

In what sense, if any, is reason (and so philosophy and science) based on faith?

"[T]he greatest contribution of medievalism to the formation of the scientific movement . . . [is] the inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles. Without this belief the incredible labours of scientists would be without hope. It is this instinctive conviction, vividly poised before the imagination, which is the motive power of research—that there is a secret, a secret which can be unveiled. How has this conviction been so vividly implanted on the European mind? . . .

"[T]here seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher. Every detail was supervised and ordered: the search into nature could only result in the vindication of the faith in rationality. . . .

"[T]he faith in the possibility of science, generated antecedently to the development of modern scientific theory, is an unconscious derivative from medieval theology" (Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*: 18 f.).

"Faith in reason is the trust that the ultimate natures of things lie together in a harmony which excludes mere arbitrariness. It is the faith that at the base of things we shall not find mere arbitrary mystery. The faith in the order of nature which has made possible the growth of science is a particular example of a deeper faith. This faith cannot be justified by any inductive generalisation. It springs from direct inspection of the nature of things as disclosed in our own immediate present experience. There is no parting from your own shadow. To experience this faith is to know that in being ourselves we are more than ourselves: to know that our experience, dim and fragmentary as it is, yet sounds the utmost depths of reality: to know that detached details merely in order to be themselves demand that they should find themselves in a system of things: to know that this system includes the harmony of logical rationality, and the harmony of æsthetic achievement: to know that, while the harmony of logic lies upon the universe as an iron

part. . . and so on without ever speaking the word 'whole'; for the longer we go on refusing to speak of it, the more insistently it rings in our ears and forces its repressed meaning upon our minds. Unless there is a whole, a universe, an infinite, there is no science; for there is no certainty beyond the certainty of mere observation and of bare particular fact; whereas science is universal or nothing, and is bankrupt unless it can discover general laws. But this discovery, as every student of logic knows, rests on presuppositions concerning the nature of the universe as a whole—laws of thought that are at the same time laws of the real world, not scientifically discovered but embraced by an act of faith, of necessary and rational faith" (143 f.).

\* \* \* \* \*

"Not only the just but also the unjust, insofar as they live, live by faith. We live by knowledge also, it is true, but not by knowledge without faith. In order to know we must always rely on something we do not know; in order to walk by sight we need to rely on what we do not see. The most evident example of that truth is to be found in science, which conducts its massive campaign against obscurity and error on the basis of a great faith in the intelligibility of things; when it does not know and finds hindrances in the path of knowledge, it asserts with stubborn faith that knowledge nevertheless is possible, that there is pattern and intelligibility in the things which are not yet intelligible. Such faith is validated in practice, yet it evermore outruns practice" (H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*: 117).