

## Preface

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It is a major paradox that at the very moment when science has produced more complete explanations of both the physical and the biological worlds than ever before, a movement that rejects not just science but all of rational scholarship, and indeed the values of the European Enlightenment itself, should be so vocal, so well financed, and enjoy so much support in the popular media.

The purpose of this workshop, organised by the Academy of Europe, is to analyse this phenomenon from a variety of viewpoints – philosophers, scientists and those involved with various arenas where reason and unreason have come into conflict.

This meeting took place at Christ's College Cambridge, in December 2011. We were fortunate in having a distinguished set of contributors. We were further fortunate in having in Michael Hanlon a distinguished scientific journalist who undertook to be rapporteur and to edit the contributions that were made and the manuscripts that were subsequently submitted. This special issue of the *European Review* is devoted to this meeting and the organisers hope that it will go to a wide audience and try to put in place a robust framework for preferring reason to unreason, science to obscurity, and a robust utilitarian philosophy to various forms of religious fundamentalism and dogma.

To put it at its briefest, we are making the case for *nullius in verba* (the motto of the Royal Society) against *credo quia absurdum* (Tertullian's famous tag in favour of fideism).