

IS ROBIN BARROW'S METHOD OF PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS  
"IRRATIONALISTIC"?

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OPSOMMING

Robin St. C Barrow se filosofiese metode (d.i. konseptuele analise) kan as irrasionalisties beskou word. Om hierdie stelling te substansieer, word 'n oorsig van die verskille tussen rasionalistiese en irrasionalistiese denke gegee en word nadruk daarop gelê dat "irrasionalisties / irrasionalisme" tegniese terme vir 'n besondere benadering tot filosofering is: die irrasionalisme skyn die rol van die rede / die redelike in die wetenskap te erken, maar anders as in die geval van die rasionalisme word die rede nie bloot om sy eie ontwil ingespan nie. Dit word aangewend vir ander, praktiese, sedelike, subjektiewe en selfs terapeutiese doeleindes. Daar is vasgestel dat die meeste van die kenmerkendste eienskappe van die irrasionalisme aangetref kan word in 'n ontleding van die filosofiese oogmerke wat Barrow in 'n aantal van sy jongste werke stel.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is accepted in some philosophical circles that twentieth century philosophical thought is "irrationalistic" in warp and woof. Schoeman (1983:298) for instance is of the opinion that irrationalism may probably be regarded as the most influential way of thinking in Western Europe since World War II. Singer (1979:442) states that "the culture of both Europe and America during the twentieth century has given rise to a new outburst of irrationalism in all areas of modern life which threatens to destroy Western civilization". According to him modern educational philosophy "is a curious combination of evolutionary thought, Dewey's pragmatism, progressivism, and Skinner's manipulative behaviorism", all irrationalistic philosophies. Language analysis, philosophical and con-

ceptual analysis are sometimes regarded as forms of "irrationalist" philosophy, along with pragmatism, Lebensphilosophie, existentialism and New Marxism, to mention only a few twentieth century philosophies (cf. Vollenhoven, 1956: 39ff; Klapwijk, 1971:34).

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To call twentieth century philosophy "irrationalist" sounds unscientific, far-fetched and absurd, to say the least. Serious students of conceptual analysis in particular will immediately be inclined to reject the notion that this form of philosophizing is "irrationalistic". However, equally committed philosophers (of education) like those referred to in the first paragraph claim that conceptual analysis is indeed "irrationalistic" (Schaeffer, 1986:56-57). For the sake of philosophical dialogue this assumption has to be tested. One of the first steps in this process will be to clarify the meaning content of the term "irrationalist". Secondly the formal characteristics of twentieth century irrationalism will be expounded philosophically. The third step will be an exposition of Robin St. C. Barrow's aims of his method. This will be done to determine whether the method of conceptual analysis employed by this prominent philosopher of education can indeed be regarded as "irrationalistic".

On the basis of this analysis it is hoped that exponents of conceptual analysis, and those philosophers who are still struggling with the so-called basic questions (i.e. ontological problems) classical philosophy has always been concerned with, will be able to enter into a more meaningful dialogue.

## 3. "IRRATIONALISM"

The noun "irrationalism" seems to have been used for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century, but words like "the irrational" seem to have been employed already some 50 years before that (Rücker, 1976:548). A closer investigation of the use of these two terms reveals that they may refer to areas of human life and of reality inaccessible to human reason. They may also mean something like "unvernünftige Handlung", i.e. "Handlung wider besseres Wissen" (acting contrary to one's own better judgement; the choice to act contrary to something which in the

prevailing circumstances seems right or reasonable; an action which is incompatible with what a particular person (subjectively) regards as right or reasonable in the circumstances) (Baldwin, 1960:575). "Irrational(ism)" may also refer to a philosophy opposing rationalism, or to the supra- and infra-rational aspects of philosophical thought. The term "irrationalism" itself seems particularly imprecise and vague as an instrument of philosophy (Edwards, 1967:213). Irrationalism is for instance not only regarded as a modern philosophy on the same level as pragmatism, existentialism, and New Marxism (amongst others) (Delfgaauw, 1972:90ff), but as an umbrella term for (most of) the twentieth century philosophies (Klapwijk, 1971:34). It is also accepted that irrationalism manifests itself in many forms, for example in the form of ontological irrationalism, epistemological irrationalism, ethical, psychological and sociological irrationalism (Edwards, 1967:214-216).

