

In Defence of Reason

WHAT IS REASON?

Reason is thinking that does not contradict itself. You cannot know what is real without reason. You can make mistakes with it and it is important to do it right.

Reason consists of three laws. All the other laws are just different forms of these but the substance is unchanged.

With Aristotle we must agree that there are three Laws of Thought (page 108, An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis).

One is the Law of Identity which says that A is A.

Two is the Law of Non-contradiction which says that a thing cannot be A and non-A in the same sense. A thing can be good and bad but not in the same way but a thing that is good and bad in the same way cannot exist.

Three is the Law of the Excluded Middle. Everything is either A or it is not A.

You will see that two and three are not really additional laws to one. They are just different ways of stating the first so there is only one law: A is A. If A is A and not non-A then A is A. If everything is either A or it is not A then A is A for A is not non-A.

The senses train you to see that A is A so reason comes from the senses and you know that the senses are right on this thing. For example, the sense of sight cannot see an invisible dog! Reason itself is a form of perception. Perception is detecting what is real and true in itself and what is real to you. You want your perception through sight to be good so you need your sight through reason to be good as well. Those who lie to you and those who let you err are opposing your perception. They are therefore opposing you. Consciousness, your most basic component is a perception, so to desecrate it is to desecrate yourself.

Faith is trust in another based on evidence that they can be trusted. Some say that rationality is not faith but the opposite of faith. Faith means that if new evidence arises that it is wrong or should be doubted that the person maintains faith. So it is indeed anti-truth and anti-reason though it may cherry-pick from them. Faith in reason and its power then is the only form of faith that is acceptable. It is then and only then that rationality becomes faith and faith becomes rationality.

REASON AUTONOMOUS

Reason makes you autonomous it is said. Truth got by your own reason does not mean that your reason is autonomous. You cannot change truth so if you see it you see it. The faculty of reason is autonomous but once it works something out you cannot change it for it is correct. You cannot do anything about 1 and 1 being 2 once you realise that 1 and 1 are two. What about assuming being more autonomous? It is autonomous yes but at a price. If you assume the wrong thing you end up going down the wrong road.

I CAN PROVE REASON

The allegation that reason is just blind faith and it takes blind faith to believe in it for it is its own witness is wrong. We know that we cannot stop doing it in one form or another and it is most likely to us that it is right for why would a demon or anything deceive us with it all the time? It is its own credible witness and it is not blind faith to believe in a credible witness. Reason is a way of trying to sense what is real. It is a sense. To say it is blind faith to have faith in reason is as silly as to say that it is blind belief or blind faith to believe that you see or hear!

If "reason is true because it says so and it says so because it is true" is circular reasoning then it is the only time we are allowed to use circular reasoning for this circle is necessary to have knowledge and belief or even if it leads only to the possibility of belief that will do. We don't need any other circle. But if it is a circle then how can we say that we know or believe for that is what is wrong with circular reasoning it does not entitle us to say we believe or know something? We know by experience that we can believe things so it would be different from other circles altogether.

I don't need circular arguments of any kind to persuade me to commit to reason and science. I know that by mental perception. I know that A is A for I am I and nobody else. Experience tells me that A is A. I know that the same holds true

for any other thing because I experience them as A is A like myself. I know that when A is A is true for me it is or would say probably true for everything else. However, "A is A" is not "A is true because A is true" but A is A because non-A is impossible experientially. We know by experience that A is A just as we know we see the colour red. Even if we are hallucinating the colour we still see it and that cannot be denied. Arguments like A is A are expressed in words which leads to them being confused with circular arguments but if you just concentrate on your awareness you will see the argument is true without words. The words are the fault of our language and not the fault of the self-verification experience. For our confidence in reason to be a real circular argument we would need to be unsure that A is A or that we exist and then use this circle to prove that we do! Obviously this is ridiculous. To say that God exists because the Bible says so and the Bible is right because God exists is really to prove nothing. That is what is wrong with circular arguments, the premise is the conclusion and vice versa, which proves nothing. But the circular argument, I exist because I experience myself and my experience is right for I exist, is different. It does prove itself. That is why it is not arbitrary to accept this circle and forbid all others as contravening reason. It is not really a circular argument for there is no assumption in it.

