

FAITH & REASON
PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY
TWO VALID WAYS TO
KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM & GOD

IN THE WRITINGS OF
PETER KREEFT
AND
ENCYCLICAL OF
POPE JOHN PAUL II

COMPILED BY
FR. BILL McCARTHY
OF
MY FATHER'S HOUSE

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY – TWO VALID WAYS TO KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM AND GOD

God is the author of all truth – whether that truth be scientific, mathematical, medical, geological, biological, cosmological or ecological. All roads come from God and, validly followed, lead us back to God. I wish to offer some reflections – my own and other's – on 2 pathways to God – Philosophy and Theology or more simpler put - reason and faith.

Faith and Reason

We can come to know the existence of God but through faith and reason, we can come to know many of the attributes of God through faith and reason as well. Plus, we can know many of the principles of God's Law through faith and reason. Down through the centuries many philosophers and theologians have attested to the valid dictums of both Philosophy and Theology. Scholastic's philosophy use the expressions – "*intellectum quarens fidem*" (reason seeking faith) and "*fides quaerens intellectum*" (faith seeking reasons.)

We do not believe reason should usurp the primacy of faith, hope and love. We agree with classical Christian orthodoxy as expressed in medieval formulas like *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding") and *credo ut intelligam* ("I believe in order that I may understand"). That is to say that when faith comes first, understanding follows, and is vastly aided by faith's tutelage. But we also agree with the classical position's contention that many of the things God has revealed to us to be believed, such as his own existence and some of his attributes, can also be proved by human reason, properly used. We could not have written this book if we did not believe that. After we believe, we can and should "be ready to made [a] Defense" for our faith (1Pet 3:15).

Objective vs. Subjective Reason

However, we must not naively identify objective rationality with subjective rationality. (See chap. 16 on objective truth.) Truth is objective, but people usually aren't! We are obviously living in a fallen world, not a perfect world, one where people's exercise of reason is expressed in various forms of irrationality. An argument that is in itself perfectly rational and valid will often fall on ears deafened by prejudice, passion, ignorance, misunderstanding, incomprehension or ideology.

The last of these seems especially dangerous today. Usually, people seem to choose what to believe not by looking at the evidence but by

looking at ideological labels, especially “liberal” or “conservative,” or by asking which associations evoked by an idea within their consciousness, rather than by looking at the idea itself and at the reality it points outside their consciousness.

We need not and should not employ any of these substitutes for reason in order to “make contact with” or “be relevant to” those who are doing so. We make contact and relevance not by changing rationality into irrationality but by changing irrationality into rationality. That is what education is.

Reason as Friend

Reason is the friend of all other ways of knowing which are not irrational but nonrational. These nonrational ways of knowing must be distinguished from their irrational counterfeits:

1. Reason is the friend of divine authority, which can neither deceive nor be deceived, but not necessarily of human authority, fads and fashions.
2. Reason is the friend of faith in this divine authority, but not of naiveté. Thus reason leads to the faith and away from the cults.
3. Reason is the friend of hope, but not of human wishful thinking.
4. Reason is the friend of *agapē* (love) but not of *eros* (selfish passion).
5. Reason is the friend and complement to imagery, symbol and myth, which also reveal truth, but not to impossible imaginings, esoteric fantasies or misty pseudomysticisms.

Faith and Reason

In a sense the marriage of faith and reason is the most important question in apologetics because it is the overall question. If faith and reason are not wedded partners, if faith and reason are divorced or incompatible, like cats and birds, then apologetics is impossible. For apologetics is the attempt to ally reason to faith, to defend faith with reason’s weapons.

Definitions

It is especially crucial to clarify our definitions of *faith* and *reason*, because these terms are often used either vaguely or equivocally. Defining removes vagueness. Distinguishing two possible meanings and confining ourselves to one at a time removes equivocation.