APPENDIX K

DEFINING RATIONALITY

Critics and proponents of the reliability of reason often talk past each other, for they have very different conceptions of what reason is. Before he can profitably discuss whether reason is a reliable guide to truth, one must be clear about what he means by REASON. I will define what I mean by REASON and related terms as I use them in this book. I use these terms in a significantly broader sense than many do.

> **REASON (RATIONALITY)**—*that set of divinely created laws, principles, and processes, innate within human intelligence, whereby a human being formulates true beliefs about reality from the data of experience* **{A}**.

All the different processes that function within human intelligence to lead us to a knowledge of the objective reality outside ourselves are included within the scope of what I am calling reason. Reason is not limited to a particular kind of logical analysis or deduction. Reason includes *all* the various processes that transpire within human intelligence. It includes guessing, hunches, direct perception, imagination, aesthetic experience, athletic skill—anything and everything that human intelligence does in order to come to a true understanding and perception of reality and to act within and upon it.

Sometimes reason is used as a synonym for REASONING. This is the source of much confusion and misunderstanding. I discuss this later.

> **LOGIC**—*that set of divinely created laws or principles, innate within human intelligence, that serve as a guide in the formation of valid beliefs. As we formulate our beliefs about objective reality, logic either warrants or disallows those beliefs* **{B}**.

The principles of logic serve as the validity criteria for our beliefs. As one reflects on his experience, he instinctively seeks to formulate true beliefs about reality. The laws of logic are those principles in conformity to which one instinctively seeks to construct those beliefs.

It is these principles that any formal system of logic is trying to capture within a formal system. No formal system of logic has successfully captured the whole scope of what constitutes human logic. Hence, I do not

use the term LOGIC to refer to any particular formal theory of logic. Rather, I use it to refer to the innate principles themselves—those principles that we use everyday to evaluate the validity of possible beliefs about reality. Logic does not constitute a way of thinking. It is the guide and template for all our thinking; it is the very substructure of intelligence itself—an essential attribute of reason.

> **REASONING**—the act of constructing beliefs about objective reality from the data of life experience **{C}**.

There is no guarantee that the beliefs formed as a result of reasoning will successfully conform to the laws of logic. If we define successful reasoning in terms of its conformity to the principles of logic, then reasoning may be more or less successful. Reasoning can readily result in illogical and irrational beliefs.

The term REASON can be and often is used as a synonym for reasoning. This engenders a great deal of confusion. They are not synonymous. Reasoning, as I am defining it, is the activity of belief formation using human intelligence. Reason is that set of innate laws, principles, and intellectual procedures by which reasoning can be judged sound or unsound. Consider the following proposition: "Reason is a reliable guide to truth." This proposition is often mistaken for a second proposition: "Human reasoning is a reliable guide to truth." The latter proposition is obviously false. Human reasoning *per se* is not a reliable guide to truth, and that is not my contention in chapter 3. My contention is a very different claim. Namely, that REASON is a reliable guide to truth. In other words, while human reasoning is fallible and can quite frequently result in false beliefs, reason—the innate set of standards by which reasoning is to be judged as sound or unsound—is not fallible and never leads to false beliefs. If reason judges an instance of human reasoning to be sound, then necessarily that instance of human reasoning has led to a true belief. And if reason judges an instance of human reasoning to be unsound, then necessarily that instance of human reasoning has led to a false belief. That is what I mean when I claim that REASON is a reliable guide to truth.

> RATIONAL has several different meanings. Its meaning varies as it is used to describe different things:

> **RATIONAL** (describing a being or person)—*a being (a person) is rational if he has reason as a part of his nature. To be rational is to have the*

> *ability to formulate beliefs about reality that are generated by the mental process-es innate to God-given intelligence and that conform to the principles of logic (reason)* **{D.1}**.

By this definition, animals—as well as humans—are rational in some measure. The difference between humans and animals is not that humans are rational (in this sense) while animals are not. Humans differ from animals in the nature and extent of their rationality. Human rationality reflects divine rationality in a way that animal rationality does not. Most importantly, human rationality includes moral judgment while animal rationality does not.

'Rational' is sometimes used to distinguish one sort of person from another. For example, "Paul is quite rational; John is not." When used in this way, 'rational' is being used to describe a person in one of two ways: either (1) he is particularly skilled at reaching logical beliefs **{D.1a}**, or (2) he is particularly self-conscious of his rational processes and engages in them methodically and systematically rather than intuitively **{D.1b}**. For my purposes in the arguments of chapter 3, neither of these senses of 'rational' is in view. All human beings are equally rational in the sense in which I mean 'rational' in that chapter. No style of employing reason is more rational than any other.