And it need not be circular reasoning because instead of saying A is A because I experience it and my experience is right because A is A it could be like I am the law that A is A for I am my existence therefore I can make deductions about other things being A is A. A house looks blue to me not because my eyes testify that the house is blue and my eyes are right because the house looks blue but because even if the house is an illusion I still perceive blue and I know it is not black but blue to me. It is as mistaken to say that evil does not exist for it is an illusion and that only good exists as it is to say that I cannot reason about what my senses tell me for even if I am being deceived that does not stop me rationally reasoning about what I perceive. When I reason about anything I reason about what it is to me.

You know that a process of elimination: having A, B and C and knowing that something must be A if it is not B or C, can reveal the truth. The evidence against B and C stands as evidence that A must be true even if you have no other evidence that A is true. A process of elimination forces you to accept reason and perception as good tools with which to understand and interpret reality. There is no way belief in reason could be blind belief or belief without evidence for no circular argument has anything to do with a process of elimination. It is better than a mere circular argument.

REASON REIGNS SUPREME

Rationalism is opposed by Empiricism and Pragmatism and the Coherence Theory of Truth. Rationalism is based on the Correspondence Theory of Truth. This is not really a theory. Its just pure commonsense to argue that if a statement is true then it corresponds to something real. "There is a pebble on the beach" is true if there is a pebble on the beach.

The Empiricist, by saying that truth is what is learned by the senses, is saying that x is not y but is x which is affirming the three laws of reason. It is hypocrisy to accept the laws of reason as supreme and then to pretend that they that the senses are the standard of truth and not them. Empiricism is incoherent and its adherents should stand by reason in the first place. However one should be a rationalist first and an empiricist second.

The information person x gets from the senses is not the same as that which person y gets. For example, when two people look at a table they see it as a different shape. Only reason can tell that that they are seeing the same thing or likely to be.

A Pragmatist is a person who believes that if something works then it is true. Truth is what works as the fact that sums work proves them true demonstrates.

Pragmatists are making an unreasonable guess for they can see that what is true is not always practical.

You need to reason to work out what is practical so Pragmatists are exploiting logic and pretending that they do not recognises it as the only true authority. Pragmatism is like a wall that uses the foundation and says it does not.

Pragmatism says that if belief in God is useful to x then it is true that God exists and if Atheism is pragmatic to y then it is true. It uses reason and then it forsakes it. We need reason to avoid chaos and Pragmatism repudiates it so Pragmatism is not practical.

The Coherence Theory of Truth is another alleged alternative to Rationalism.

When two coherent systems can be at variance the theory can only be incorrect. It forgets that coherence is no mark of verity unless it is worked out from what is known to be true. If Jesus was a bad man then Christianity which says he was good is not true just because everything it says fits together like a jigsaw puzzle. But you need to use reason to create the system therefore it would be better to listen to reason alone or to listen to reason in the first place. It would be better to see what reason says than to use it to weave a system based on fantasy that you want to pretend is reality. And the coherence

theory is just such a system.

We are convinced that that we learn all we need to know by reason. Truth is not what is understood or proved by reason but what is really there. You can think you have proved something that is not self-evident and be wrong.

The theory means that nothing is fully true for we can't have a fully coherent system. So nothing is true or false. To say, "Cats like milk", is to say something that is more true than, "Dogs are gay", but there is no clear-cut difference. Obviously things are either true or false full stop and that is that. (See *The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy*, page 55).

Rationalism is continually blackened by troublemakers who pretend to have established its falsity. Here is an example of what they are like. Sceptics and even religionists love alleging that reason alone cannot be the final arbiter of what is true for there are many truths that it does not and cannot lead us to. For example, it cannot tell us if another person is really good if you judge a person good reason has to come into it somewhere for judging is working out what you think about them and think they are. Is a ruler completely wrong because it cannot measure the distance between the north and south poles?

