

Rationality and Objectivity

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IN MORE DETAIL:

I. Introduction

- A. Examples of assault on rationality and objectivity
- B. Popular images of rationality and objectivity
- C. Philosophical images of rationality and objectivity

II. Rationality: Theory

A. What rationality is

- 1. Contrast with prominent alternatives to reason
(authority, faith, emotion, consensus, bigotry, astrology, tradition, drifting)
- 2. Lesson: what reason is
- 3. Means of knowledge
- 4. Instrumentalist conception incomplete
- 5. Importance of purposes and context

B. Why be rational?

- 1. A question-begging question?
- 2. Answer; conditions creating need for reason
- 3. The rationality of one's ends
- 4. Exemptions? areas in which one should not proceed by guidance of reason?
- 5. Contradictions

III. Rationality: Practice

A. Survey various forms of irrationality

- 1. Rationalization ("vlogic")
- 2. Self-deception
- 3. Base-tagging
- 4. Purposes
 - a) Incompatible goals;
 - b) Hazy goals;
 - c) Misprioritizing
- 5. Context-dropping
 - a) Compartmentalization;
 - b) Irrational perfectionism
- 6. Emotionalism

OPTIONAL:

- 7. Indulging the arbitrary
- 8. Misrepresenting the alternatives

- B. Rationality's requirements
 - 1. Effort
 - 2. Time
 - 3. Being scientific (openness to evidence, accuracy, thoroughness)
 - 4. Integration
 - 5. Identification ("namer;" valid concepts)
 - 6. Virtues: honesty, independence

IV. Objectivity: Theory

- A. What objectivity is
 - 1. Examples
 - 2. Lesson
 - 3. Dictionary definitions
 - 4. Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand
 - 5. Relationship between rationality and objectivity
- B. Why be objective
 - 1. Address contention that objectivity is impossible
("can't shed your skin," "all claims are theory-laden")
 - 2. Can you prove objectivity?
 - 3. Why objectivity is appropriate

V. Objectivity: Practice

- A. Survey various forms of non-objectivity
 - 1. What objectivity is not:
(another person's shoes; God's eye perspective;
neutral, value-free; infallibility)
 - 2. Chameleon-itis
 - 3. Good-guy syndrome
 - 4. Misprioritizing
 - 5. Impatience
 - 6. Selective attention
 - 7. Improper indulgence of preconceptions
 - 8. Eternally open mind
 - 9. Groundless second-guessing

OPTIONAL:

- 10. Confusion concerning burden of proof
- B. Objectivity's requirements
 - 1. Clear and valid goals
 - 2. Whole-hearted commitment
 - 3. Independence