CONCLUSION: CULTURE'S REASONS

From one perspective, the central philosophical problem raised by locating human being in culture is *the autonomy of reason*. Is our faculty and method of inquiry and deliberation self-grounding, does it provide its own justification? The dominant modern Western tradition thinks reason is indeed autonomous, not dependent upon or justified by anything outside itself. This is a normative statement, of course, not descriptive. No contemporary philosophers believe that there is a metaphysical Reason subsisting in itself, that if there were no neurons and no signs in the world, Reason would yet persist. Reason is something about the mind, or something about the way signs and concepts are ordered in human speech and writing. Nevertheless, we commonly conceive reason as something whose validity is not drawn from pragmatic consequences, divine utterances, emotional cathexes, survival probabilities, or social conventions, but from itself.

Already in the Enlightenment, however, that autonomy was in question, particularly among thinkers on the periphery of the eighteenth-century English flame, simultaneously drawn to the most advanced country on earth and a bit wary of being burned. For the Scotsmen Thomas Reid, Adam Smith, and David Hume and the Irishman Edmund Burke, the realm of legitimate belief extended beyond what reason can ground. They held that reason *per se* is inadequate to life, in particular to practical-ethical (hence political) life, there being beliefs we inevitably or legitimately hold which reason nevertheless cannot know to be true. Hume did this most negatively, implying that such beliefs are irrational, but dictated by our natural constitution. The others agreed that reason is limited and grounded in something outside itself, either common sense (Reid), social tradition (Burke), or social identification (Smith). But for them, that-on-which reason is founded is not irrational or contradictory to reason: reason is continuous with practical-ethical life and its necessary commitments. Thus they prefigured many radical twentieth-century critiques of reason, although in a nonapocalyptic way.

That reason is not autonomous implies no collapse into chaos or barbarism, just a demystifying acceptance of its sociocultural location.

It will come as no surprise to the reader if, with the thinkers mentioned, I deny the autonomy of reason. *Reason is emergent from or supervenient upon culture.* It is culture operating at a sufficiently complex and responsible level of interrogation. Reason can be defined as *methodical metajudgment,* the methodical adjudication of conflict among human judgments. Given a range of multiple or competing judgments of any kind, reason is the capacity to decide among them validly, that is, validly by contemporary criteria. It is thus an intrinsically normative and interrogative concept. We must imagine that humans have engaged in reason at least since the development of "symbolic culture" in the Upper Paleolithic age, and perhaps earlier, since the maturation of relatively complex natural languages. Perhaps we could follow Bateson in saying that once humans could reflexively refer to discursive-practical contexts, situations of linguistically mediated shared activity, reason was present. But what matters here is less its lineage than its commonality to segmentary, agroliterate, and modern societies. Implicit in this claim is that it makes little sense to restrict reason to naturalistic, nonreligious, postmythical cultural forms, to claim that reason somehow was born in ancient Greek natural philosophy, fell asleep for a millennium or two, then awakened for good in Europe's "Age of Reason." Modernity is not more rational than other eras. It is *differently* rational.

The Three Reasons

Gellner distinguished what he called "Durkheimian" from "Weberian" rationality. The former was for him the rationality of embodiment and instantiation, the participation of instances in socially shared ideal forms. The latter, which emerges only in modernity, is the piecemeal logical and instrumental rationality by which acts or claims are shown to be implicated by, or consistent with, each other. Oddly enough, this bivalent notion of reason does not correspond to Gellner's own tripartite historical scheme. Nevertheless, his instinct was, I think, sound. We do not find in history and prehistory a transition from the non- or prerational to the rational. Lucien Levy-Bruhl's notion of the prelogical mentality has been rightly criticized. Rather, we find a transition among different *modes of rationality or reason.*

This becomes plausible once we accept a broad notion of reason as methodical metajudgment. Segmentary societies engage in such adjudication, just as agrarian and industrial societies do. The absence of reason would mean the absence of the articulation of *reasons,* of social validation or justification. But such is barely conceivable, given complex natural languages and cultures. We do not know of societies in which fully competent members do not steer among values in polynormative and novel situations, weighing competing rules and giving reasons for their decisions. We know of no societies in which members do not *explain* themselves.

