

Reimagining the Rationalist Movement for the Twenty-First Century and Beyond: Why the Rationalist Movement Needs to be Recast to Suit Current Realities

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Abstract:- We begin this paper by defining and discussing what rationalism and rationality are. We also then debate and discuss the core concepts associated with closely related and allied concepts such as empiricism, positivism and liberalism, and weigh these in in relation to rationality and rationalism. The history of the rationalist movement worldwide, and in India are also explored, and their aims, objectives, mission and goals explored as well. We also review and overview some rationalist groups, and individual rationalists from all over the world, and from all walks of life, and trace their history, and provide their biographies as well wherever necessary. Some schools of thought pertaining to rationality and rationalism are also explored, both in India, and elsewhere in the world. Likewise, the interface of various concepts associated with rationalism and rationality and various strands of social sciences theory are also probed and investigated. Lastly and mostly importantly, we explore various lacunae, deficiencies and shortcomings associated with the rationalist movements worldwide, and propose course-corrections to address them. We expect and anticipate therefore, that this would give the much necessary shot in the arm for the rationalist movement, and make it more effective and efficacious in the context of the twenty-first century. It will also naturally help such movements win and gain people's trust as well.

I. INTRODUCTION

If one devalues rationality, the world tends to fall apart
- Lars von Trier

It is not rational to assume, without evidence, that rationality can disclose everything about the world, just because it can disclose some things. Our intuition in favour of rationality, where we are inclined to use it, is just that - an intuition. Reason is founded in intuition and ends in intuition, like a pair of massive bookend-. Iain McGilchrist

Faith is not a rational thing, and yet to understand the universe, rationality alone will not give it to us. Our understanding of the universe must transcend the rational.
John Rhys-Davies

We begin this paper by defining and discussing what the twin and interrelated concepts of rationalism and rationality are. We also then debate and discuss the core concepts associated with closely related and allied concepts such as empiricism, positivism and liberalism as well, and weigh these in in relation to rationality and rationalism. The history of the rationalist movement worldwide, and in India are also explored, and their aims, objectives, mission and goals explored as well. We also review and overview some rationalist groups, and individual rationalists from all over the world, and from all walks of life, and trace their history, and provide their biographies as well wherever necessary. Some schools of thought pertaining to rationality and rationalism are also explored, both in India, and elsewhere in the world. Likewise, the interface of various concepts associated with rationalism and rationality and various strands of social sciences theory are also probed and investigated to the extent that they add substance and meaning to this paper. Lastly and mostly importantly, we explore various lacunae, deficiencies and shortcomings associated with the rationalist movements worldwide, and propose course-corrections to address them.

We expect and anticipate therefore, that this would give the much necessary shot in the arm for the rationalist movement, and make it more effective and efficacious in the context of the twenty-first century. It will also naturally help such movements win and gain people's trust as well both in the short-term and in the long-term. Therefore, some kind of a people-driven, people-centric and a people-centered approach, and one that understand people's pulse and keep an eye and a ear to the ground, will allow us to eye the ball, namely that of a rational, just, equitable, harmonious and a fair society that is not a bridge too far; namely, it is well within our grasp and our reach. We will argue, and with full reason, that the approaches advocated in this paper are therefore superior to other approaches in the market. All existing approaches must naturally gravitate in this direction. This is of paramount important to ensure that rationalist movements are not run to the ground, and begin to lose their relevance gradually and eventually in twentieth century societies around the globe.

➤ *What is Rationalism?*

The term rationalism is widely and commonly used in philosophy, and in many other fields of the social sciences. The term dates back in some form or the other, to hoary antiquity, even as far back as to the times of the Ancient Greeks. Etymologically speaking, the term is derived from the Latin word *rationalitas*. The term is commonly used by the common man and specialists alike. As defined in philosophy, rationalism may be stated to be the scientific and the epistemological position that "regards reason to be the chief, the primary, or the sole source and the test of knowledge" or "any view that appeals to reason as the chief and primary source of knowledge or justification", in marked and stark contrast to other possible or likely traditional sources of knowledge faith, dogma, tradition, revelation, knowledge derived from position or authority, and sensory experience included. When worded more formally, rationalism may be defined as "a theory, an approach or a methodology" "in which the criteria of truth are not only just sensory but also intellectual and deductive". Therefore, in the view of rationalists, the chief and the primary characteristic of knowledge is that it is innate and has greatly and largely to do with the intellect, the fecund faculties of the mind, and is proportional with the ability to derive and grasp logical truths and realities; reasoning and logic are therefore also seen to be vastly superior to all other means of acquiring knowledge. As a part of this process and approach, data and evidence are also critically scrutinized and analyzed. This position was contrasted during the renaissance and enlightenment with empiricism which is a wholly and a radically different and a distinct approach. The latter view maintains that knowledge is innate and is acquired by means and through the mechanism of the human senses as understood through the principle of associationism where ideas are built on to a tabula rasa or a blank slate. Empiricism is therefore chiefly and primarily associated with experience, and the sensory apparatus with minimal deviations and exceptions.

Rationalism is widely used in diverse fields such as mathematics, the physical sciences, and to some extent in the social sciences as well. It has also been sometimes associated with the incorporation of mathematical models into philosophical works, and the works of eminent philosophers Rene Descartes, GW Leibniz, and Baruch Spinoza who argued for the superiority of reason over other forms of knowledge, though they sometimes admitted to the importance of empiricism as well. Rationalists therefore, always argue for the indispensability of reason, and the superiority of reason. The term "Continental rationalism" is often employed to describe these philosophers, and this position is contrasted with British empiricism. Anything that does not pursue the virtues of rationality may be deemed either arational, or at times irrational, and not logical or reasonable. People are therefore said to be rational if they act based on reason rather than on dogma or authority, and apply logic and reasoning in all their actions. Rationality is also generally and typically based on the reason responsiveness paradigm; therefore, humans respond to an account based on the mental faculties, logic, and reasoning. Another approach is the coherence approach which

recommends an internal and external coherence among various mental states. Goal based approaches seek out goals such as the persistent pursuit of ultimate truths. There are also two other paradigms, namely that of internalism and externalism; Internalists hold and argue that rationality primarily and chiefly depends on, and is a product of an individual's mind and its inner workings. Externalists on the other hand, argue that external factors may also have a role to play in this connection and in this regard. Normative discussions pertain to the question of whether one should always be rational, in all his daily dealings, and in all walks of life, or whether rationality is purely optional, and is an idealistic goal not worth pursuing at all times. Some other idealists and moralists have also explored the potential conflict between rationality, ethics and morality, or the lack and absence of it.