> **RATIONAL** *(describing a sequence of reasoning or an argument)—an argument or some sequence of thinking or reasoning is rational if it conforms to the principles of logic and results in beliefs that conform to the principles of logic* **{D.2a}**.

Thinking that is rational is opposed to thinking that is irrational—that is, thinking that fails to conform to the principles of logic and reason. Occasionally, a person might refer to 'rational thinking' or 'rational thought' when all they mean by the term is thinking that transpires in the mind of a rational being. In this sense, the opposite of rational thinking is behavior that is non-rational because it does not involve thought at all—that is, activity that is not the attribute of a rational being. Hence, there is another useful sense of 'rational'—

> **RATIONAL** *(describing a sequence of reasoning, an argument)—an argument or some sequence of thinking or reasoning is rational if it is something that an intelligent, rational being would engage in (as opposed to some being who is, by nature, incapable of intelligent, rational thought)* **{D.2b}**.

RATIONAL *(describing a belief)—a belief is rational if it conforms to and has been formulated in accordance with the principles of logic* **{D.3}**.

While humans are capable of irrational beliefs, we permit irrational beliefs relatively rarely and selectively. Most of our beliefs are rational. We have a built-in sense of obligation to hold rational beliefs and reject irrational ones. We instinctively feel shame when our beliefs are criticized for being irrational or illogical.

Sometimes we describe a belief as rational in the sense that it is formulated by a rational being {D.3a}. This sense would be related to D.1 and D.2b above. And sometimes we describe a belief as rational in the sense that it is the result of a conscious, deliberate process rather than the result of an intuitive hunch {D.3b}. This sense would be related to D.1b above. But neither of these is what I typically mean when I describe a belief as RATIONAL in the course of chapter 3.

RATIONAL (describing a thing)—*a thing is rational if it has the earmarks of having been fashioned, designed, created, conceived, or accomplished by a rational being and is, therefore, capable of being known or understood by another rational being* **{D.4}**.

One of the consequences of something having been designed by a rational being is that it can be known by another rational being. I discuss this more fully in chapter 3. Accordingly, if a rational being formulates rational beliefs about a rational thing, it follows that those beliefs will be true and will constitute knowledge of that thing. The beliefs will correspond to what the thing actually is. This is such an inevitable consequence of a thing's being rational that it is at the heart of what we mean by calling a thing 'rational'. A thing is rational if it is knowable to a rational being through normal rational processes.

LOGICAL has various meanings as well. Its meaning differs as it is employed to describe different things:

LOGICAL (describing a being or person)—*a being (a person) is logical if he tends to form beliefs that succeed in conforming to the principles of logic. In other words, a person is logical if he tends to be successful in formulating rational (logical) beliefs* **{E.1}**.

A common meaning for 'logical' will not be relevant to the arguments

and claims of chapter 3. 'Logical' can be used to describe a person who tends to be self-conscious, deliberate, methodical, and/or analytical in the way he goes about formulating his beliefs {E.1a}.The opposite of being logical in this sense is to be intuitive. A person who relies on intuitive hunches employs his reason differently from the person who formulates his beliefs deliberately, step-by-step. Often the latter is called 'logical' in contradistinction to the former. While this is a common and acceptable sense of the term 'logical,' it has no bearing on the claims in chapter 3. Relative to my claims there, the intuitive reasoner is no less logical than the deliberate, self-conscious reasoner. What makes a person logical is that—in the end, however he gets there—he embraces beliefs that conform to the principles of logic. What style of reasoning he uses to come to those beliefs (whether intuitive or methodical) is not relevant to what is at stake in that chapter.

> **LOGICAL** (describing a sequence of reasoning or an argument)—*an argument or some sequence of thinking or reasoning is logical if it conforms to the principles of logic and results in beliefs that conform to those principles* **{E.2}**.

This is synonymous with 'rational' in sense D.2a above. Not infrequently, an argument or sequence of reasoning could be described as 'logical' in a sense that parallels E.1a above. Namely, 'logical' can describe an argument that is deliberate, self-conscious, methodical, and analytical {E.2a}. But, as above, this is not a sense of 'logical' that affects anything I assert in chapter 3.

LOGICAL (describing a belief)—*a belief is logical if it conforms to and has been formulated in accordance with the principles of logic* **{E.3}**.

This is synonymous with 'rational' in the sense of D.3 above.

No sense of 'logical' corresponds to 'rational' in sense D.4. We do not typically employ 'logical' to describe a thing. Only people, arguments, or beliefs are commonly characterized as logical.