But we need to expand Gellner's scheme by separating out two modes of rationality he conflated under the "Durkheimian." I suggest that ritual-segmentary, stratified-axial, and modern-industrial society each have their own characteristic mode of reason. Thus there are three "reasons," Durkheimian, Jasperian, and Weberian. No argument will be mounted here to show that reason is historically divided into *only* these three types. The claim is rather that what we refer to as reason or methodical metajudgment is a complex notion that can abide division, and that at least three types of reason can be distinguished across history and prehistory. Which is to say that, all told, the attribution of variant forms of reason to historical and prehistorical periods is preferable to asserting the sameness of reason, hence the unreasonableness or irrationality of the earlier periods. Last, this developmental scheme does *not* mean that the earlier forms are unavailable in the later, that Durkheimian and Jasperian rationality are absent in modern society. In this as in many other cases, development implies the emergence of a new capacity having priority over retained but demoted older capacities. The leading form of rationality, as embodied not only in speech but in practices and institutions, is characteristic of an age's dealings with what it regards as its chief interests and problems, the others playing subaltern roles, but available either to challenge the dominant form or fill in its gaps.

For Durkheimian rationality meaning is embodied in the structures of social life, to which there can be no rational objection. One may, of course, object to a way of interpreting those structures, or a way of dealing with their conflict. Simply put, in segmentary life society is everything, a condition made easier by the fact that society exists in harmony with its natural environment, with a minimum of artifice and manipulation, divine characters multiplying along the border between the two. Signs and referents are not *systematically* distinguished; they are commonly distinguished—none

of the Narragansetts whose folkways Roger Williams chronicled in the seventeenth-century ever believed that *ewáchim-neash,* their word for corn, could make a good meal—but there are cases where the word is efficacious, has physical power (Williams 1971: 100). Beliefs and words are indiscriminately events or things, following the same social norms as actions and constructions. To be a "wise" man or woman is then to interpret narrative tradition, to reason from a variety of validities expressed in practices, usually via analogy to paradigmatic cases, in order to adjudicate current disagreements or problems. It is to understand the function of reason as handling communal problems against the background of a tradition that exhausts intelligibility and normativity.

While the agroliterate age is roughly ten thousand years old, cities only emerged around 3,000 B.C.E. Thus the new mentality of the age may well have taken a long time in developing. Its full expression is certainly on display by the time of Jaspers's Axial revolution. Starting then, and through the history of Agraria, rationality came to be understood as the embodiment of or participation in a transcendent ideal, or the attempt to demonstrate such participation, verbally expressed in a logical hierarchy of principles. Socrates' attempt at universal definition of each norm, with his Pythagorean-Orphic belief in the soul, the Hebrew Prophets' condemnation of contemporary society by transcendent standards, the Upanishads' turn from Vedic ritual to contemplation, and Gautama's assertion of the unreality of the world—or, equivalently, the superiority of logic to common experience—all express the new view. Validation is participation in, emulation, embodiment, or instantiation of what is beyond sensory experience and social convention. One might say in a Derridean vein that this Jasperian or Axial rationality is the full exploitation of the implicit possibilities of *writing,* itself definitive of the agroliterate age. For now, just as ancient writings can be used to show that contemporary society has declined, that it fails to be true to its normative documents, the religious genius and the philosopher can announce that the real is *not* ideal. Society is no longer everything; it is now merely *almost* everything. The dualism of ideal and real matches the cosmic, metaphysical dualism of God and world, or truth and appearance, and the hierarchy of elite (almost always two-headed, warrior-aristocracy and literate scribes) versus commoners (peasants plus merchants). Gellner is right to see Plato's *Republic* as a marvelous expression of this world, with its perfectly coordinated hierarchy of classes (philosophers-guardians-moneymakers),

levels of education, modes of cognition, the cardinal virtues, and types of political regimes.

