

Dear Charles

Some months ago I wrote you a letter of appreciation for the positive way you cover the religious scene. It is, I pointed, a remarkable change from some years ago when religion, but especially the CRC, was given mostly negative coverage.

In that same letter I also expressed my opinion that there is a philosophical weakness in your writings that crops up time and again with respect to the relationship between faith and reason/science. You share an aspect of the common American worldview that very few people are aware of but that plays a very important part in our culture. It is, e.g., part of the basic difference between the public and Christian school system associated with Christian Schools International with its headquarters on East Paris Ave.. And it cropped up in your article of yesterday.

You warn against mixing up religion and science in public schools. A few lines further you describe faith and test tubes as "complementary ways of understanding." We should respect the difference between "what we know and what we believe...." Though this is part of the general American worldview, it cannot stand the light of reason--and that's important in America. Something that cannot stand up to reason is taboo, unreliable, subjective, and must be avoided.

By now you are probably very curious. Let me relieve you. It is never a question of either religion vs science or of faith vs reason. Nor are they complementary parallel ways of knowing. Modern science, you probably know, has its earliest roots in Islam and, later, in very consciously post Reformation Christian philosophy. It was a matter not of faith vs reason/science, but of faith establishing and undergirding science. That fact that subsequently secularism obscured (I was almost going to use the word "bedeviled" here!) the relationship between them does not undo the earlier cause-and-effect relationship between them.

So then, what is the relationship? Faith, belief or assumptions, whichever word you prefer, underlies all human endeavour. Man is primarily a believer. His entire life is based on beliefs, including his reason and science. Everything he does is directed by certain unproven assumptions or beliefs. Rationalists believe that independent self-sufficient human reason can attain to truth. They believe it; they have never proven it. The public school system is based on the belief that one can attain to objective neutral truth only by human reason and is blind to the undergirding role of unproven assumptions in it all.

Thus, it is not a matter of faith vs reason/science. It is a matter of faith vs faith, perspective vs perspective, unproven assumption vs unproven assumption. Where do people get the idea that all truth must be proven? That itself has never been proven and is merely an expression of unproven belief.

This means that there is no neutrality. The public school system is supposed to be based on objective neutrality. That is nonsense. It is merely based on another set of beliefs and assumptions that the secular establishment has refused to examine. If they did, it would undermine their entire system by taking away their rationale for using my tax money to propagate beliefs I reject and forcing me to pay extra to support a system that is based on my belief. All systems are faith systems; no system is neutral or objective.

I have gone beyond my original purpose to explain the relationship between faith and reason but entering the subject of educational systems or philosophies. The latter serves as an example about how a wrong view of the relationship between these two perspective has led to terrible financial discrimination and oppression of people who do not buy into the faith system of public schools. Why should public money only be used to support one faith system, a system that is no more neutral, objective or rational than any other and just as much faith-based? And I am not even touching the issue of the problem of ethics and morality in the public school system, an area where secular faith is particularly weak.

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Can someone explain that to me? Can you, Charles Honey?

I would send this letter for inclusion in the Public Pulse, but my previous published letter falls within the 6-week restriction. So, this is a private letter to you.

I repeat that I have high appreciation for your work. At the same time, your acceptance of the faith vs reason/science dualism often weakens your arguments. I would be happy to discuss this matter over a cup of coffee with you. Call me at 241-1449. Also check out the website below for more info about my honorable self.

Cordially  
John (Jan) H. Boer

Dear Charles

Thanks for your reply. I appreciate the time you took for it, even though you do not go into the issues.

I did offer to take you out for coffee. I would like to enlarge that invitation to a lunch on me.

You did not refer to that invitation in your letter. As I reflected on that, it occurred to me that my name may be getting into our way here. Though my name is officially "Jan" and that is what I use in all written documents, I am a man, not a woman and in daily parlance I go by "John." If you still are open to a lunch, just say the word and suggest a couple of dates suitable to you.

I am especially curious about your comment about obvious disagreements. I don't see anything obvious here and I believe we could have a fruitful discussion, even if only for purposes of mutual enlightenment. Every defence of the public school system I have ever heard always rests on this traditional and, for most people, unexamined, duality between faith and reason. It is an example of the power of philosophy on the mind and heart of an entire civilization of people who tend to dismiss philosophy as something useless and impractical. The result is that they become victims of their own unexamined philosophical assumptions embedded in their worldview, in very foundations of their practical daily lives. And they build entire national structures on those assumptions, such as school systems. It is nothing short of amazing!

Anyhow, give me a couple of dates and we'll have a friendly round on me!

Cordially  
John Boer