

LIMITS OF RATIONALITY: VIJAYA B. KUMAR

This is a topic with unlimited scope. As rationality is not just confined to the human mind alone, the spectrum of discussion can be expanded into many interesting angles. For the sake of simplicity, I would confine myself to humans and their rational or irrational actions not just from a biological, molecular, neurological perspective alone but also from the angles of religion, spirituality and more intellectual aspects of philosophical points of view.

From a biological point of view, without rationality, in fact great amount of rationality in the biological reactions, no organism, however tiny or gigantic can either form or evolve. From a molecular point of view, the rationality is imbedded in the molecular reactions which are so sequentially arranged both in respect to time and space so that the survival of the biological entity will occur for fixed period of time. Usually when we say one is irrational or rational in his or her actions, unknowingly we associate the actions to the human brain. We quickly find fault in ones actions as one has the ability to think and act in a fashion that is in conformity with our view. This aspect is fascinating, particularly because the actions of any given biological entity can be manipulated at molecular, environmental or social level. In a research environment, we can essentially identify the regions in the brain for such manipulation by a variety of means.

When we enter a broader perspective of limits of rationality, where no other living being except humans are involved, we need to investigate the role of religion. Among the thought processes of the human mind that translate into actions, religion is the most irrational one. Even from most kindergarten commonsense, religion makes no sense, if it proclaims that there is some one hiding on a mountain or sitting in clouds and manipulating everything that is going on planet earth and every where in the universe. Much more irrational part of a religion is when it suggests such person called GOD is sending out messenger(s) to implement His agenda. And yet, human mind and human mind alone caters to such notions and cherishes them with rabid passion. I, by no means is the first person to talk on the irrationality of the human religion, millions before me and I am sure millions after me will talk on it without a conclusion or any significant dent into it at social level. Ironically, those who condemn religious notions, often put themselves on higher pedestal of intellectuality. I do not claim superiority for not accepting the existence of such an individual called GOD, who is hiding from our view, but ha infinite power. However, I will give compelling reasons why this belief may be necessary for gregarious nature of the human.

When the spiritual aspect is analyzed with respect human rationality, it becomes more interesting. To a large extent, the spirituality justifies the irrationality embedded in the declaration of the existence of one or more entities hiding some where, with powers to kill and create. The evolution of spirituality by this belief in the existence of creator is medically important for a person to cure one self of many problems, mental and physical. Probably this belief may permit one to become a better individual in one's interaction with nature.

Philosophically, the rationality of the human mind is mind bogglingly beautiful, at least to me. Philosophy is the part into which irrational views of religion have to eventually merge. As even most religious individual, some day has to realize or even briefly accept that there is no entity outside that cares for him or his existence. Then, the philosophical interpretations will have to naturally emerge from the concept of the Supernatural entity called GOD. It is coincidental and ironic, that this is being discussed as a subject in such an esteemed committee on Indian soil. That is the land where irrational religious views are not bound by a religious law but allowed the freedom of thinking to take into philosophical levels. While it is left to the individual to strongly or weakly believe in the existence of a super power in any form that comforts him, no impediments were ever created in ones freedom of questining the existence of

this unknown, un-seeable and non findable entity, namely GOD. No time in its history, a disbelief resulted in persecution, instead that discussion became a part of their investigation. Such freedom resulted in the generation of philosophical texts which are referred to Upanishads, Brahmasutras or Shaddarsanas etc.

I will briefly discuss these aspects in defense of need for a controlled irrationality for peaceful living of the human being for the short existence he has a species on this planet.