Another important distinction is generally made between theoretical and practical rationality. Theoretical rationality pertains to the rationality of human's internal beliefs as determined by his belief systems and his mental and cogitative states. Practical rationality on the other hand is chiefly and primarily concerned with actions. There may of course be a conflict and an overlap between the two, though in most cases, these rest in separate world. Ideal rationality lies at the intersection of objectivity, truth, deliberation, and knowledge but may be too theoretical or idealistic and may lie beyond the reach of a majority of people. Bounded rationality as opposed to perfect rationality was conceptualized by the American economist Herbert Simon in the year 1955, and refers the idea that people make decisions that are limited by various restrictions such as innate cognitive abilities, time or cost constraints and considerations, and the information that is at their disposal. As a result, people often make only workable choices instead of striving for what is idealistic. Rationality may also be individual or collective; the latter pertains to collective behavior. Sometimes, cognitive processes and biases that impede rationality are systematically explored, along with the psychological processes involved in their implementation. Other relevant fields include game theory and non-cooperative games, decision theory, Bayesianism or reasoning based on probability, economics, and artificial intelligence. Rationality is also often interfaced with higher order skills such as planning and strategizing. Evolutionary biologists also claim that reasoning, logic and rationality are the sole prerogative of human beings; animals on the other hand act purely on the basis of instinct, and to a much smaller degree, emotion. Rationality is also sometimes used synonymously with reason and reasoning, though there is a subtle and a thin layer of differentiation between them.

The noted American philosopher William Frankena also states that there are four basic conceptions of the term rationality based on the goals it seeks to accomplish or achieve. The four conceptions of rationalist in his view, correspond to utilitarianism, egoism, perfectionism, and intuitionism. For perfectionists, moral or non-moral perfection is the singular goal and objective of rationality. According to the "egoist" perspective, rationality is interfaced with seeking out one's own happiness and bliss.

This is in stark contrast with the utilitarian point of view, according to which rationality means maximizing everyone's well-being and happiness. According to the intuitionist perspective, something is said to be rational only if it conforms to truths that are self-evident and widely held to be true. We must also distinguish and differentiate between rationalism and rationality at all times. Rationalism is a formal school and discipline of thought according to the postulates and tenets of which, knowledge can be acquired through logic and reason alone which involves and includes a complete and a critical cross-examination of evidence, while rationality is the quality of being guided in all walks of life by reason and by logic.^{1 2 3 4 5}

Max Weber also classified rationality into four types namely practical, theoretical, substantive, and formal. Substantive rationality takes into consideration the value of an action and the need to act in accordance with cultural value systems unlike formal rationality which uses and applies formal rules and logic more. Practical rationality deals with the real world applications and implications of rationality while theoretical rationality seeks to provide a theoretical foundation.

One of the chief, basic and fundamental debates both in earlier and in contemporary times is between what we may call "internalists" and "externalists". While proponents of both these schools of thought hold that rationality depends on a wide array of complex factors, internalists believe reasons to be reflections of mental states, or perceptions, desires and beliefs, and argue for the dominance of internal factors in determining whether actions are rational or not. On the contrary, externalists see reasons as external factors regarding what is considered to be good or right, and consequences also matter in deciding and determining what actions are rational and what are not. Scholars may also be categorized as internalists or externalists based on this distinction, and Bernard Williams for example, has supported internalism and critiqued externalism.

➤ *What is Empiricism?*

The theory of empiricism refers to the theory that all knowledge is experiential or essentially based or derived from experience (and empirical evidence) that is in turn

¹ Phemister, Pauline: *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz*. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2006)

² Strazzoni, Andrea: *Dutch Cartesianism and the Birth of Philosophy of Science: A Reappraisal of the Function of Philosophy from Regius to 's Gravesande, 1640–1750*. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018)

³ Verbeek, Theo: *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992)

⁴ Lacey, A.R. (1996), *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1st edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976. 2nd edition, 1986. 3rd edition, Routledge, London, 1996.

⁵ Loeb, Louis E.: *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981)

derived from the senses. It is therefore, a posteriori, and in its canonical form, rejects a priori reasoning. The core concepts and ideas associated with empiricism developed during the course of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, with major contributions made by the English philosopher and physician John Locke, the noted Irish philosopher George Berkeley, and the Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume. Of course, some other scholars and researchers contributed too, in varying measures. This field of study and inquiry falls well with the field and the realm of epistemology which is the science of knowledge, and competes with rationality and skepticism for public attention. Epistemology also includes various epistemic features of belief including justification, warrant, reality, and probability, though this is a specialized field of study by itself. Some scholars hold and believe that empiricism is a much more reliable approach and method of investigation based on the senses (externally-oriented ones albeit backed up by a sound sense of judgment and reflective experience) than one that purely uses arguments based on logical reasoning. Such scholars also may hold that empiricism helps overcome cognitive biases, distortions, and allied errors of judgment, and pushes a neutral point of view. Most empiricists believe in the "blank slate" or *tabula rasa* concept which states that the human mind is "blank" at birth and develops its ideas differently and uniquely through association.

Experimentation and trial and error are also often advocated by empiricists who believe that these are surefire recipes for getting to the truth which may initially may be highly tentative and probabilistic, and subject to continuous revision and falsification if the need arises. Of course, the boundary lines between the two philosophies and streams of thought may sometimes become nebulous and hazy; people may also not always be subdivided neatly into the two camps, as there are a plethora of interpretations possible. Empiricists may also be subdivided into classical empiricists, radical empiricists, (a more dogmatic form of empiricism) moderate empiricism, philosophical empiricism, pragmatic empiricism, and logical empiricists. (This began only in the 1920's) Empiricists and rationalists are also divided on a diverse set of aspects such as intuition, the innate knowledge thesis, and the innate concept thesis. These variegated topics are as such outside the scope of this paper, and readers may refer to the internet or to relevant literature for more information. We do not wish to delve into them here. The history of empiricism may be traced back to the ancient era with major contributions by the Greeks (sophists, stoics, and Epicurean schools), the Hindus (The Vaisheshika school of Hindu philosophy for example was founded by Kanada Kashyapa who lived in the second or the third centuries after Christ), Middle Eastern scholars during the golden age that occurred and took place there during the medieval era, and several other schools of thought. Empiricism must also be contrasted with innatism; the latter view holds that humans are born with some form

