

PREFACE



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The following monograph on "*Reason and Religion*" has two distinct parts. The first is a consideration of the unique nature of reason itself and an explanation of why it cannot be subsumed by any
5 other activity — especially by either religion or science — or be devalued into some form of ambiguity such as poetry. The second is an example of how reason, speculatively understood, might help to give an insight into the Christian religion —
10 particularly its Liturgy.

As a backdrop to these two undertakings, I have also tried to indicate that the very real problems of our century — especially its proneness to violence and the destruction of the earth — are not solvable
15 if perceived unspeculatively.

PART ONE

*The Nature of
Reason*



*THE NATURE OF
REASON*

The title of this monograph, **Reason and Religion**, seems straightforward enough to us as heirs of a long history in which the two terms "reason" and
5 "religion" can be assumed as having a meaning commonly understood. Nowadays it is usual for intellectuals, particularly philosophers, to speak of "reason" in deprecating tones and in terms which assume that there can be many types of "reason".
10 Likewise these same intellectuals assume that there can certainly be many "religions". With respect at least to "reason", philosophers in particular should know better, for of all opinions, none is so destructive of philosophy as to think it possible that there
15 can be more than one rationality or more than one "thinking".

There have been, of course, historically, many "philosophies" and not a few "philosophers". In religion the same can be said. There is a certain
20 irony that in both cases when the activity becomes turned into a "profession" the number of philos-

ophies and religions becomes enshrined and idealized. "Ideologies" and "founders" become idols. There have been no wars over philosophy outside of the rather low level disputes in academe — many
5 going back to ancient times. Religion, which has so many million more adherents, can lay claim to the all time record for blood shed — albeit in the name of God. And in this single fact, as prevalent today as ever before, lies a certain mark about religion
10 that should not be allowed to be overlooked.

The clarity of the question here, of the fact that the most violent parts of the world are those most "religionized", cannot be understood simply as ethnic warfare or economic deprivation or lack of
15 education. More than these "politically correct" *naïvetés* are needed to even begin to understand the question. The violence of religion, of religious war, is palpable in itself just because it *contradicts* the main tenets of the religion(s) involved — tenets
20 which place the highest priority on loving co-operation, wisdom, contemplation, peacefulness.

What is most curious in discussing this question of religious violence is that it cannot be discussed "within" religion. The religious consciousness
25 cannot be aware of other religions having equal rights to claiming truth, cannot be aware of secularity as a possible alternative, cannot have the

historical consciousness of social science. These natural assumptions of modernity have arisen out of *breaks* with religion, which laid claim to going beyond a simple religious consciousness.

- 5 More curious still and more instructive is how the religious consciousness has in various forms tried to *absorb* these assertions of independence. The most general and pervasive way to characterize this effort of religious consciousness to stay with itself and the
10 counter offensive of consciousness trying to be independent of religion is to see the dispute as a struggle between "religion" and "science".

- There is historical merit to this characterization in so far as every scientific advance, that is, new or
15 "improved" empirical understanding of physical existence, has always been rejected by religious authorities, who then in the fullness of time and self-interest have been forced to accommodate it.

- 20 There is also a certain intellectual merit in the characterization of the struggle between "religion" and "science" in so far as each is, intellectually speaking, that is, speaking from a standpoint out-side of either one, the opposite of the other. Religion is a deductive activity dwelling on eternal universality
25 unknowable empirically — hence, its claim to faith. Science is an inductive discipline hopelessly immersed in a strict temporality of instances only knowable as possibility. Its "method"

is its "faith". The dogma of the religious consciousness must reject the inevitable scepticism of the scientific consciousness. Equally the scepticism of the scientific consciousness cannot bear the burden of invisible truth and must opt for the idolatry of possibility.

While there may be merit both historically and intellectually in the reasons for the dispute's insolubility, there is little merit in thinking it possible that the insolubility is absolute. As absolute the dispute can have only two outcomes. Either it will go on forever with each side becoming ghettoized and intractable, or one side will annihilate the other. Put more colourfully, either science is the work of the devil or religion is a nest of superstition.

The violence of religion is *also* the violence of science. Science has immensely encouraged and expanded the ability of violence. All the "techniques" of war are scientific techniques. And throughout the ages men of empirical bent have been drafted by rulers to help them kill their enemies more efficiently. Leonard da Vinci spent as much time on weaponry as on theory and serves as a link between the artisans of Greece and Rome and the scientists of Europe and America. There has been no doubt a steady increase in "technique" from phosphorous to cruise missiles. Unfortunately

the thinking, if such it be, behind the use of the techniques is about as primitive as ever.