Weberian rationality is but a couple of centuries old, which is to say that only in the last two centuries has its implicit form been made explicit and differentiated from the Durkheimian and Jasperian. It is the functional or instrumental rationality by which practices and claims achieve justification in the context of aims and explicit premises. Hence efficiency in achievement or logicality of procedure rationalizes any particular act or claim. It is highly differentiated, or as Gellner says, "modular." Truth, goodness, beauty, salvation, and pragmatic norms like efficiency are utterly separable. Incommensurability of norms then permits commensurable judgments *within* the discourse of each norm. As Weber saw, this makes it impossible to project an integrated factual-moral world. But since in most respects human historical development combines rather than replaces earlier forms, it would make sense to say that Jasperian rationality retains the Durkheimian, and we modern Weberians retain the other two. Thus we move among the three. While our leading form of rationality cannot project an omnivalent whole, our vestigial, subaltern, contextually employed Jasperian and Durkheimian rationalities can continue to do so. This is not to suggest that we integrate, reconcile, or unify the three reasons. We cannot. For the Weberian the third moment is not a Hegelian sublimation of the other two, but as Peirce claimed of his Thirdness, or Relation, it is merely a more complex dimension of a totality it does not exhaust (Peirce 1955: 266–67).

Each of these modes of reason has a distinct relation to culture. Durkheimian reason is reason *undifferentiated* from culture, or more precisely, the capacity to judge other judgments in an environment where modes of judgmental validity are not distinguished from cultural norms. It takes the form of weighing a variety of considerations regarding which we moderns would accuse the reasoner of continual category mistakes. It is the reason of the implicit or unarticulated whole. I am tempted to say that, to this very day, this is what constitutes being "reasonable" in our everyday English sense of the word. Reasonableness, as opposed to reason or rationality, implies that no one consideration is either foundational or overwhelming, no one part of the whole determines all others, that one must take plural saliences into consideration, rather than appeal to a logical hierarchy of principles. It may sound odd to connect a modern person's "reasonableness" with ritualistic, segmentary versions of "reason," but that is because we reject other com-

ponents of segmentary thinking, for example, the ontological continuity of signs and things. Still for us today, Bernard Shaw's quip holds, that the reasonable man [*sic*] adapts to society while the unreasonable man demands that society adapt to himself, hence history is made by the unreasonable man. Reasonableness takes pluralistic current considerations as its guide, while the unreasonable refer to some narrower norm that trumps all others. "Be reasonable" is a plea to honor the normal pluralism, hence balanced inconsistency, of social criteria rather than force one criterion above all. This socially pluralistic form of reason was *the* human form of reason for the vast majority of human existence.

Jasperian reason is the capacity to evaluate judgments in terms of society-and-culture-transcending norms. The model of validity is Platonic or Alexandrian or mathematical. The particular, the decision, or the action in question is valid because it embodies or participates in an ideal or transcendent model. Reasoning must operate by relating worldly events and possibilities to rules independent of the processes or events in question. This is the reason of the explicit or articulated whole. The normative models can only be known by those with special knowledge, that is, literacy. They carry high culture, now distinct for the first time from low or folk culture. This form of reason is always dogged by the need to debate and clarify what those transcendent rules are, hence the sticky problem of what can justify a transcendent rule. But wherever this problem is ignored or solved, the hierarchy of reason can nicely match the hierarchy of caste, virtue, and power.

Weberian reason is the reason of a culture split into progressive spheres. Each context is made rational by formulating its premises, or goals, which then dictate what means are rational. The task of understanding the world is distinguished from social fealty, status, moral duty, aesthetic satisfaction, and salvation. Certainly one might, having completed a bout of research, then evaluate that research in terms of these other values. But no one can claim cognitive legitimacy, truth, for a result *because* it would be good to believe it, will make society operate better, or is more beautiful. As Weber rightly said in his classic essay "Science as a Vocation," we modernists are "polytheists," our version of reason having discovered that the connective tissue linking goodness, truth, and beauty—which Jasperian rationality had no trouble finding in God—is unavailable (Weber 1972). Reason can only move among given concepts, premises, and rules within the normative contexts they define. One might say that while modernity saw the rise

of Weberian or instrumental reason, our current period of modernity, the postmodern, is defined by the discovery of the incompatibility of Weberian and Jasperian reason, the gradual disentangling of Weberian reasoning from its anachronistic Axial parentage.