of knowledge, and that the mind is not a blank or an empty slate.^{6 7 8 9 10}

II. POSITIVISM

Let us also briefly discuss what positivism is in this section. To put it in a nutshell, positivism refers an eminent philosophical school that holds that all genuine knowledge is derived only by virtue reason and logic and through sensory experience. Knowledge must therefore be scientifically verifiable and hold up to critical scrutiny according to this school. This school of thought also holds that all other ways of knowing, such as introspection, intuition, dogma, hidebound tradition, and faith, are *prima facie* invalid or null and void. While this idea has been advocated by many thinkers through the ages during the course of the last couple of centuries, (Its antecedents even traces its history back to the time of the Ancient Greeks) it dates to its present and its canonical form only to the ideas put forth in the early part of the nineteenth century by the eminent French thinker and an early philosopher of science Auguste Comte. Comte fought lifelong against all forms of dogma, blind and unsubstantiated tradition and orthodoxy, and is regarded to be one of the world's greatest post-Enlightenment thinkers. Comte's earliest works on the subject was "The Course in Positive Philosophy", published between the years 1830 and 1842. This work provided much of the epistemological basis for positivism, and is also the basis of his later work.

This was subsequently followed by his seminal work, "A General View of Positivism". This work was published in French in 1848 but translated into English only seventeen years later, in 1865. Comte's also famously proposed that all societies passed through three stages namely the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and the positive stage. It was only the last of the three stages according to him, that was associated with rationality and scientific endeavour. Positivist ideas subsequently percolated in diverse fields such as logic, economics, psychology, philosophy, historiography,

⁶ Harwood, Sterling (1996). "Moral Sensibility Theories", in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Supplement)* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.)

⁷ Daiches D., Jones P., Jones J. (eds). *The Scottish Enlightenment: 1730–1790 A Hotbed of Genius* The University of Edinburgh, 1986. In paperback, The Saltire Society, 1996

⁸ Achinstein, Peter, and Barker, Stephen F. (1969), *The Legacy of Logical Positivism: Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD

⁹ Hume, David. "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding", in *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 2nd edition, L.A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1902

¹⁰ Mill, J.S., "An Examination of Sir William Rowan Hamilton's Philosophy", in A.J. Ayer and Ramond Winch (eds.), *British Empirical Philosophers*, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY, 1968

and the like, as other scholars and researchers extended Comte's ideas in their respective fields. Positivism in general has somewhat declined in the modern age in the face of criticism, and has been partially supplanted by both post-positivism and anti-positivism. Karl Popper, Willard van Orman Quine and Thomas Kuhn were important post-positivists or post-empiricists, while Max Weber and Georg Simmel were anti-positivists. Logical positivism, later called logical empiricism, dates to the late 1920s, when different groups of philosophers, scientists, and researchers instituted the Berlin Circle and the Vienna Circle. These ideas not only took off, but also flourished later in the century. To summarize here, post-positivism is a research methodology and approach to analytical thought that both critiques and modifies positivism to a significant degree, while Antipositivism is another theoretical standpoint and position that also differs from positivism in a few fundamental ways. Logical positivism is somewhat different from logicism which was pursued by thinkers of the likes of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and others, but is interesting in its own right because it fervently attempted to impart logic to many sciences, mathematics included.^{11 12 13}

➤ Liberalism

Liberalism is a popular and a widely known moral, ethical, and a political and moral philosophy that is very popular in the west, particularly in the United States of America. This has been so at least since the time of the enlightenment. This doctrine is based on the rights of individuals, limited role to be played by governments, (classical liberalism) personal liberties and freedoms, liberal egalitarianism, the right to free speech, political and democratic rights, the rule of law (constitutional liberalism), social justice (social liberalism and welfare liberalism) and absolute equality before the law. The latter includes both gender equality and racial equality. While this doctrine and this philosophy is only indirectly related to the core message of this paper, it impacts it significantly nonetheless. Notable and prominent supporters of liberalism have included the likes of Thomas Paine, George Henry Evans, and Silvio Gesell, while critics of it have included the likes of Vladimir Lenin and Deng Xiaoping. Most liberals also support capitalism and free markets, while critics of liberalism oppose democracy and free markets, though this is by no means a rigid precondition. Another allied principle is that of John Stuart Mill's Harm principle. This principle states that action cannot be taken against individuals except as a last resort, if and when they harmed society in general or other individuals or groups of individuals. This principle also naturally implies that humans are rational creatures, and

¹¹ Laurent Fedi, Auguste Comte, la disjonction de l'idéologie et de l'État, *Cahiers philosophiques*, n°94, 2003, pp. 99–110

¹² Laurent Fedi, Le monde clos contre l'univers infini : Auguste Comte et les enjeux humains de l'astronomie, *La Mazarine*, n°13, juin 2000, pp. 12–15

¹³ Laurent Fedi, La contestation du miracle grec chez Auguste Comte, in *L'Antiquité grecque au XIX^e siècle : un exemplum contesté ?*, C. Avlami (dir.), L'Harmattan, 2000, pp. 157–192

able to take their own decisions. That is why they must be given a fair degree of freedom to pursue their own chosen path in life. Liberalism is also the foundational basis upon which rationalism and free thought can be exercised. That is why the two go hand in hand.^{14 15 16}

➤ *Pragmatism*

Pragmatism deals with topics as diverse as the nature of knowledge, concepts pertaining to belief, and science—from the point of view of their practical uses and practical successes, rather than studying them as mere abstractions. It is therefore expected and anticipated that these will lead to rational outcomes. This school of thought may be traced to the USA in the 1870s when Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Chauncey Wright and John Dewey made foundational contributions to the field. The foundational treatises of pragmatism include Charles Sanders Peirce's works on the logic of science and belief published in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Pragmatists also deal with concepts as varied and diverse such as epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. Rationalists also use rationalist pragmatism in their works and endeavors, and measure success in terms of output and the downstream consequences of their work. We had distinguished between pragmatism and practicalism in our earlier works. Kindly read the paper "Embedding "practicalism" as an intrinsic constituent of the philosophy of science: Positioning "practicalism" as an essential prerequisite for rapid scientific progress" for more information.¹⁷

