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### *Faith and Reason in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century\**

#### **Abstract**

The culture of the new century in Europe has commenced with the rebellion of man against God followed by „emancipation” of the overall human life from every religious content and authority. God or freedom has become the dilemma and a choice. Consequently, this produced the conflict among church and the state (society), of civil and sacral, spiritual and materialistic, soul and the body, faith and sense. Faith has become the symbol of irrational, of ignorance, dark, improvable, conservative... Sense, on the other hand, has become the symbol of power, knowledge, improvement, progress. In the last few centuries, nothing was so glorified as the findings of ratio. Confrontation of faith and knowledge (mind) has had the unperceivable tragic consequences because of which the Euro American continent will be paying for a long time ahead. This confrontation has brought both the faith and sense to some kind of pathology. The man has become divided, schizophrenic being, the battlefield of his own two most important functions and attributes. Today, the situation is not so dramatic but there still exist various prejudices, misunderstanding, mutual ignoring on the faith – sense relation. That is the reason why the new, integrated Europe necessitates the conciliation of mind and faith i. e. the integral (complete) knowledge.

The question of faith and reason is not easily accessible, and if we want to shed some light upon both of these terms we need to have clear ideas in our minds as to what exactly we understand by them. There are almost as many meanings of these expressions as there are philosophical and theological schools of

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\* The paper is printed as submitted.

thought belonging to the history of human beings. We shall not consider these terms as *termini technici* belonging to the languages of religion, philosophy or science, but primarily as symbols and metaphors of the two most potent forces which have decisively influenced and which still influence the destiny of humanity. These are religion and science. History of the relationship between faith and reason (religion and science) changed throughout history. This relationship was different when taking into consideration different cultures and civilizations. We are primarily concerned with this question as manifested on the Euro-American continent and within its civilization to which we also belong. I feel that the most adequate expression for this relationship is *tragedy*. Unfortunately, initiator of this tragedy was the Church which at one point in time strove to impose enforced control over science thus causing the rising of antireligious *scientific thought*<sup>1</sup>. *Right until the end of the Middle Ages there existed harmony, more or less, between faith and reason, religion and science. Christianity demystified nature thus laying ground for modern science. It saw entire creation as being an expression of the logos.* Reason was regarded as one of the greatest God's gifts to man. Christianity considered the world of paganism, superstition and charlatanry as being hostile, an opinion which was to be adopted by modern universities and schools some time later. God himself is Logos, reason. Up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century (when modernity was initiated) many people were almost possessed by the desire to rationalize God, the divine, and the eternal, i. e. to found their faith on reason. It was then that Copernican turn of events was initiated with intent to build reason upon the foundations of faith. Modern science became unthinkable without faith in the rational order in nature (Hume). Religious dogmas were substituted by scientific dogmas. Faith in God was substituted by faith in reason (goddess of reason). That which was unscientific, which was impossible to be proven by science, became almost non-existent. Limits of reason became the limits of the world (Wittgenstein).

For contemporary man faith is a term which has suffered changes both in its value and meaning. It ceased to denote confidence, relationship, communion, externalization, or becoming accustomed to another. Modern man understands faith most often as a term denoting an acceptance of principles and values without investigating for any scientific proof of those principles and values. Having faith means agreeing with some learning or a theory (any theory) which remains improvable. Having faith means accepting something

<sup>1</sup> Мајендорф, Ј. „Теологија и наука”, у зборнику: *Православна теологија*, Београд, 1995. 282

even when we do not understand that which we are accepting. Having faith means unconditional subordination to authority (religious, ideological, political). Have faith (believe) and do not investigate! This maxima whose author remains unknown to me is the metaphysical precondition to all forms of totalitarianism<sup>2</sup>.

This modern world mutual opposition between reason and faith has unforeseeable tragic consequences leading to a sort of pathology of both reason and faith. Scientism and fideism are two equally dangerous temptations facing the modern world. For some the world is something which is self-sufficient, autonomous and independent from God, and for others it is the dungeon of the soul, the source of all evil, and something that has no substantial but only accidental value. Instead of explaining, interpreting, safeguarding and saving the world, rationality (reason, science) has been transformed into a power to rule, to subordinate and control the world. Knowledge devoid of faith and values becomes dangerous and merciless. Technical-technological rationality of today presents a threat to life on this very planet. Faith devoid of knowledge (rationality) becomes nothing but magic with a permanent tendency to transform into superstition and to subordinate man to the natural elements of the world. From the angle provided by anthropological perspective, man unconditionally falls into a state of schizophrenia when putting faith and knowledge into a mutual state of opposition.

Today there is no open animosity between faith and reason, science and religion. Unfortunately there largely exists a state of indifference and mutual ignoring. However, this conclusion does not bring into question the lately more frequent statements coming from all sides that reason and faith, science and religion are indeed complementary.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there should not exist a dilemma: faith or reason, science or religion. There should be an attitude: faith and reason, science and religion. Certain preconditions are necessary for this to become a reality. Firstly, it is necessary to rediscover the Church, i. e. to reconstruct the Christian faith which needs to be cleansed from all pseudo-Christian sediments formed throughout its history. Contemporary crisis of humanism serves to enhance this process which is a process of a rediscovery of the lost Christian world. On the other hand, it would be significant if the secular intelligentsia should find means to have itself delivered from its idolatrous notions concerning science.

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<sup>2</sup> Јанарас, Х. Азбучник вере, Беседа, Нови Сад, 2000. 23

Scientific theories devoid of metaphysical, religious and artistic dimensions more and more resemble a sick infant destined to die immediately upon its own birth.

Reconciliation between faith and knowledge, which should take place during the recently entered century, should not be regarded as a question requiring an academic or an abstract approach. In fact, the survival of this world might depend on this question. I shall reinforce this stance by the opinion of Whitehead<sup>3</sup>, perhaps the best theoretician of science of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who says that that when we consider what religion means to humanity (or what science means to humanity) it might not be exaggerated to say that the future course of history might depend on the decision taken by the present generation concerning the links between the two. In religion and science we have the two most potent general forces that affect human beings.

Today we have a world integrating at an unbelievably fast pace and this integration relates to all levels of human life. These integrations should be accompanied with a reintegration of man and his cognitive abilities, a constitution of an integral knowledge and humanism, and an establishment of a holistic picture of the world where everything is mutually linked and dependant, where nothing may exist on its own and by its own self.

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Вајтхед, Н. Наука и модерни свет, Нолит, Београд, 1976. 268