

A433 English

The question of the ideal of reason

Dated **Feb 20 1961**. 5 handwritten schematic pp, in perhaps two slightly different shades of green ink. 4 of the 5 pp. are on reverse of discarded English text on realism. These are the first notes in this file (V/8) to have a date. I presume they are notes for the 1961 course *De intellectu et methodo*. I do not think the earlier items in this file belong to that course, but to something later, perhaps preparation for 'De methodo theologiae' in the following spring. (RD)

The question has to do with the ideal of reason, that is, with the end or goal toward which scientific, philosophical, or theological work heads. This end is knowledge. This end is presently unknown. And yet it is also somehow known, and not just in words, feelings, and abstractions [?] but in such a way that precise and exact rules can be developed with regard to the process itself.

Such a methodological ideal is grounded in the very nature of intellect and is conceived in different ways over the course of the ages.

La crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine

Desclee 1960

Barbotin Trouillard Verneaux Dubarle [triple underline, with an arrow] Breton

RD Excursus: Lonergan reviewed this 1960 book in *Gregorianum* 1963, and the review (published again in CWL 20) follows. Note that in the lecture notes Verneaux and Breton are underlined once and Dubarle three times with an arrow pointing to his name. The paragraph on Dubarle appears below in bold type, to highlight Lonergan's interest in raising the question of the ideal of reason.

Review of Edmond Barbotin, Jean Trouillard, Roger Verneaux, Dominique Dubarle, Stanislas Breton, *La crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine*. Recherches de Philosophie, v¹

The first three writers are brief but pointed witnesses to the crisis. From a phenomenological context Edmond Barbotin asks whether the rational is the enemy of the reasonable, whether the person, so essentially singular, can develop through access to a universal that seems either to ignore or to deny the singular (p. 26). From a Neoplatonist context Jean Trouillard argues for the 'One' that is, indeed, the negation of reason's multiplicity but thereby the negation of the negativity inherent in reason. Roger Verneaux speaks from a traditional context but only to conclude that the principle of sufficient reason is not a principle: it is not self-evident but false; what is self-evident is its negation; the alleged principle is merely a rationalist postulate that is to be abandoned along with rationalism (p. 38).

Dominique Dubarle envisages the issue historically in terms of the constitutions that human reason has given itself. In rapid but penetrating sketches of successive views that reason has held of reason, he tells us what *logos* was for the ancient Greeks, what *ratio* meant to Latin thought, what it became in medieval syntheses that enlightened reason by faith and, when the enlightenment of reason was sought by omitting faith, the rupture that

¹ Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960, 215 pp. [*Gregorianum* 44 (1963) 372-73.]

arose not only with the medieval but also with the ancient view of reason. For modern man ‘reason’ is secularist self-constituting subjectivity that leaves to ‘understanding’ the theoretic and practical organization of the real as objectivity (pp. 80-82). Among Catholics, however, the ancient view is still alive, and even apart from religious concern one of the goals of contemporary spiritual renewal may be defined as an effective reconciliation of ancient tradition and modern discovery. For the crisis of reason in contemporary thought is simply the fact that reason has not yet given itself an adequate constitution, that its self-education remains incomplete, that as yet a fully determinate model, an explicit set of standards, an up-to-date codification does not exist (p. 113).

Stanislas Breton sets forth the changes that have occurred in mathematics, logic, and natural science. These changes, he insists, are neither the result of this or that discovery nor the work of this or that school. Rather they are the crumbling of an *ancien régime*, the outcome of a many-sided and complex historical process, in which events and discoveries occurring independently and in different fields have led opposed schools of thought and different climates of opinion to analogous conclusions. For while the conclusions differ with the schools and climates, still they agree in their opposition to the idea of necessity. Once enshrined in Euclid’s *Elements*, Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, Laplace’s hypothetical demon, and most philosophies, once the self-evident and necessary essence of science, necessity has become a marginal idea.

There has been a concomitant change in philosophy. There is a lack of interest in the possible and the a priori, a distrust of the universal, a devaluation of the impersonal. Philosophy has ceased to be the work of solitary thinkers deducing the world, and it has become the common task to be promoted by personal contact and dialogue, and to be achieved not by proof but by persuasion. *Erklären* has been left to the scientists; *verstehen* has become the heritage of philosophers, and its basic requirement is an openness to all the surprises that reality offers. So fixed systems give way to manifolds of intentional horizons which are to be, not justified but described; description goes back to genesis and motivation, but its aim is not criticism but comprehension; there slips away the *zoon logikon* whose mind corresponds to things and whose things imitate the Idea; there emerges the community of self-constituting spirits aware of a responsibility for what they make of themselves.