➤ *Other Strands of Thought*

We now review some other associated strands of thought below. The doctrine of atheism may be defined as the idea or belief that a paranormal force does not exist. The term is considered to be relatively old, and is sometimes traced all the way back to Ancient Greece in the fifth century BCE. The term initially had a pejorative and a negative connotation as it was generally seen as being anti-establishment. However, with the general rise of rationalism and free thought, this idea became more mainstream and generally acceptable. This idea is by no means universal however, and this doctrine continues to have its own set of detractors who are drawn in from all walks of life. Some subscribers to this doctrine are generally seen to be

¹⁴ Cassel-Picot, Muriel "The Liberal Democrats and the Green Cause: From Yellow to Green" in Leydier, Gilles and Martin, Alexia (2013) *Environmental Issues in Political Discourse in Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing

¹⁵ Flamm, Michael and Steigerwald, David. *Debating the 1960s: liberal, conservative, and radical perspectives*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008

¹⁶ Freeden, Michael, Javier Fernández-Sebastián, et al. *In Search of European Liberalisms: Concepts, Languages, Ideologies* (2019)

¹⁷ Embedding "practicalism" as an intrinsic constituent of the philosophy of science: Positioning "practicalism" as an essential prerequisite for rapid scientific progress Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJSRT, June 2024

dogmatic and hard-nosed, while others are generally more flexible, and amenable to all forms of ideas. Therefore, we have strong and weak atheism, as well as explicit and implicit atheism. We vehemently and vociferously argue and state that dialectal approaches are always necessary; we had also introduced the concept of non-cancelling contradictory evidence in a previous paper. Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens are outspoken in their beliefs and in a broad sense, represent the horsemen of this movement. In earlier times, Niccolò Machiavelli, Michel de Montaigne, Bonaventure des Periers, and François Rabelais also veered towards this position, though not entirely. However, some others tend to argue that the whole idea itself is unscientific given that the idea of a supernatural entity is ill-defined, and not entirely within our grasp or reach.

Others scholars like John Gray have also stated that science can almost never replace belief and faith entirely, as these serve two very different and conflicting roles in society, and this is a view that we also wholeheartedly endorse. Religion has been studied in the anthropological sense of the term by many scholars and thinkers, anthropologists and sociologists included, and serves many functions in society such as personal, collective, spiritual, economic, political, social and cultural. We would also like to equate this to approach to ivory tower intellectualism, and per the doctrine of neo-centrism, this is bound to throw up many types of counter-reactions and even in a way, reinforce belief in sects and new age movements. Indeed, this may have already happened to some extent as polarization is seldom a good idea. Reconciliation always is. Win-Gallup international studies and other studies have also shown that hard-core atheist only form a small percentage of the overall movement, and the 2019 Templeton Prize winner Marcelo Gleiser has even gone to the extent of stating that the idea of atheism is inconsistent with the scientific method given the fact that the concept of a supernatural entity is ill-defined, nebulous and somewhat hazy. It is also almost always open to wide interpretation, and may have a cultural slant.^{18 19}

Agnosticism is a far more reasonable position that skeptics and freethinkers often take. It refers to the belief that the existence of any form of a deity, or a paranormal entity, cannot be established with a fair degree of certainty. The term "agnosticism" is thought to have originated from the Greek word "agnostos", or "agnosis" which means "that which is unknowable". The famous British biologist and anthropologist Thomas Henry Huxley who supported the idea, later coined the term in its present sense in 1869 at an inaugural meeting held by the Metaphysical Society in London. This society was founded

¹⁸ Baker, Joseph O.; Smith, Buster G. (2015). *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. NYU Press. p. 100

¹⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul (2004) [1946]. "An existentialist ethics". In Gensler, Harry J.; Spurgin, Earl W.; Swindal, James C. (eds.). *Ethics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. p. 127

in that very same year by James Knowles as a debating society on important issues. The noteworthy Austrian Philosopher Karl Popper also supported the idea, and many modern thinkers like Saul David Alinsky, Poul Anderson, and Piers Anthony are also generally seen to be self-confessed agnostics. However, this idea is canonically and traditionally associated with a fair degree of intellectualism, and as such may not appeal to broader segments of society, and may not replace traditional belief systems.²⁰

Skepticism, which is also sometimes spelt as skepticism, adopts a questioning attitude or a questioning stance towards all kinds of knowledge claims and truth claims. It therefore does not accept a claim without sufficient evidence, or with sufficient reason. Skepticism has unquestionably been the basis of much of progress in society and science. Sceptics may not always advocate belief or disbelief; what they do however advocate and recommend in a majority of cases, is a suspension of belief and a suspension of judgment. The latter is also generally equated with a neutral stance that neither endorses nor rejects the claim. In the view and in the opinion of some scholars, "good" or moderate skepticism, which only requires or demands strong evidence before accepting a position, must be distinguished from "bad" or radical skepticism, which jumps to conclusions and discounts claims entirely, often unfairly without sufficient knowledge, or grounds for belief. The latter also borders on skeptopathy which in general is an unhealthy and an undesirable position. We had sought to distinguish between the two in a paper that we had published in 2024. Another form of skepticism is philosophical skepticism. This approach may even question the possibility of knowledge, or rational belief, or more moderately, states that nothing can be known with an absolute degree of certainty. A variant of skepticism is Cartesian skepticism which is a form of methodological skepticism. This is based on the writings and the work of the French philosopher Rene Descartes. This approach is often referred to as Cartesian doubt, methodic doubt, etc, and has influenced scientific method profoundly.^{21 22 23}

