

RATIONALISM. Rationalism and rationality have a dualist aspect. By all accounts we must employ rationalism in all our endeavours and rationality ought to be the basis of our beliefs and our actions. **H**owever, we often use the process of rationalisation as a device to justify intolerable or immoral behaviour - when seemingly rational viewpoints and decisions lead to discrimination, discord and war. **T**hus rationalism must be coupled with morality. The duality of reason-based rationalism - once it is tied to compassion, love and understanding (which are facets of spirituality) - may seem a contradiction. **B**ut to be of value to society, rationalism must entail ethical principles.

ra·tion·al·ism

1. the belief thought and action must be governed by reason
2. the belief reason is the sources of knowledge and truth

ra·tion·al·i·ty

1. beliefs, opinions or actions based on rational principles
2. thinking or behaving in a rational way; to think rationally

ra·tion·al·i·sa·tion

a defence mechanism demagogues make use of as 'rational' claims hide their true motivations for contrary behaviour

The Rationalist Society of Australia is the oldest free-thought group in Australia, promoting reason since as early as 1906. Members and supporters hold that all significant beliefs and actions should be based on reason and evidence, that the natural world is the only world there is and that answers to the key questions of human existence can be found only in that natural world.

"We seek to stimulate freedom of thought; we support a secular and ethical system of education; we promote the use of science for human welfare; we encourage interest in science, criticism and philosophy as connecting factors in progressive human culture. Unlike the UK and many European countries, Australia is wary of mixing religion & politics and has no state-aligned church."

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There's a specific aspect of rationalism & rationality that fascinates me, where to be rational is to oppose logical fallacies such as: "Since event Y followed event X, event Y must have been caused by event X" ... this train of thought is called a Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc Fallacy. An example is: "The rooster crows immediately before sunrise; therefore the rooster causes the sun to rise."

That example may be simplistic, but the principle of the Post Hoc Fallacy underlies complex human mental gymnastics, for instance in astrology: "When A, with character traits c & d, was born, some stars were aligned. Person B, born under an identical star constellation, shall display the same traits c & d." Mind is prone to such irrational and delusional fallacies coming easily and vividly.

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Another example of mental gymnastics - where rationalism is disregarded - is the so-called Law of Attraction (LoA); it states "whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve". Believers are beholden to a correlation between the dream they conjure up and the manifestation of that dream in reality ... "since my success followed my dream, my dream caused my success";

they ignore that correlation does not imply causation. The LoA promises if you "dream big" you will "achieve big". Importantly - while it is a given that to "achieve big" a vision for the future is required - the law of rationalism is inexorable: It is delusional to think success results from dreaming big ... success follows good education, hard & smart work, resolve & tenacity and making the right choices.

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