In spite of all these difficulties surrounding the term "irrational(ism)", Strauss (1978:108) claims that there exists a degree of consensus about the term, making dialogue between philosophers not altogether impossible. However, he feels the necessity for clarification of this concept for purposes of scientific thinking. According to him - and in this he accepts the explanation of irrationalism put forward by H. Dooyeweerd (1969 1:28 et seq) - irrationalism is a problem pertaining to the process of "concrete abstraction". Through a process of abstraction the universal characteristics of phenomena are discovered. Every phenomenon possesses a universal (common) and an individual (particular) aspect, simultaneously present in any single specimen of such entity. The universal aspect provides knowledge of concepts (eg. tree). The individual aspect of an entity however defies definition or formulation into a concept, as definitions and concepts are universal by definition. The universal aspect points to the general or common being of a phenomenon or entity (eg. "tree-ness").

Against this background Strauss (1978:110) argues that rationalism only allows room for the universal aspect (law/order) of (phenomena in) reality. This causes the individual (factual) aspect of a phenomenon (or reality) to be theoretically reduced to or equated with its own universal or law-aspect. Quite the opposite is characteristic of "irrationalistic" thinking: when the individual or factual aspect of a phenomenon (or

reality as a whole) is absolutized, every avenue to rational conceptual knowledge is cut off since the individual aspect cannot be grasped conceptually (as a universal concept), as has been argued. Such an approach is then technically termed: "irrationalistic". Rationalism leaves no room for genuine knowledge of particulars, whereas irrationalism leaves no real room for genuine conceptual knowledge. The former is deterministic (absolutization of the law aspect); the latter indeterministic (absolutization of the subject to the law, i.e. the individual or factual aspect).

Strauss (1978:110) contends that the unbreakable correlation between the law aspect and the subject aspect of a phenomenon or entity has to be taken into account in order not to be deceived into a form of either rationalist or irrationalist philosophy. Schoeman (1983:305) points out that the contraposition of rationalism versus irrationalism, is not at all well known in humanistic philosophy, where these two positions are known as rationalism and empiricism. According to him rationalism holds that concepts and impressions are the result of the workings of man's autonomous reason. He agrees with Strauss and Dooyeweerd, that the rationalist absolutizes the law aspect of reality, and theoretically "dissolves" the factual aspect of a phenomenon in its own law aspects. Practical life is of no significance in scientific work; it belongs to "another dimension" of reality. To cross over from the dimension of scientific work to the dimension of practical life is inadmissible: it is nothing less than a cross-over from one ontological dimension to another.

The empiricist (irrationalist) again, accepts that concepts originate outside a person and do not relate or pertain to reason only. He absolutizes the factual aspect of reality as well as individual subjectivity and regards all laws and norms as insufficient in themselves, as products of individual subjectivity, products of autonomous and self-sufficient man (i.e. man creates his own law). As a result irrationalism (occasionally also indicated as anti-rationalism or empiricism) is indeterministic in its efforts to suspend all laws/norms, to make the latter relative to their own subject(s) and to reduce them to the domain of subjective fact (Schoeman, 1983:306).

For the purposes of the present investigation none of the following meanings and connotations of "irrationalistic" will be accepted: illogical thinking, supra-natural or super-human aspects of thinking, unreasonable and ill-advised behaviour, behaviour contrary to one's own better judgement, behaviour contrary to what can be objectively or subjectively regarded as good and sensible. The idea that irrationalism can be regarded as an independent line or brand of philosophizing is not acceptable either. Having rejected all these meanings and connotations of the term "irrationalist" it becomes important now to outline a positive meaning for the term.

In the first place it must be accepted that "irrationalism" means something in philosophical opposition to "rationalism". In fact, there is much evidence that twentieth century irrationalism has developed as some kind of a reaction to rationalism which has reigned almost supreme since the sixteenth century. Like rationalism, irrationalism, is, according to Vollenhoven (1956:39), subjectivistic, i.e. the philosopher himself is accepted as the norm for scientific philosophizing.

Irrationalism however, still accepts rational behaviour as important in philosophy but rejects its absolutization. For example, it is argued that the reason (ratio) can only be applied to some or other restricted area. There is no real agreement among irrationalists as to the limits of reason; they all seem to agree that reason has to be of secondary importance in philosophy. Reason is not shown the door, as it were, but is not allowed to dominate everyone or anything in the "house of philosophy" anymore. Irrationalism is a form of criticism of reason but not rejection of it (Vollenhoven, 1956:40). There is no patience with the general, speculative views or with the unbiased and objective calculations of reason alone. Hegel, Dilthey, Troeltsch, Comte, Marx, Freud, Bergson - to name only a few - have shown that there can be no mention of the autonomous self-determination and independent observation of reason. Irrationalism has little faith in absolutized reason, or in fact in the reasonableness of reality or of history. Various circumstances in the twentieth century have led philosophers to question the rationalistic faith (Klapwijk, 1971:33-34).