So too *La crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine* is a collaborative effort. Its aim is not to work out the systematic solution of the issues it raises, but to portray persuasively the situation within which our thinking in fact occurs. There is, of course, no heroic *epokhe* precluding any suggestion of what is to be done, but the suggestions that are made do not fall within a discernible pattern. It would be hard to reconcile Verneaux and Breton, Trouillard and Dubarle. Still, there is a single direction to Barbotin’s, Dubarle’s, and Breton’s papers, and one must be grateful to all of them for raising issues that in theology are very urgent. Modern scriptural, conciliar, patristic, medieval studies are ‘science’ not in the ancient Greek but in the modern sense of the term; and the dogmatic theologian has the task, if not of arranging for their baptism, at least of finding himself at home with them.

End of RD Excursus

(p. 2 of notes)

Diversity: For the ancients science was certain knowledge of things through causes. Science was of the unchanging or immobile and the universal, and also of the necessary. No science considers

those things that are *per accidens*. Science is speculative; it is theory. Science is individualistic, and it is of absolute value. [RD: 'individualistic' means, I think, that it is done by individuals, in contrast to the modern scientific community. See below, modern notion of science as 'cooperative.']

For the moderns science is not certain. It proceeds through probable opinions to more probable opinions. It has to do with causes, but the notion of 'cause' is one thing among the primitives, something else for the Greeks, something else again for the classical moderns, something else again for Einstein, and yet something else for quantum physics. Science is about laws internal to movement itself. It has to do with universals in such a way as to include particulars in their concrete development. There is Newtonian mechanics, an account of the genesis of the world, of the evolution of species, of human history. Science is cooperative, and unfolds slowly over the course of time. It has to do with those intelligibles that *de facto* are verified. What is intelligible in this world is not necessary except 'ex suppositione' [as in 'If Socrates is sitting, he is necessarily sitting.'] Science indeed considers those things that are *per accidens*, as in the theory of probability. Theoretic science is a stage. It is also genetic; this is true also when it is human science.

The open [subject?] is one who makes himself or herself, one's society, one's scientific ideal, in free responsibility.

(page 3 of notes)

If the differences are so great, does there remain what traditionally is asserted of science, philosophy, theology, namely, a certain absolute value or validity? Is Western man some kind of anthropological type that differs from other types, or does he pursue an ideal that has an absolute value, that is accessible to all, and normative for all? [RD: we know from elsewhere that this was Husserl's question in *Krisis*.] Is man a rational animal or a symbolic animal (Cassirer, *Essay on Man*)? Is the supreme science, the queen of the sciences, the sociology of knowledge? Karl Mannheim, in *Ideology and Utopia*, generalizes the Marxist notion of ideology and seeks a way of avoiding ideology. (Also mentioned is Werner Stark, *Sociology of Knowledge* and Merton's bibliography.)

RD Excursus: Pertinent here is the following paragraph from pp. 78-79 in CWL 22:

There further arises the question whether theology, if it is not a science, pertains to the field of the sociology of knowledge. The sociology of knowledge was a notion developed first of all, I think, by Max Scheler in his *Die Wissensformen und Die Gesellschaft* (*Forms of Knowledge and Society*) and, again, *Sociologie des Wissens*. It is taken up by Karl Mannheim mainly as a generalization of the Marxian view of ideology. Marxians call everyone else's views ideology; but their own is the truth. In any case, Mannheim generalized Marx: if everything is ideology, what do you have? You have sociology of knowledge. You get the approach in *Ideology and Utopia*; there is a bibliography in it, but it regards what is before 1935. In later writings, Mannheim further developed the notion of the sociology of knowledge, and he was very keenly aware that he had to avoid a relativism because he was a Jew who had been bounced out of Germany under the Nazis, and he did not want to accept anything at all of pure relativism, but he

(page 4)

1 There is the Euclidean scandal that

(page 5)

3 Scotus	science is about possible worlds	voluntarism
St Thomas	conclusion from principles = scientia	
	principles and terms = understanding	

judgment about the terms = wisdom (1) a gift of the Holy Spirit

(2) the principle of philosophy

(from 2, the principle of philosophy, there are two arrows, one to 'epistemology' and the other to 'wisdom grows in the course of time').