Given this, what did the notion of the autonomy of Reason, floated by the ancient Greeks but actualized only in the Enlightenment, mean? I suggest it was nothing more than the *differentiation* of inquiry into truth from other forms of human judgment, speech, activity, and production. Modernity is based in the rejection of omnivalence, which is to say, the rejection of the Durkheimian or "natural" condition of humankind. The inability to project a whole is precisely the deep modern problem of the relation of human values or norms to the material, putatively value-less, undesigned universe achieved by modern, truth-governed science. Modernity is then, as Weberian, radically contextual; each social endeavor generates its own norms and "constructs" its own environment. Niklas Luhmann would say that this is a permanent condition, in which modern or postmodern society has worked out alternative modes of social and intellectual organization which cannot tolerate and do not need Durkheimian or omnivalent unity (Luhmann 1982). Postmodern society is, as he says, "a whole that is less than the sum of its parts." Ominivalence remains of course in the supracontextual zones of decision in which we variously abandon Weberian rationality, going by our "instincts," "sensibility," "experience," "practical wisdom," and so on.

Now certainly these disentangled spheres are still the constructions of a culture and characteristic of the people that employ them. They serve the ends of the culture. They do so, however, *through* this disentanglement and unifunctionality. Carried far away by the wind, the seed better serves its parent plant. But in doing so it takes the species to unanticipated realms, opening it to novel changes. The progress of the unifunctional spheres develops unimaginable cultural resources but in the process reconstitutes the culture, again and again.

The Bend of History

At the outset of our study we noted Francis Fukuyama's famous argument that global politics in a postcommunist era experiences "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1989). That thesis is at odds with, on the one hand, Benjamin

Barber's claim that the world is dividing along a new bipolarity between premodern *jihad* and postmodern "McWorld" (Barber 1992) and on the other, Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, which anticipates a pluralistic world of permanently conflicted cultural units (Huntington 1993). Certainly the plausibility of Fukuyama's thesis has suffered in the last decade; most of the phenomena treated by the present study have added fuel to the polycultural thesis.

But Fukuyama's view is not *all* wrong. What we mean by modernity is an environment based in certain kinds of progress, which, once achieved, are relatively self-sustaining and hard to do without. Whatever else is true of the contemporary world, it has created a direction, a cognitive, technological, economic, and—at least in terms of the public control of the modern state through democracy and universal education—political standard for the rest of the world to meet. Virtually all societies and major parties acknowledge these goals, hence everyone accepts a roughly equivalent meaning of "development." Disapproval of Western modernization concerns the cost of these achievements or what may accompany them, but no peoples or national elites are today in favor of less science, worse health care, and fewer economic opportunities. If we can say that there is no such thing as complete modernization—since every society and culture retains elements that are relatively unreformed by progress, including the United States—we can also say that today there is no such thing as complete or full antimodernism, no true attempts to return to the premodern era *simpliciter.* For such a return would have to mean abandonment of social and legal equality, a return to caste distinctions, aristocratic or royal ownership of land or the means of production, abandonment of modern science and technological progress, the social primacy of kin and locale, and hence the weakness of central government. There are *no* such movements in the world today, for a "movement" requires centralization, politicization, rationalist organization, and modern technology. Or if there are such, they occur only in situations of crisis that fulfill no culture's normative criteria, during the collapse of the state into warlord-ism or a reversion to tribal and clan social organization. Modernization rules out some forms of cognition, culture, and social organization.

Nevertheless, there is nothing in the impressive recent spread of global capitalism, the information revolution, and liberal republicanism which together spell the end of ethnic, religious, or nationalistic modes of social organization, either now or soon or *ever.* Reports of identity's demise have

been greatly exaggerated. The reason for the persistence of primordial versions of identity and affiliation is not only the enduring need for them, but as well the very flexibility of modernity and its technologies, which can be exploited and channeled in different ways by all sorts of polities. We do not know what aspects of human culture will be dispensed with by the various experiments in modernization now under way.