A further characteristic of irrationalism is the fact that the subjective element in which man puts his trust can be qualified by the term non-rational. According to Vollenhoven (1956:40) this element may be either sub-analytical or supra-analytical. In irrational(istic) thinking there is still a complete trust in the autonomy of man; however, this free and autonomous man is essentially irrational, not really understandable. He does not act according to the generally accepted rules of reason but makes decisions in accordance with the situation (contingent thinking). This "irrationalistic" and actively acting being finds himself in a world which is reputedly not reasonable or understandable. The situation in which he finds himself is essentially meaningless; it is man's task to give meaning to it by means of his own actions. According to Klapwijk (1971:34) the theme of irrational thinking is: (irrational) man in his situation, here and now.

Briefly recapitulated then, "irrational" thinking does not denote illogical or haphazard thinking, or unreasonable, or naive, or unscientific thinking. Irrationalism is a term referring to a twentieth century trend in philosophizing characterized by a reaction to the rationalism of the previous three to four centuries. The "irrationalistic" thinkers of the twentieth century still accept the importance of reason but reject any absolutization of the law aspect of reality in general and of an entity (phenomenon) in particular. While still accepting the importance of reason, it expects reason to play a secondary role in philosophical thinking. In other words, the contingent situation (here and now) or some or other aspect or element in/of it is of greater significance to the irrationalist than the application of the generally accepted rules of reason. According to irrationalistic thinking reason is secondary; it is applied for a purpose which is practical, and - as such - primary. It is not preoccupied deterministically with the universal or law aspect of reality / an entity, as has been indicated but rather with the individual, factual or subject aspect of reality / an entity in an indeterministic fashion.

Now, with regard to the problem stated in paragraph two, the question can be asked whether Robin Barrow's philosophical method of conceptual analysis can be regarded as irrational in the terms just described. Does reason / science / analysis play a secondary role? Is conceptual analysis done for some or other purpose relating to the practical lives of men in

general, or the analytical question itself in particular? Are the rules of logic and reason observed for their own sake in Barrow's method of conceptual analysis (i.e. rationalistic) or for some other purpose pertaining to practical life (i.e. irrationalistic)? These questions as well as various related ones will have to be answered with regard to Barrow's method in order to find a solution to the problem stated. But first Barrow's philosophical aims with the application of conceptual analysis have to be outlined. These aims will make it possible to draw certain conclusions with regard to the problem stated in paragraph two.

#### 4. THE AIMS OF PHILOSOPHIZING OR CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO ROBIN BARROW

##### 4.1 Introductory remarks

Robin St. C. Barrow is a well-known educational philosopher, but for the purposes of this article his interest in education is regarded as incidental since our interest is only in his method of philosophizing.

He has not found it necessary nor possible to give an exhaustive exposition of his philosophical method in a single publication. Elements of his method can be found in various of his publications and will have to be "put together" in order to gain a coherent grasp of it. This task can however not be undertaken in this article since our attention must perforce be restricted to his aims of philosophizing. These too have to be collated from various writings to gain a comprehensive insight.

Barrow himself does not distinguish between the following four different though closely related aims of philosophizing in the way we have done. For purposes of the present discussion it was however regarded as expedient to make these (arbitrary, discretionary) distinctions. In order to determine whether Barrow's method of philosophizing is indeed irrationalistic in the sense described in paragraph three (supra), the various aims of philosophy, as formulated by Barrow, will now be discussed. I propose to give such a coherent view of these aims in a very condensed form, and then to proceed to a process of weighing them against the characteristics of "irrationalistic" thinking outlined in paragraph three (supra).

#### 4.2 The aims of philosophizing

Barrow equates philosophizing with conceptual analysis. The "first aim" of philosophizing is the examination of the main concepts (in the domain of education), a rigorous investigation of the ideas (i.c. of education), so that a fuller picture of them and a greater awareness of the implication of each concept can emerge, or sometimes, so that the inadequacy of an idea or slogan may be exposed (Woods & Barrow, 1982:x).