A process of elimination tells us that the only measuring rod to be used to see if a claim is true is reason for the alternatives are incoherent and wrong. They say truth is something different from what is real while reason is concerned with what is real.

Millions of believable books are being written every year. Every religion has its very convincing books of apologetics or evidences for its faith. But all these books cannot be right. You need to know a lot, think a lot, go to a lot of expense, interview and investigate all sides and be able to check and validate original sources to work out what to make of them. Few can do that. Deception is so easy. That is why reason has to be the only teacher and tool for the Atheist. If you think properly you don't need to go to all that trouble and the proofs and refutations are easily available. They are in your head. Reason will be the salvation of many from cults and quacks.

Reason is the judge of all things and we must ensure that it reigns forever and ever.

IS REASONING FUTILE WITHOUT GOD?

We need reason as a tool to help in the search for truth and to avoid the perils of self-contradiction. C S Lewis said that those who say we are made by pure chance are saying our reason may be defective and cannot be trusted. What does he want us to do? He wants us to decide that there is a God who gave us our reason and God is reliable so we can trust our reason. But it makes no sense to say that reason is reliable for you have reasoned that God is reliable. You are trusting reason by itself so what are you doing trying to bring God in for? You are trusting in reason to trust in God so how can you say your faith in God is the reason you trust your reason? That is lying.

Reason can be understood as a sense - it senses what is contradictory or what make sense. If it is the product of chance, it is the same as our sense of sight, our eyesight. That would be the product of chance too but it keeps us reasonably informed about what is going on around us. So why can't reason be the same?

DOES REASON ABOLISH ITSELF?

Every reason depends on another reason and you cannot check them all out.

But the reasons we start off with are convincing enough and it is reasonable to accept them as there is no evidence that they are misleading.

Reason is no good for it cannot be proven that a is a so reason could be wrong.

Reason does not need proving as it is so clear and absolute. It seems to many of us that it proves itself anyway.

Your reason could be an illusion. You can imagine a being convinced because of the way his brain is programmed thinking that 1 and 1 is 3.

It is reasonable to obey reason even then because having a vision of pink elephants which are not there is a real vision with false information. Reason could be an illusion but it is unreasonable to live and think as if it is for you don't need to and it does not need you to.

Finally you cannot avoid reason. To reason that reason is wrong is contradictory for it assumes reason is right in the first place.

Reason if it is based on presuppositions seems to weaken reason. It seems to fail to give it the foundation it wants. In fact

Reason is so good that if anything deserves presuppositions that back it up then it does. It is a far stronger affirmation of reason than reason proving reason to be the right method (if it could) would be!

REASON AND OUR DIGNITY

Reason is that which makes us the best animals or is the one difference between us and the other animals. It is why you cannot treat a human being as you would a sheep.

CONTRADICTION

Inconsistency means either a simple contradiction (A is non-A) or a contrary.

A statement can only have one contradiction. For example, if Mary is totally bald, then it is a contradiction to say she has hair. It is that simple. A contradiction is when two statements cannot be true at the one time in the same way.

A contrary is different. If Mary is not totally bald then countless possible contraries arise. If she has no hair then it follows that she does not have exactly one hair, two hairs and so on ad infinitum. If she has no hair then it follows that she does not have one red hair, two and so on. Or choose any colour.

CONCLUSION

Exalt reason to its proper place in your life. Anytime you try to follow something else you are reasoning that you should not heed reason alone and believe only what it sees no contradiction in. So you can't get away from reason anyway so you should reason properly. Reason is not believing only what is proven. It is wishing we could. It is to keep trying to prove or support even in the face of hopelessness.

A reason to believe does not in itself make your belief reasonable. A reason to doubt does not in itself make your doubt reasonable. A reason to disbelieve does not in itself make your disbelief reasonable. The reason has to be good and evidence that is well thought out and explained is the best reason of all.