Humanism is considered to be another very important moral and a philosophical outlook, and is associated intrinsically with rationalism and rationality as well. Simply put and simply explained, it is a belief system or a system of philosophical that that attaches paramount importance to the maximization of human welfare and human progress (including the pursuance of ethics and morals) rather than divine or supernatural concerns and considerations. This stance was first widely adopted during the renaissance and

then later on the Enlightenment. This philosophical worldview essentially turned its back from medieval scholasticism which sought to reconcile reason and rationality with dogma. Some aspects of humanism can however be traced back to the times of the Ancient Greeks, and to pre-Socratic writings. Humanist organizations have been founded in well over forty countries, and these advocate humanism in some form. Secular humanism is another strand of humanism, and is allied and associated with mainstream humanism. Secular humanism essentially espouses the cause of reason, logic, rationality and naturalism, while at the same time, rejecting all forms of dogma, supernaturalism, and superstition. Secular humanists may believe in virtues such as individualism, Individual freedom and responsibility, mutual brotherhood, social responsibility, and cooperation, collectivism in endeavour, a universal and a cosmopolitan outlook, etc. In the year 1980, an important secular Humanist declaration was made by what is today referred to as the "Council for Secular Humanism", and Secular humanism is now rapidly gaining traction at least in elite and intellectual circles in different parts of the world. Important secular humanists have included Isaac Asimov, Clark Adams, and Steve Allen. The American Humanist Association is an important non-profit organization registered in the United States that promotes the cause of secular humanism.^{24 25 26}

Free thought generally refers to a highly unorthodox attitude, way of thinking or belief that also encompasses dissent. People who practice free thought or believe or subscribe to free thought are referred to as freethinkers. The term was first coined between 1705 and 1715, is thought to have come into general use in the seventeenth century, came of age in the 1870's, and is today associated with heterodox modes of thinking, agnosticism, humanism, deism, secularism, anarchism, and anti-clericalism. All these concepts are closely related to one another, and go hand in hand. Of course, this does not mean or imply that freethinkers let their imagination run wild, amok or riot, it is rather a controlled process of deliberation or thinking that channelizes thought processes and arrives at the desired result. Freethinkers are however, generally free from the chains of orthodoxy and tradition, and think independently. They do not hold or entertain a thought on²⁷ account of the traditions associated with such a thought, idea or believe, but after careful deliberation, mutual adjustment of competing ideas, and general consensus. Needless to say, free thinkers reject all forms of bounded thinking and

²⁰ Nicholas Von Hoffman (2010). *Radical: A Portrait of Saul Alinsky*. Nation Books. pp. 108–109

²¹ François-Xavier de Peretti, « Descartes sceptique malgré lui ? », *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism*, 11 (3), 2021, Brill, Leyde, pp. 177–192

²² Edwin M. Curley, *Descartes against the Sceptics*, Harvard University Press, 1978.

²³ Charting the skeptopathy - skepticism continuum: A constructive aid in the interests of consistent and reliable scientific activity Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJSRT, May 2024

²⁴ Toumey, Christopher P. "Evolution and secular humanism", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Summer 1993, Vol. 61 Issue 2, pp. 275–301

²⁵ Radest, Howard B. *The Devil and Secular Humanism: The Children of the Enlightenment* (1990)

²⁶ Pfeffer, Leo. "The 'Religion' of Secular Humanism", *Journal of Church and State*, Summer 1987, Vol. 29 Issue 3, pp. 495–507

²⁷ Alexander, Nathan G. (2019). *Race in a Godless World: Atheism, Race, and Civilization, 1850-1914*. New York/Manchester: New York University Press/Manchester University Press

instead believe that beliefs formed on the basis of authority, revelation, tradition, social mores, or dogma are not healthy for societal progress. More contemporary terminologies such as lateral thinking or out of the box thinking are related to free thought; these terms however came into being much more recently. Important freethinkers have included the nineteenth-century British mathematician and philosopher William Kingdon Clifford, Thomas Paine, Noam Chomsky, Edward B. Said, and others. Such ideas are sometimes tied to utilitarianism and consequentialism. The garden Pansy is associated with free thought, and this was formally adopted as a symbol of the American secular unions in the 1800's. These doctrines hold that human welfare and progress must always be kept in mind, and must be the guiding force behind all actions.²⁸

Antitheism is a more radical and a rabid position which states that all forms of theism should be opposed given that they are dangerous to the cause and welfare of society. The term is attested in the English language since at least 1788, and is thought to derive from the Greek words anti and theos. A notable proponent of antitheism is Christopher Hitchens. Irreligion as it is widely understood by the common man refers to the absence or total rejection of religious beliefs or practices. The nature of this concept however varies widely from individual to individual, and the idea interfaces to varying degrees with agnosticism, rationalism, skepticism, and secularism. Organizations such as the Pew research centre, and Worldwide Independent Network/Gallup International Association have carried out surveys on individual beliefs throughout the world, and have noted the diversity of perception among individuals on vital issues. Deism is a theological and a philosophical position that involves the existence of a higher power or supreme being, and the existence of natural laws unaccompanied by worship. Deists tend to be much more scientifically inclined than traditional theists, and this school of thought has some currency among eminent intellectualism.

This school of thought is said to have originated in England in the early part of the seventeenth century and picked up steam and momentum the following century. Some elements and aspects of Deism are however much, much older, and date back to at least five hundred years or so ago. In recent years, Deism has seen a resurgence in Turkey, though it is frowned upon by the clergy.²⁹ Spirituality involves a search for the meaning of life, and is popular among those who are philosophically inclined and seek alternatives to traditional belief systems. The word is generally attributed to the Latin word "spiritus", which means "breath" or "life", and must be contrasted with spiritualism which has a slightly different meaning. People recommending or advocating spirituality may also advocate morals and ethics; these date back in a compiled form to ancient Babylon as Hammurabi was described as a great law giver; however, in recent times, Sam Harris and the Dalai

Lama have attempted to codify them again. Moral objectivism as opposed to moral subjectivism and moral relativism refers to the idea and the belief that there is a standard set of moral principles that can be applied to everyone, irrespective of their feelings, thoughts, or ethnicity.^{30 31 32}

III. RATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The rationalist movement is an important philosophical movement that is based on the principles of rationality and rationalism. A chief characteristic of this movement is that it promotes the use of reason in all walks and all facets of life over unsubstantiated belief not only to solve complex problems but also to acquire knowledge and accomplish human progress. A key argument of rationalists is that reason and reason alone can help people grasp, comprehend, and understand truths that cannot be understood through sense perception. Rationalism in some form or the other, has had an extremely long, rich and complex history, with roots going back all the way to ancient Greece, though it has undoubtedly been influenced by the renaissance, the Enlightenment and the age of reason and scientific progress, and has also influenced them in turn. The rationalist movement in turn influenced several other key areas including natural law and deism. Many scholars laid the foundation for the rationalist movement in some way or the other; this includes less known scholars such as the French polymath Marin Mersenne and Soren Kierkegaard. The rationalist movement has been particularly strong in India, and we review the history of the rationalist movement in India as well. But first and foremost, we begin with the history of the rationalist movement in ancient Greece because that is where its roots lie.^{33 34}