The aim of conceptual analysis is to clarify and "work out" one's notion of a concept (Woods & Barrow 1982:xiii; Barrow, 1982:50). Clarification of the meaning of terms is one of the most important preoccupations of philosophers (Woods & Barrow, 1982:9, 10, 14); it enables them to argue lucidly and clearly (Barrow, 1981:2). Philosophy is concerned with clarifying all general and specific concepts (eg. animal x duck) (Barrow, 1981:10). What the philosopher is interested in achieving is a state of affairs where words are systematically applied to clear conceptions, and those conceptions are entertained as ideas (Barrow, 1981:14). The point of philosophy is to rid our minds of hazy generalizations, ambiguous slogans, inarticulate ideas and half-truths, and to enable us to detect and demolish them in the reasoning of others, and then, in their place, to cultivate the thinking and communicating of precise, discriminatory, clearly expounded truths or steps in reasoning (Barrow, 1981:16). It is to render us sceptical of all that is not presented to us simply and clearly (Barrow, 1981:17). Our task is both to try to stop people thinking in terms of obfuscating slogans and generalizations, and to build a body of precise concepts that will generate a more productive educational theory (Barrow, 1982:52). Good conceptual analysis results in explications that are clear, coherent, internally consistent; implying nothing that the agent finds himself logically unable to accept while being committed to something contrary at the same time (Barrow, 1983:194).

We need clarification, according to Barrow, of individual conceptions partly to ensure that we are talking and thinking about the same thing, and not some similar but distinct species of thing. We need it partly and more importantly to ensure that we, individually, have coherent and clear ideas and that we have teased out and can grasp all that those ideas logically entail. Conceptual analysis is the business of clarifying one's



own conceptions. What one is doing at rock bottom is trying to grapple with one's own most private ideas (Barrow, 1982:50).

To clarify the main concepts (i.c. of education), then, is the "first" aim of conceptual analysis (philosophizing) according to Robin Barrow.

Closely linked to this "first" aim is the "second", namely to arrive at a set of clear, coherent and specific concepts. We need, according to Barrow (1982:xiii), to clarify our concepts in order to assess them; until we have painstakingly spelt out what we understand by a concept, we can say nothing about it, and obviously our unpacking must lead to a clear exposition, so that we know we are saying something and what it is. Specificity is necessary in order to facilitate talk "with teeth in it". That is to say, in order to be able to make telling comments on the world, in order to gain a fuller understanding, one needs to develop an armoury of specific as apposed to general concepts (Woods & Barrow, 1982:xiii). Clarification of the meaning of terms is therefore one of the most important preoccupations of philosophers, according to Barrow (1982:9, 10, 14), since it will enable them to argue with lucidity and clarity (Barrow, 1981:2). Precise thinking is the aim of philosophy. Philosophers have to get a thorough conceptual grasp of x, y or z (Barrow, 1983:191). Commandment number one for the decade of the eighties is: thou shalt make clear that philosophy (of education's) concern is not so much with words as the coherence of the ideas that lie behind them (Barrow, 1982:52).

The "third" aim is again closely linked to the previous "two". The precision to which the philosopher aspires by means of conceptual analysis is needed not so much in relation to the concepts of, say, physics or psychology, but in relation to everyday concepts such as love, power, motivation, need, responsibility and personhood as they are explored through history, in literature and philosophy. To give people conceptual finesse would really be to do something useful and something relevant as regards our human condition (Barrow, 1984:174). Philosophers spend time trying to ferret out meaning of one kind or another (Woods & Barrow, 1982:5). Their hope must be that in answering the question (eg. what does the term x mean?) they will not only be undertaking the

inquiry just for the sake of it but will also be providing hints and clues for those engaged in, say, education, to indicate what should be done and the way in which it ought to be done (Woods & Barrow, 1982:9, 10, 14). Would-be educators are looking for hints and clues concerning the sorts of things they ought to be doing and the ways in which to do them. An analysis or definition should provide substantive guidelines (Woods & Barrow, 1982:14). If we really want to educate for the real world, Barrow (1984:174) argues, we have to raise children in such a way that they become critical thinkers in matters pertaining to the stuff of daily life: they are thereby better able to understand current reality and to make constructive proposals to alter reality. The phrases Barrow uses to elucidate this point are "an armoury of clear and specific concepts", "conceptual finesse" and "discriminatory power". We need an armoury of specific concepts, Barrow claims, because the ability to make fine discriminations is the key to rational control of the world. The task of the school remains to provide a liberal arts-orientated curriculum in order to build up a subtle conceptual repertoire as regards matters such as human relationships, the nature and purpose of society, life and death. Only thus can people hope to make sense of reality and perhaps improve it (Barrow, 1984:175).