And what in all this is the role of reason, and how is it to be related to religion and science? Our
5 monograph is entitled *Reason and Religion* not "Reason, Religion and Science" because in understanding the violence of our time it is necessary to understand science as "technique" — no more, no less. As such it has a certain neutrality. A neutrality
10 no doubt often deplored by those who want to use it for their own ends. But the idea that science as such has anything useful to say about its "use" is more deplorable still. The point at which the scientific consciousness becomes conscious of itself
15 as "scientific" is just the point at which it *must* become "religious". And this is just what happens when scientists become politically or socially active. They must then be drawn into ethical issues. As soon as this happens they step into the fold of
20 religion and cease to be able to do their work — which is nothing else than to seek out the secrets of the physical universe without the restriction of "consequences".

The religious consciousness enlists the scientific
25 one for its own ends. It uses it to destroy its enemies. This is easier the more purely "religious" it is. It is not difficult to die and to kill if this life is seen as merely a *means* to heaven. And the more

empirical that heaven is — paved with gold or peopled with nubile women and sumptuous feasts and laughter — the easier is the destruction of the here and now. This understanding alone should
5 make everyone justly afraid of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of religious fanatics, that is, true believers.

Again, what is the role of reason? By this point it should be clear by implication at least that the
10 question of violence cannot be addressed very clearly by either a religious or a scientific consciousness. There is no particular impetus for either to end it. The one sees it as a furtherance of eternal ends, the other is by nature indifferent. To
15 really deal with the question is to get outside both consciousnesses. And to do this is only possible through reason.

Once again there is merit, historical and intellectual, for this priority of rationality. Historically it was the
20 discovery of “reason” by the Greeks that made possible the discovery of both “religion” and “science”. Without the Greek insight into the *independence* of reason there would be no “religious” or “scientific” consciousness — only a kind of undifferentiated
25 eclecticism with various rituals, largely inefficacious either in reducing physical ills or in increasing knowledge of the physical or psychical universe.

The distinction between "religion" and "science" is a *rational* distinction. This scares theologians and scientists. The history of this fear has taken and always will take the form of suppression on the one
5 hand, absorption on the other. Greek philosophy flourished for a long time — about a thousand years before it was shut down institutionally and symbolically by a Christian emperor, Justinian. The
10 piety of the emperor did to philosophy what Greek piety did to Socrates — both in the name of religion. The historical upshot was the absorption of philosophy by Christianity. Theology became the highest activity. Philosophy was relegated to
15 "natural" reason unaided by "revelation". Philosophy as handmaiden to Faith became "use-ful" or prolegomena to faith and the "underivability" of dogma. Dogma could be thought of as defensible logically. This defense reached its apotheosis in the Middle Ages when litigation was religious rather
20 than, as in our time, economic.

The revenge of philosophy, metaphorically and historically, was the triumph of science beginning about five hundred years ago. The triumph was rather a slow affair, only gaining momentum in the
25 nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The result is the increasing violence of our era. The demise of Communism as a politically correct form of secular economic religion has let out a Pandora's box of ethnic hatred and religious fundamentalism.

Scientific secularism is powerless against this violence as it is, as much as anything, its author.

5 The authority of science, now unchallenged in the West, except by various fundamentalist groups still surviving as anachronisms from an earlier age, is based, like that of Christianity ten centuries ago, on the scepticism of reason. In the case of science reason is used as an instrument of "mathematical" rather than "theological" precision. The scientific
10 imprisonment of reason is, like its religious one, a self-destructive act of rational consciousness. The mark of this self-destruction is a lack of self-confidence in the hierarchy of rationality.

15 The discovery of rationality by the Greeks became possible only because the Greek philosophers were perfectly clear that the highest activity was *thinking* and that *reason* was itself the mark of divinity in man. This confidence was dissolved first by Christianity — and likewise among other religions such as
20 Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism when Greek rationality was introduced — and then again by modern science. Only within the small but devoted remnant of philosophers and Christian mystics remaining in the Greek philosophical tradition that has maintained itself through the
25 centuries does or can this confidence remain alive. This is the confidence of speculative philosophy which unswervingly maintains that Reason is

indeed the highest mark of mankind and the true essence of an *imago dei*.

5 The uniqueness of the claim lies in its "speculative" nature. Speculative reason cannot be a tool be-cause
out of it, speculatively speaking, arise both religion
and science. How can this be? Certainly no modern
person, either Western or Eastern, can conceive of
such a claim. Yet only a little reflection will show it.
10 No species other than the human has religion or science. All other animal species have sensation. Many of these species have one or more of the five senses more abundantly than do we. Some species
seem to dream and to plan to some degree and to
communicate and remember to a more than
15 elementary degree and even to show some degree of what humans like to think of as altruism. Yet only men and women go to Church, attend university, idolize the theory of relativity. No species other than the human kills so systematically, destroys the
20 planet so effectively, or loves so universally and cares for the earth so passionately. Why? How can this be? Simply because no other species is so capable of rationality — of, in a word, self-consciousness.