➤ Rationalism during the Greek Period

Let us now begin the history of rationalism in Ancient Greece with a small and a critical observation. That is, while the roots of Rationalism can be traced all the way back to the time of the Eleatics and Pythagoreans of ancient Greece, and to the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, more meaningful

³⁰ Crookes, Sir William (1904). *Researches into the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (7th ed.). Two Worlds Publishing Company Ltd

³¹ Leonard, Todd Jay (2005). *Talking to the Other Side: A History of Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship: A Study of the Religion, Science, Philosophy and Mediums that Encompass this American-Made Religion*. iUniverse, Inc. p. 364

³² Tolsma, F.J. (1954). "The psychiatric significance of spiritualistic (ie spiritistic) groups". *Folia Psychiatr Neurol Neurochir Neerl.* **57** (1): 17–34

³³ Verbeek, Theo: *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992)

³⁴ Strazzoni, Andrea: *Dutch Cartesianism and the Birth of Philosophy of Science: A Reappraisal of the Function of Philosophy from Regius to 's Gravesande, 1640–1750*. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018)

²⁸ Royle, Edward. (1980). *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: popular freethought in Britain, 1866–1915*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

and substantial breakthroughs had to wait until the renaissance, the enlightenment, and the Age of Reason. The Eleatics were a group of pre-Socratic scholars, philosophers and thinkers who constituted a famous school of thought that flourished in the fifth century BCE. The school is so named on account of the ancient Greek colony of Elea that had then existed in the southern part of Italy where it was first established. However, the Eleatics subsequently moved back to mainland Greece following political instability in Elea, and its eventual decline and demise. The core philosophers canonically associated with this school are Zeno of Elea, Parmenides, and Melissus of Samos, with other contributions by Xenophanes of Colophon and Empedocles. All these philosophers and scholars published major works in the field, examples being Parmenides' "On nature" which is now more or less lost save some minor fragments. Eleatics traditionally advocated monism, and this is a school of thought which rejects all forms of duality. Eleatics also advocated stability, unreality of motion or change, and changelessness.

Pythagoreanism originated around the sixth century BCE, loosely based on the teachings of Pythagoras and his followers, who were known as the Pythagoreans. This group promoted mathematics, science, and ethics in addition to several other disciplines and branches of study. Pythagoras established their first community in the ancient Greek colony of Kroton, which is located in present day Italy. Accounts of this movement were maintained and preserved by Iamblichus and Porphyry who were also among Pythagoras' chief biographers. Another school of thought worth mentioning is that of cynicism. This school of thought originated in the Classical Greek period but extended well into the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods as well. A later iteration of Pythagoreanism came to be known as Neo-Pythagoreanism, and this took root in the first century BCE. Other Greek cults such as the Orphists were out of synch with the rationalist movement more or less completely.

Platonists are groups of individuals who advocate the philosophy of Plato or various philosophical systems derived from Plato's ideas to varying degrees. Platonism influenced Western thought fairly comprehensively, profoundly and deeply. Some of the key and core ideas of Platonism include the belief in abstract and mathematical objects, besides a belief in "The one". A famous Platonic academy was also established in the fourth century BCE. In the third century CE, the philosopher Plotinus added new elements to Platonism, and modified some of its core doctrines, thereby establishing the doctrine of Neoplatonism. Just as Pythagoras and Plato offered several critical insights into rationality, Aristotle too made major contributions by advocating the use of syllogistic logic in argument. In the Middle ages, rationalist thought is associated with the works of Augustine, the Islamic philosopher Avicenna (who is also known as Ibn Sina), Averroes (who is also known as Ibn Rushd), and the famed and eminent Jewish philosopher and theologian Maimonides, whose works we shall discuss momentarily. The Waldensians sect was an ascetic

movement that was eventually branded heretical. This sect advocated some form of rationalism, though not completely.

^{35 36 37}

Rational thought flourished and progressed remarkably during both the renaissance and the Enlightenment period. The Renaissance refers to a period in European history that lasted from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and was associated with a cultural, intellectual, artistic, creative, scientific, political, and economic rebirth. This term literally means rebirth in French. The Renaissance is considered to be the meeting point of the Middle Ages and modern civilization. During this period, art, architecture flourished, and there was a general rediscovery of classical literature, particularly Greek literature. The printing press was invented, and the age of exploration also began. The Age of Enlightenment also known as the Age of Reason was an important intellectual and philosophical movement that took place in Europe between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. This movement attached a great deal of importance to knowledge, reason, rationalism and empiricism. Ideals such as natural law, emancipation, liberty, individualism, personal freedom, and progress, religious tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and a separation between the church and state were espoused and advocated during this period. A Scientific Revolution also took place during this period, and the works of Johannes Kepler, Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, Tycho Brahe, and Isaac Newton, were noteworthy, along with the rationalist ideas and ideals of notable philosophers such as Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Stendhal, Maimonides who was an influential Torah scholar of the Middle ages with several medical and non-medical writings, Baruch Spinoza, the polymath GW Leibniz who wrote extensively on theology, philosophy and ethics, and the English philosopher and physician John Locke.

Rene Descartes is dubbed as the father of modern philosophy. His famous dictum, "Cogito, ergo sum" (or "I think, therefore I am"), sums up the spirit of the period. By this he meant that epistemological and metaphysical foundations of science could be accomplished only through the use of reason. Descartes also heavily influenced Baruch Spinoza who speculated on the physical and metaphysical. Gottfried Leibniz also contributed greatly to several fields of study such as metaphysics, logic, mathematics, jurisprudence, physics, epistemology, and general philosophy. He along with Spinoza, is widely considered to be a genius today, and several other thinkers followed in his footsteps. The German thinker Immanuel Kant also contributed greatly to philosophy and ethics, and is widely revered today. Other notable contributors to rationalism

³⁵ Martín-Velasco, María José and María José García Blanco eds. 2016. *Greek Philosophy and Mystery Cults*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

³⁶ Nightingale, Andrea W. 2004. *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.

