

native effect on the immaterial is most doubtful. In any case, it is highly doubtful that thought or reasoning is in the chain of natural causation.

Thought is not a natural event, as we usually construe that phrase. It is *sui generis*, unique, belonging to its own category, distinct from all others. If reason is any kind of event at all, it is a *human* event. The ability to do sustained reasoning is a distinctly human ability. As for its place in causation, sustained reasoning, or the results of it, joins the chain of causation as a cause, not an effect. When thought is performing its proper office it is determinative, not determined. That this is the nature and role of reason is not some new insight of mine; it is the common sense of those throughout the ages who have given thought to the matter.

Some qualifications are in order, of course. Undoubtedly, all sorts of things may influence, disrupt, distort, or even condition our thinking. Intense heat or cold may make any but the most elementary thinking extremely difficult. Low pressure systems in the atmosphere may depress us, and high pressure systems may exhilarate us. Our wishes, whether born of material interests or immaterial desires for diversion, may lead us to wrong conclusions. Pathological mental states may render us incapable of sound reasoning.

Our minds do not exist in splendid isolation from our bodies but are rather so much connected with them that we can rarely ignore them for long. If I were bitten by a rattlesnake, I suspect I would have great difficulty even breathing, much less thinking.

But all that should be nothing to the point. It is the very office of reason to put at naught all these influences which distort conclusions. If I draw my conclusion as to what is of ultimate importance in this world in the presence of a Bengal tiger on the loose, I may be expected to modify it in more serene surroundings, to say nothing of how others might view my conclusion. In like manner, it is the business of reason to remove all discrepancies in thought, whatever their source. The source of the discrepancy does not matter any more than the fact that Ezekiel Bulver's father was a man mattered in his conclusions about a triangle. The question is whether or not it is possible to construct a triangle any two of whose sides must not be longer combined than the other. If it is not, it matters not at all whether the person who drew the conclusion was a man or woman, a bourgeois or industrial worker, had an inferiority complex or had sublimated his sexual desires. Anyone who doubts this axiom about triangles can test it for himself. All else is irrelevant. It evades the issue. ⊕

John K. Williams

EQUALITY, JUSTICE, & LIBERTY

IN Australia recently I received through the mail a document entitled *Changing Australia*. The title was deliberately ambiguous: it was both descriptive—that is, referred to alleged changes taking place in Australian society—and *prescriptive*—that is, urged readers to agitate for and work toward, certain changes.

The document made sorry reading, being little more than a litany of most of the least lovely lunacies of our age. "High technology" was condemned; massively increased government-to-government aid to the third world was recommended; zero-economic growth was espoused; businesses and industrial enterprises making profits were casti-

gated; higher taxation rates, and more lavish transfers of wealth from rich to poor, were advocated.

None of these attitudes or proposals could be described as "novel." Were it not for the *source* of the document few lovers of liberty would, I think, have spared it a passing glance. For that source was not the newly elected socialist government we Australians are "enjoying"—indeed, that government was severely reprimanded by the authors of the report for their "moderation." Nor was the source one of the many communist parties in Australia claiming to represent "authentic" Marxism-Leninism. Its source was the Divisions of Social Justice of the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational Churches (the last three, which united in 1976, now known as the Uniting Church in Australia). In the coming months the faithful of these

The Reverend Doctor John K. Williams has been a teacher and currently does free-lance writing and lecturing from his base in North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

This article is from a seminar lecture at the Foundation for Economic Education.