The "fourth" aim of philosophical analysis has to do with the nature of scientific knowledge. Philosophy is more concerned with making advances in our understanding by refining our grasp of what we already know, than with generating completely new knowledge (Barrow, 1981:2). Philosophy is an art which pinpoints and asks fundamental questions relating to term x (Barrow, 1981:3). Conceptual analysis asks philosophical questions about the bases of a discipline, the meaning of its fundamental concepts and the logic of its procedures (Barrow, 1981:5).

## 5. ARE BARROW'S AIMS OF PHILOSOPHISING "IRRATIONALISTIC" AND THEREFORE CHARACTERISTIC OF TWENTIETH CENTURY IRRATIONALISM?

### 5.1 Importance of rational thinking

It has been pointed out in paragraph three (supra) that irrationalistic thinking still holds reason in high esteem. This is also true of Barrow's line of argument: he refers to conceptual analysis, the examination of main concepts, a rigorous investigation of ideas, the clarification of concepts, lucid and clear arguments, systematical application of words to clear concepts, adhorrence of hazy generalisations, ambiguous slogans, inarticulate ideas and half-truths, the demolition of these unscientific monstrosities in the reasoning of others, the cultivation of the thinking and communicating of precise, discriminatory, clearly expounded truths or steps in reasoning, scepticism of all that is not presented simply and clearly, clarification of words, terms, concepts, coherence of concepts and ideas, logical entailments of ideas, the rejection of obfuscating slogans and generalizations, precisions of concepts, explications that are clear, coherent, internally consistent, the rejection of all that is logically unacceptable, the assessment of clear and logical concepts, understanding, clearness of expositions of concept and meaning, specificity, telling comments on the world, specific oncepts as opposed to general concepts, precise thinking, critical thinking, the ability to make fine discriminations, rational control of the world, philosophy's concern to make advances in our understanding by refining already existing knowledge, questions about the basis of a scientific discipline, the meaning of fundamental concepts and the logic of the procedures followed by a discipline.

When the words printed in bold are taken into account, there can be little doubt in our minds that Barrow is everything but irrational in the vulgar sense of the word. However, as has been pointed out previously in this article, the "irrationalistic" thinker in the intended meaning of "irrationalistic" still has high regard for reason.

## 5.2 Reason plays a secondary role in "irrationalistic" thinking

Rationalism accepts the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of reason. Irrationalism, as has been shown, relegates reason to a more modest position. Bluntly put: logic and reason are not important anymore for their own sakes but they have a purpose to serve. This purpose is primary; reason and logic are socondary, instrumental to this purpose.

Irrationalism has to do with autonomous man (rationalism also upholds the autonomy of man - in this case of his subjective reasoning powers) in the contingent situation here and now. Barrow's line of thinking about the aims of philosophizing is a brilliant case in point. Consider the following arguments from his pen: awareness of the implication of concepts (also for their practical use / understanding): the point of philosophy is to rid out minds of hazy generalizations; we need clear conceptions to ensure that we, individually, have coherent and clear ideas; conceptual analysis is the business of clarifying one's own conceptions; grappling with: one's own most private ideas, the purpose of conceptual analysis is to build up a more productive educational theory, philosophizing must enable the philosopher to make telling comments on the world; conceptual analysis is concerned not so much with the concepts of scientific disciplines but rather with the everyday concepts such as love, power, motivation (etc.). TO give people conceptual finesse would really be to do something useful and something relevant to our condition; philosophy should provide hints and clues concerning the things people ought to do, for example as practical educators. An analysis should provide substantive guidelines. People have to be brought up to be critical thinkers in matters pertaining to the stuff of daily life, to be able to understand current reality and to make constructive proposals to alter reality, to be able to rationally control the world; to help people make sense of reality and perhaps to improve it; conceptual analysis aims at refining knowledge we already have rather than generating completely new knowledge.

It is clearly evident from these quotations that Barrow can in no way be regarded as a rationalist in the sense described in paragraph three (supra). He applies reason not for its own sake, but rather for the sake of acquiring another "non-rational" purpose. The words printed in bold in the preceding paragraph indicate this. The irrationalist uses reason and logic not only to rationally and logically understand his own situation and surroundings but also to alter them if possible. In this ideal one hears still a faint echo of the late-rationalist Karl Marx's eleventh thesis against Feuerbach: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kommt drauf an, sie zu verändern" (Philosophers have so far only interpreted reality / the world. However, the important thing is to change it) (Marx, 1978:7).

