

In the Grip of Reason

As soon as I wrote down this title I thought of another rather muscular version:

Trapped in the double-Nelson of Rationality

that is the inescapable mindset of the Rational Person who has to have an explanation of everything we humans come across, our history, the environment that surrounds us, the living world, everything we feel, make, experience has to be explained at any given moment. And even if we cannot explain it now the future will. Every nuance on a person's face, tone of voice, touch can be elucidated in the Darwinian tenet of survival of the fittest and these fittest will leave their progeny. All of those minute changes of expression can be fitted into who will succeed and who will fail. There is no escaping whether chatting in company or sitting on a bus passing the *Bomber Command Memorial* at Hyde Park Corner. What made the young men sacrifice themselves? Of course all those who flew on missions believed that they will be *the* ones who will come back, beat the enemy to make sure their sons and daughters live on and thus they continue.

But then we come across poetry where the touching lyricism of words cannot be explained, why do we react to it with sentiment. Can we explain emotion, no doubt psychoanalysts say yes, but indeed would we want everything analysed to 'death' when we just want to let ourselves be carried away saying I don't want to know the why, just feel my pulse. When that happens we are no longer in absolute control of ourselves, the rational part of us loses its grip but in the legal world we remain responsible for everything we do. 'I could not control myself, I was carried away' is no legal argument, we are always the owners of everything we do all the time. We observe ourselves from outside – why am I doing this? The rational, all-explain-world, feels rather dry but civilisations that have succeeded have followed reason on their own terms. Religion is not rational until one considers the way it offers the solution of immortality to counter the greatest fear mankind has, death. The non-existence is difficult to fathom while we are still full of energy and imagination, how could all this end in nothingness? We can explain biological death but can we come to terms with nothingness in a rational way.

This is the conundrum of the Double-Nelson a rational person is trapped in the world of reason where daily we read new explanations from the myriad research establishments of what has eluded us but now they tell us the why. Even music, which we listen to, that we lose ourselves in its soothing inspiring thumping sound has been bisected, analysed broken down to its segments.

Human advancement is a history of explaining the world. The proverbial apple that Newton conjured up to have dropped on his head to explain gravity, eureka, always fell down. The falling had been accepted without anyone asking why has it always landed on the ground as opposed to going up, what made it go down – it needed Isaac Newton to explain the attraction of mass, gravity. Indeed the question never arose, they did not even bother to put it down to God's will – everything falling will always go downward. Newton explained the why and others scientists have not stopped unravelling what has always been accepted as fact without asking the why. Now we seek explanations for everything, indeed we cannot accept something that cannot be explained in a rational way. The fatal risk of the orthodox mindset is that it explains everything on its own terms without rationality, the rationality that we accept as scientific. Something that can be challenged, its reasons defended until it becomes mankind's tenet. The counter to the rational is religious orthodoxy, which also explains everything but cannot reason so it has to hide behind the *'it is God's Will'*. Such orthodoxy resorts to violence, which is none other than the frustration of having to explain everything but cannot. But how do we enjoy ourselves, become lost in the magic of dance and music if we are having to explain everything all the time. Are we irrational when we unshackle ourselves from constant reason to enter another world of pure pleasure, that something which touches something deep within us that our all-controlling brain cannot reach. How do we strike a balance? How do we keep the pleasure from getting out of control and bring ourselves back to reason. Reason in the end always wins otherwise we would live in constant chaos so the double-Nelson can loosen but never lets go.