Thus it appears that expansion of the modernized areas of the globe will mean *more and more different ways to be modern*. We face not one but *many* globalizations (Berger and Huntington 2002). An earlier round of modernization and its discontents produced fascism and communism, direct threats against liberal capitalist modernity. The first was destroyed, the second, in its own phrase, "withered away." But the newer round of discontents is more amorphous and arguably more creative. One does not have to accept former Singapore president Lee Kuan Yew's promotion of "Asian values" against Western-style individual rights to recognize that the modernized Pacific Rim nations have their own model of capitalism, a communitarian rather than individualist model. Will South Africa and Nigeria lead a novel African modernity in the next half century? What kind of society will China become by the time it takes the lead in East Asia? And how different will the *least modernized* countries look from those countries exhibiting the *least Western* forms of modernization? What we see as a failure to modernize may in fact be a novel non-Western form of modernization. I think it likely that this spiral goes on indefinitely, with convergence not on a single model but around certain constraints that the various extant models must share, such as, for example, mastery of the technological-scientific developments of the day. For if there is a lesson of postmodern society, it is not that things fall apart when the center does not hold, but that some things can function quite well without a center.

That is what is really disturbing to the fundamentalist mind, not secularization, but the combination of claimed religious identity *with* secularization, embodied most of all by the United States. For we can now say that the Islamic revival is *Axial* or *Jasperian*. That is its distinction. Even in its fundamentalist expressions it is a highly rational form of moral-Platonic thinking, divorced from ultimately segmentary-ethnic-kin-local ties, thing the particular always in terms of the transcendent universal. Militants elevate this into a utopian scheme through a politicized modernity that accepts modern science, technological innovation, industrialism, and commercialism (not full capitalism, given the Islamic rejection of usury). This is instructive.

Islam today represents unambiguous Axial reason, particularly as the militants seek to denude Islamic society of its Durkheimian substructures, its social traditionalism. It is its Axial nature that makes the Islamic revival most frustrating to the West, in that it exhibits what is, for the postmodern West, a hyperrational (which is to say, modernized) version of its own Axial past.

Regarding those postmodern societies we can offer a tentative and surprising suggestion: as *Jaspers recedes, Durkheim returns.* To say that Reason is *not* autonomous is to say that it remains irreducibly Durkheimian, hence social. That form of reason has been present for as long as human beings could adjudicate disagreement. Axial or Jasperian reason discovered the advantages of a detour *away from* social life *for* social life, and Weberian reason did it one better, bestowing massive power and prosperity on societies that renounced the substantive dependence of cognition and production on culture. But the Rortyan resocialization of reason is a return to Durkheimian reason after the withdrawal of Jaspers. The Axial age metanarratives cease to be central to the human societies that have evolved modernity on the terms described herein, however they ornament our discourse. Still, in the central societal processes of the most advanced societies the socialized cognition and segmentary rationality that is forever the fallback position of human beings remain. For oddly enough, if Durkheim's notion of collective consciousness fits any society, it fits contemporary postmodern mass culture. Thus Weber and Durkheim ambiguously join hands. That is our unique situation. Our culture is fragmented, ironic, open, volatile, hence unlike any earlier culture. That is its Weberian content. But that content functions as a formidable social whole bearing the echoes of centralized nationalism, subtended by a common context-free culture that is inculcated by electronic mass media, all to form a very powerful We-World. Our behavior is composed of piecemeal but serviceable Weberian roles, contexts, and calculations, which nevertheless grow and spread into Durkheimian functions, strategically retaining Jasperian fig leaves. Flanking the great agroliterate period of 5,000 B.C.E. to 1900 C.E., the source of our normative civilizations, the modern Weberian and the segmentary Durkheimian forms of reason meet in our postmodern era. To what end, or to what new beginning, remains to be seen.