³⁷ Kahn, C.H. 1994. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett

include Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Nicolas Malbranche, Lyman Hotchkiss Atwater, and Charles de Secondat. The enlightenment period in history is thought to have begun with the death of Louis XIV of France in 1715 and its end is thought to have coincided with the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. Rationalism has diversified greatly today, and several new strands such as "rationalist expressivism", "rationalist pragmatism", and "linguistic rationalism" have emerged." Some philosophers also spoke about "reasonableness"; this concept should however not be strictly equated with rationality.

➤ *Rationalist Movement in India*

The rationalist movement has been exceptionally strong in India, and has had a long and chequered history. The rationalist movement in India connotes, and is represented by a diverse group and set of organizations and people who are engaged in the task of making India more not only rational, but also just, fair, equitable, and secular. They have many different goals which including the fostering and inculcation of a scientific temper, moderating and modulating the role played by faith in daily lives of citizens, fighting superstition and pseudoscience in all their myriad forms and incarnations, promoting critical thinking, harmony and tolerance, supporting freedom of expression, promoting gender equality, class equality and elimination of caste, besides many other noble and notable objectives. There are many Indian organizations under the umbrella of the rationalist movement, and these include the Indian rationalist association, rationalist association of India founded by R. P. Paranjpye, the federation of Indian rationalist associations, etc. There are many other rationalist movements and rationalist organizations such as the "Bharatiya Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti" which was founded way back in the year 1985 by some eminent Bengali rationalists. There are over 100,000 self-declared rationalists in India, and most of them are engaged in promoting a scientific temper either full-time or part-time, and educating the public as well. For example, the Divine miracle exposure campaign was launched by the Sri Lankan rationalist Abraham Kovoor, and G.N Jyothi Sankar organized several rounds of "All-India Miracle Exposure" campaigns along with Abraham Kovoor, and others. These organizations also publish several noteworthy and praiseworthy journals to disseminate their ideas widely among the Indian public, and these include "Free thought", (edited by G.N. Jyothi Sankar), "The Rationalist", (edited by S. Ramanathan), and "Modern Freethinker", (edited by Sanal Edamaruku).³⁸

➤ *Famous Indian Rationalists*

We now discuss some famous Indian rationalists and also review their biographies along with the contributions they made to the rationalist movement and resultantly to society in general. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a famous thinker and an important social reformer. He is known for having founded the liberal and Unitarian society, the Brahma Samaj. He is sometimes dubbed the "Father of the

Indian renaissance" for all his stellar contributions and his stellar accomplishments. The title of "Raja" was bestowed upon him by the Mughal Emperor Akbar II who reigned when this empire was in terminal decline. He encouraged education among women and girls and helped abolish the nefarious practices of Sati and child marriage. Periyar EVR was an important thinker from the south of India, from the state of Tamil Nadu. Some people consider him to be the father and founder of the Dravidian movement and the self-respect movement, though several others also undoubtedly contributed to this movement. Periyar fought against the social evils of his time, including superstition, blind faith, dogma, orthodoxy, and the caste system which advocated and propagated suppression and inequality. Some of his ideologies along with the historical models he based his theses upon, may have been antiquated, if not fundamentally flawed. They have therefore been criticized and called into question many times by other thinkers and intellectuals.

Narendra Achyut Dabholkar was an eminent Indian physician reformer, social activist and rationalist of repute who was also the founder and president of the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti which fought to eradicate superstition and blind faith. Jyotiba Phule, was an Indian social activist, an anti-caste social reformer and writer from Maharashtra. He fought valiantly and heroically for the eradication of untouchability and the caste system and is also remembered for his efforts in educating women and lower caste people. His wife Savitribai Phule participated in many of his activities as well. Abraham Kovvur was an important Sri Lankan rationalist who dedicated his life to the rationalist movement, and imparted a new vigour and dynamism to it. He also fought to expose several paranormal phenomena, besides quacks and charlatans. Another famous rationalist was Basava Premanand who founded the organization, the "Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations", was the convener of Indian CSICOP, (Committee for skeptical inquiry) and until his death in 2009, was the owner-publisher-editor of the famous and the noteworthy Indian monthly magazine, "The Indian skeptic". H Narasimhaiah was a Gandhian, and was an eminent rationalist, skeptic, and free thinker from Karnataka. He was elected a Fellow of the "Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal", and wrote a collection of essays in Kannada titled "Terada Mana" or "open Mind" and an autobiography named "Horaatada Haadi" or "the Path of Struggle". In 1962, he founded the Bangalore Science Forum, which strives to promote rational ideas among the general public, and has a large popular following.

Sir Raghunath Purushottam Paranjpye was an eminent Indian mathematician and diplomat who wrote several books on rationalism. Another rationalist was Govind Pansare who fought unhealthy social and cultural practices, and went on to become a member of the Communist party of India. Prabir Ghosh was the founder and president of the "Bharatiya Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti", a famous science and rationalists association that is based out of Kolkata in India. He authored and penned a large number of books in the Bengali language contesting and disputing many types

³⁸ Cottingham, J., ed. (1996) [1986]. *Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies* (revised ed.). Cambridge University Press.

of supernatural and paranormal claims. Prabir Ghosh offered a sum of Rupees fifty lakh or five million to anyone who could prove paranormal claims. This was on the lines of a similar offer made by James Randi, a Canadian- American skeptic. MM Kalburgi was a famous litterateur and a scholar from Karnataka in India who fought against all forms of hidebound tradition, superstition, and blind faith. Gauri Lankesh also fought against radical religious extremism, criticizing right wing polity and advocating freedom of the press till her untimely death in 2017. Joseph Edamaruku and Sanal Edamaruku were another famous father son duo who spent their entire lives and careers promoting rationality. The duo ran several magazines promoting rationality, and also debunked several paranormal claims. Roddam Narasimha also had rationalist ideas, though he is better known as a scientist. Gopa Raju Ramachandra Rao and Saraswathi Gora were Indian freedom fighters, rationalists, and social revolutionaries who also championed a positive way of life, and fought against outdated customs. Other prominent rationalists from India were Babu Gogineni, Shahu Maharaj, and Sahodaran Ayyappan, and all of them fought for a rational mindset and a rational way of life. The editor of New Delhi-based *Woman's era* and *Alive* magazine Vishwanath was also a lifelong rationalist and promoted his ideas through his writings in his magazines.

