

Disintegration of Reason

Perspectives

1. Nomenclature
2. Instrumental reason
3. Psychology and scientific study
4. Postmodernism and irrationality

Nomenclature

'Reason' as term for specific grounds for belief and action.
Still used also in the general sense, but 'rationality' more usual

Rationality also psychological term for use of reason in thought and action, both for individual persons and groups.
New pattern of usage roughly dates from late 19th century.

Instrumental Reason

- No limits on aims or values
- Calculate cheapest or most efficient means
- Optimal outcome



Irrationality and Science

- Rational thinking about unconscious process
- Experimental psychology
- Not necessarily irrational but unconscious
- Politics, including national and other groups
- Emotions and evolution



Challenges to reason

- Link to 'instrumental' reason
- Criticism of reason in modern philosophy: historical – Foucault on reason defined against madness; Deleuze against Kant.
- Experimental psychology finding poor reasoning capacity

Reason and evolution

- Mercier and Sperber introduce evolution by saying reason developed in context of communication and cooperation (socially):
- Justification of oneself
- Evaluate justifications of others
- Argumentation – try to convince/evaluate arguments of others
- Interactive setting

Implications for philosophy 1

- Evidence that much ordinary reasoning NOT governed by rules of classical logic
- Not 'monotonic'
- Oaksford and Chater suggest probabilistic (Bayesian) form for ordinary reasoning
- Mercier and Sperber prefer modularist view of inference (reason module more specific than knowledge and decision making).

Implications for philosophy 2

- If Mercier and Sperber successful less separation between rationality as study (eg., psychology) and popular thinking or feeling than post-Schopenhauer.
- But probably no difference to problem of instrumental reason