasoning, but because he wanted to come to that conclusion. That is the

trouble with many people. Their reasoning is always colored and biased by personal prejudices; and, paradoxical as it may seem, they do not know that they are fooling themselves. They believe that their reasoning is perfect.

Another very important point in rationalization, also brought out in Robinson's "Mind in the Making," is the fact that we would not have had all the past arguments, quarrels and wars were it not for rationalization. Even such great men as Plato and Aristotle often rationalized. They sometimes tended to color their thoughts with their personal beliefs and prejudices and for that reason, they often debated with their contemporaries whose reasoning was also biased. Thus we see that very few people indeed are free from this type of thinking. It is prominent in the thoughts of the schoolboy who reasons why he should go to the ball game instead of school; of the business man who reasons why he should close shop on a hot summer day and go bathing; and of the ruler of a large and powerful nation who reasons why he should war on a weak neighbor. We see, then, that rationalization may have been responsible for many important actions that have influenced the history of the individual himself and of the world.

No one can hope to say without contradiction that he is able to wipe out rationalization from our thinking processes, and no one can safely determine how it will ever be entirely eliminated--an impossible event, so long as our fundamental instincts will remain with us; but, I am sure, that we can safely say that the thinking processes of only the most educated and intellectual persons are free from rationalizing.

..... *are they? Or is it relatively so?*

BEING OBJECTIVE

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## BEING OBJECTIVE

"Shall I do this?" mumbled I to myself, as I sat in my study room, one day. This utterance was occasioned by the fact that I had seen my sister smoking and was undecided as to the course I should follow. Shall I put a stop to it or not? I was in a very perplexed state of mind indeed; and after some deliberation, I decided to speak to a certain gentleman whom I knew.

After I had told him what bothered me, he smiled knowingly and said, "What do you personally believe?"

"Well!" answered I, "In my viewpoint-----"

"Ah! Young man, stop right there." I glanced at him in a surprised manner, but he continued to speak. "That is the trouble with most people. They do not know how to think. The average person thinks subjectively, and not objectively." Upon seeing my perplexed countenance at these terms, he said that he would immediately explain their meaning.

"Being objective is something that the ordinary person cannot do, for he tends to think in a biased manner. When he is confronted with a problem, he looks at it from his own viewpoint, and thus puts himself in a position where he can be easily influenced by prejudice. Now take the case of a person who is asked what he thinks of companionite marriage. He will immediately say to himself, 'It is against a long established custom; and since I do not believe in breaking customs long established, I am therefore opposed to it.' You see what he did? He looked at

the problem from within himself and allowed his previous opinions and prejudices to help him reach his conclusion. Instead, he should have said, 'Let me see. Will this newly proposed method help to reduce the problems of married life? Is it practical? Can it be put into use without much trouble?' So you see that when a person is confronted with a problem, he should study it objectively; that is, he should not look at it from within his own personality; but instead, study the question from outside of his own self."

"But-----" interrupted I, who could not (as yet) make "head or tail" of his explanation.

"Just a moment," he said, "I will explain myself still more fully. Now take your own case. Your sister wants to smoke and you do not know whether to give her your permission or not. Is that correct?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well," he continued, "can you give me any good reason why she should not smoke?"

I thought for a moment and answered, "I dislike the idea of her smoking, because I am not used to seeing ladies smoke."

"But," he immediately said, "that is exactly how you should not reason out a problem. You are allowing your prejudices to decide the question for you. You are deciding it subjectively; that is, you and your prejudices are deciding it; and not, you alone. Look at the problem in an unprejudiced light and say to yourself, 'Is there any reason why I should keep my sister from smoking?'"

Will smoking harm her in any way? Will anyone be harmed by her smoking?' If you reason thus, you will be looking at the problem objectively, and your conclusion will not be formed by preconceived notions and prejudices."

"But," I questioned, "is it not human nature to think subjectively?"

"That is true," he replied, "and that is just what we have to fight against. We should not let our prejudices control us; but instead, we should control our prejudices. The sad truth is that too many people think subjectively."

"Well!" I then said, "I cannot find any reason why I should interfere with my sister's smoking outside the fact that I am not accustomed to it, so I believe I will not interfere."

"That is exactly how you should reason," he replied enthusiastically. "And do not forget that when you are confronted with a problem" he continued, as I bided him good night, "that you should always, think objectively and not subjectively." As I closed the door, I heard him chuckle to himself in a good natured way.

From that time, I have always followed out his principle of thinking objectively, because I have found that it tends to make the individual give an impartial, unprejudiced, and very fair decision to any problem confronting him.

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