25 Consciousness of self is indeed our conundrum, our *mysterium*. It is self-referential — the brain studying itself! It parallels the theology of divine self-reference found in all higher religions — especially developed in the Christian Trinity — and

the same belief in natural self-reference found in all nature religions and in science.

To go back again to the question of violence. The character of our century is of violent hatred in the name of race or ideology carried out with systematic technique. In all instances such violence has been generated by either a scientific ("survival of the fittest" or the "inevitable demands of history") or a religious (a "holy war" against infidels or some form of "ethnic cleansing") consciousness.

How can we characterize these forms of consciousness. We have already seen that they are, when viewed intellectually, opposite. One is deductive and dogmatic, the other inductive and sceptical. What we can now add is that they are both, in the end, not primarily rational. They "use" reason but they are not *in themselves* rational. They are without speculative reason. And it is this lack of speculative reason, we contend, that creates the violence and environmental malaise of our century.

A further proof of this contention, if one feels the need for further proof, is the sad spectacle of philosophy's self-destruction in the twentieth century. Never has speculative philosophy been so marginalized and lacking in confidence. Nothing could be more pathetic, if it was not also so tragic, than the sight of philosophers, calling themselves

"professionals" and policing themselves for political "correctness", proclaiming philosophy as in one form or another a cult of the irrational.

5 The Greeks put the irrational into Tartarus and placed rationality on the peaks of Olympus. Modern philosophy in all its forms, Marxism, phenomenology, existentialism, Anglo-American empiricism, language cults, aesthetics, and philosophy "of's" cannot *evidence* reason. This is because reason is not
10 at the convenience of history or a matter of convention or of race. Reason is not a plurality of possibilities like geometry or species of plants. It is one, universal activity. And the proof of it is simple. Every effort to *prove* otherwise *always* depends on
15 either the inherent "logic" of reason or on a move to a sphere of ambiguity such as poetry or instinct. For it is simply *not possible* for reason *to be* irrational. One can escape the ultimate discipline of reason by becoming a poet or aesthete, or by becoming a
20 theologian or a scientist, social or natural. But there is *no other rationality but rationality itself*.

Plato and Aristotle both sought to clearly distinguish between rationality and sophistry, between the "really real" and the "apparent", between a
25 reason masquerading as truth and a reason, beyond possibility, as actual. And these distinctions are indeed the most crucial. For reason is unique in that of all activities it is the only one which is

truly *self-referential*. Thinking *only* can think
about thinking. Hence it is quite capable of think-
ing about *everything else*. But, where it does so *only*,
it loses its truth in *itself*, and always devolves into the
5 tool of religion or science.

When thinking does not so devolve, it can throw a
light upon religion and science which can stabilize
them and keep them from becoming irrational,
from becoming self-destructive and negative. This
10 is the true role of reason. When reason is so
recognized as being at the top of a tripartite hier-
archy, reconciliation can take the place of the
exclusivity of opposites. Just as religion should be
a brake to any form of state absolutism, and just as
15 science should be a brake to religious dogmatism,
so is speculative philosophy a brake on all three.
The proof of this is that only speculative philosophy
can provide a consciousness that can relate the
activity of religion and science adequately by
20 explicating the inherent relativity of both and at the
same time the limits of each. This is not an idle
claim but merely the realization that the *actuality* of
mankind is its ability to be *rational* and that that
ability is the *root* of religion and science.

25 Such a claim does not, however, by any means,
signify that speculative philosophy is simply inde-
pendent of other less self-referential forms of
consciousness. Nor can it imply that pure thinking

can somehow be a substitute for science and religion. This is because the very nature of reason as self-referential, as conscious of the limits of every other form of consciousness, demands of speculative philosophy that it limit itself as universal, that it be
5 conscious of its *own* limit. Every form of rational self-destruction has as its inward moment a privation of self-reference such that another less comprehensive form of consciousness takes on the mantel of
10 reason. But it is just because this mantel can be taken on by no other activity that the necessity of reason's independence must also rely on its relation to the limits of every other form of consciousness. The Being of Reason is also the being of the
15 *Hierarchy of Rationality*, which hierarchy is forever as much the activity of religion and science as necessary forms of human consciousness, as of thinking about thinking.