Rational analysis and understanding of the world, of one's own personal situation and surroundings, in short reality as a whole, is of the greatest importance to the irrationalist, but reason and logic are treated as mere instruments for the manipulation and changing of the contingent situation of the individual, hence the stress on daily life, our surroundings, ethical guidelines and the everyday world.

This second characteristic of irrationalistic thinking discernible in the philosophical approach of Robin Barrow, is closely linked to the third which will be briefly dealt with.

### 5.3 Subjectivism, relativism, individualism and the therapeutic aspect of irrationalism

It has been indicated that irrationalistic thinking shows a degree of impatience with the so-called perennial and eternal truths or findings which are claimed as the results and products of rationalism. The rationalist's claim that science is practised for no other reason than science itself (the ivory tower idea) is rejected by irrationalism. Reason, logic and science should have a practical purpose related to everyday life or to the contingent situation in which the scientist finds himself. Rationalism is preoccupied with the universal or law aspect of reality or of an entity, as opposed to irrationalism's interest or even preoccupation with the factual or individual aspect of reality or the entity in question. As a result of the latter's preoccupation with the individual or factual aspect of reality one finds more often than not that irrationalism shows traces of subjectivism (as opposed to the ideal of objectivism in rationalism) and relativism (as opposed to rationalism's supposed absolutism). The subjectivistic, relativistic and individualistic character of irrationalism is closely associated with what can only be called the therapeutic aspect of Robin Barrow's method of philosophizing, viz. conceptual analysis.

The following phrases which we find in Barrow's exposition of the aims of conceptual analysis reveal the subjectivistic, relativistic, individualistic and therapeutic nature of his approach. According to him, the aim of conceptual analysis is to clarify and "work out" one's own private notion of a concept. The point of philosophy is to rid our minds of hazy gen-

eralizations etc., to detect and demolish them in the reasoning of others. It is our task to try to stop people thinking in terms of obfuscating slogans (etc.). Conceptual analysis must ensure that we individually have coherent and clear ideas; philosophy is the business of clarifying one's own conceptions. What one is doing at rock bottom, according to Barrow, is trying to grapple with one's own most private ideas. By applying conceptual analysis, philosophers do not wish to find eternal truths; they are merely trying to ferret out meaning of one kind or another. Conceptual analysis is more concerned to make advances in our understanding by refining our grasp of what we already know than to generate new knowledge.

There can be little doubt that the aims of philosophizing (conceptual analysis) put forward by Barrow reveal more than mere traces of individualistic, subjectivistic and relativistic thinking, all of these typical of "irrationalistic" thinking in the terms outlined in this article. Philosophy then, according to Barrow - although he does not himself formulate it in these terms - has a therapeutic task. It has to "cure" the individual from hazy, unclear, imprecise thinking, and also enable him to "diagnose" and "cure" this same "disease" in others.

## 6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

The philosophical work of Robin Barrow is undoubtedly scientific: it is systematic, orderly, methodical, and coherent. He also provides sufficient room for reason and logic to play their scientific roles in the process of conceptual analysis. For all these reasons the question whether Barrow's method of philosophizing can be taken as an instance of twentieth century irrationalistic thinking sounds unreasonable and even far-fetched. Everyone acquainted with Barrow's philosophical work holds it in high esteem even if they do not always agree with his views, and the natural reaction to this question will be to reject the notion straightaway: Barrow's method of philosophizing is rational and scientific.

To put the question whether his way of thinking is irrationalistic in perspective it has been deemed necessary to delineate the terms rational / rationalism as opposed to irrationalistic / irrationalism. This exercise has hopefully made the statement of the problem clearer. An analysis

of Barrow's declared aims for philosophy / conceptual analysis has proved that his method can indeed be termed irrationalistic in the sense outlined in this paper. This means that although Barrow makes full allowance for reason and logic in his method, they merely play a secondary role for the attainment of some or other primary purpose. Unlike rationalistic philosophers, Barrow does not apply reason for its own sake but rather for a purpose beyond itself, in his case a personal, individualistic, relativistic and subjectivistic purpose. This purpose, as has been shown, is to therapeutically rid the individual user of language of hazy and imprecise thinking, and to diagnose and cure this same disease in others.

To say that Barrow's method of philosophizing is irrationalistic is not to derogate his scientific work. It is merely to characterize his method of philosophizing and to stress the practical and everyday value of his method of conceptual analysis.

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