➤ *Rationalism and the Social Sciences*

A famous treatise on rationality in relation to the social sciences was provided in the essay “Rationality and Rationalist Approaches in the Social Sciences” by the author David Henderson. This work discusses rationality in detail, summarizing many points that we have ourselves covered, and sees the need to integrate various threads dealt with in the rationalist movement with the social sciences better. This is a position that we ourselves endorse fully and wholeheartedly. Thus, there must be an interdisciplinary and a transdisciplinary scholarship covering various fields of the social sciences. In addition, most rationalists and thinkers associated with the rationalist movement and the rationalist cause have a left-leaning tendency just as they sometimes deem it unnecessary to understand or comprehend the human psyche fully, including an understanding of social and cultural, proclivities, urges, tendencies and biases. This is another anomaly that we must seek to correct before it renders the rationalist movement obsolete and irrelevant. This is also naturally, an essential and an intrinsic part of a successful and a workable plan.

Rationalist must reach out to society, understand the human psyche far better than they do presently or currently, and provide deep-rooted and comprehensive solutions accordingly. We would also seek a better integration with our papers on social and cultural change, and explore and examine how rational thoughts and ideas influence the process of sociocultural change, and determine patterns of sociocultural change as well. Alternatively, and much more importantly, they can also endeavour and seek to examine cultural bottlenecks and analyze how they impede the process of sociocultural change. We would also like to present a unique analogy, if a somewhat radical or a far-fetched one. If intelligent aliens were to land on earth in the

present century, they would discover to their extreme surprise and amazement that their conception of science, including their arrangement and compartmentalization were somewhat different from ours, if not radically. Therefore, nothing – virtually nothing- lies beyond the boundaries and realm of perception and relativity.

Our important and relevant papers for this purpose are “Redefining Intellectualism for a post-globalized world: Why present-day intellectualism is obsolete and why a comprehensive reassessment of intellectualism is required”, (which examines the weaknesses of current forms of intellectualism at least in relation to the human psyche), our trio of papers on socio-cultural change (symbiotic approach to socio-cultural change), structured apperception tests for sociocultural change, cross-cultural research design, cultural frames of reference, the sociology of science, identity theory, and science activism. These papers are referenced and suitably annotated in this paper. The titles of our other previously published and relevant papers are “Towards scientific apperception tests for twenty-first century social sciences research: Formulating ‘Structured apperception techniques for socio-cultural change’ in twenty-first century social sciences research”, Unleashing the potential of the ‘Sociology of Science’: Capitalizing on the power of science to usher in social, cultural and intellectual revolutions across the world, and lay the foundations of twenty-first century pedagogy”, “Generic Identity Theory for the Twenty-first Century: Towards grand unified approaches in identity formation, identity transformation and identity dilution or neutralization”, “Articulating comprehensive frameworks on socio-cultural change: Perceptions of social and cultural change in contemporary Twenty-first century Anthropology from a ‘Neo-centrist’ perspective”, “Formulating ‘Extended identity theory’ for twenty-first century social sciences research: Modeling extended identity in relation to real-world observations and data”, “Promoting science activism for the twenty-first century and beyond: Positioning science activism to promote course corrections in science and to lead to higher scientific output across societies and scientific disciplines”, “Aligning theorization and hypothesis-building with cultural and cross-cultural frames of reference: A heuristic aid to better theorization and hypothesis-building”, “Attempting Diachronic extensions of symbiotic approaches to socio-cultural change: Developing techniques to assess socio-cultural changes over a period in time”, and “The relevance of Culture and Personality Studies, National Character Studies, Cultural Determinism and Cultural Diffusion in Twenty-first Century Anthropology: An assessment of their compatibility with Symbiotic models of Socio-cultural change”. These would make for a very interesting and a very useful read. ^{39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47}

³⁹ Towards scientific apperception tests for twenty-first century social sciences research: Formulating ‘Structured apperception techniques for socio-cultural change’ in twenty-first century social sciences research Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT June 2023

➤ *Criticisms of Rationalist Movement*

There have been many modern and prominent critics of the field of rationality, and some of their criticisms have been broad and sweeping. For example the entire field of rationalism has been attacked and criticized by the American psychologist William James for being a quixotic, futile and pointless endeavour which was hopelessly out of touch with reality. He accused rationalists for not having an eye, an ear, and feet to the ground. Other critics of rationality accuse rationalists of not being consistent with new findings in the field of psychology, psychiatry, cognitive science and neuroscience. Rationalists are also accused of assuming that humans are logical and rational individuals, using deliberation and calculated appraisal always, while they may not be at all times. Cultural differences are also of course ignored by many rationalists, along with the very importance of culture itself, and its centrality to human life, and all forms of human activity. Humans do not therefore always act consciously, but subconsciously, and intuitively. Of late, an entirely new field of study within Anthropology

called Neurotheology has emerged that actively seeks out links between the evolution of the human brain, cognitive processes, and the development of religion. Some anthropologists have also isolated the UMAT2 gene which is seen to be responsible for faith. This is no doubt only a hypothesis, but was advanced by the influential geneticist Dean Hamer, and has many other adherents as well. This means that faith has many crucial roles to play in the evolution of societies, and plays social, cultural, political and economic functions, in addition to personal and cultural roles. This means that this cannot die out easily, except through a slow, long-drawn out and protracted process. Why bang one's head against a wall while there are smarter, and more sensible ways to achieve one's goal?^{48 49 50 51 52}

➤ *The Recommended Approach to the Rationalist Movement*

Our recommended approach to the rationalist movement is as follows, though other scholars, researchers and thinkers must exercise their grey cells as well. These alone we believe will see rationalist movements through in the twenty-first century and beyond:

- Rationalist movements and their general and specific orientation must be free from Eurocentrism, Indocentrism, Sinocentrism, Afrocentrism, etc: Eurocentrism refers to the idea, the ideal or the doctrine of basing everything on a European (or sometimes Anglo-centric) interpretation of issues, or European ideas and ideals, or extrapolating such ideals into non-related issues or consideration. The term has been used off and on in history, but was popularized by the

⁴⁰ Unleashing the potential of the 'Sociology of Science': Capitalizing on the power of science to usher in social, cultural and intellectual revolutions across the world, and lay the foundations of twenty-first century pedagogy Sujay Rao Mandavilli Elk Asia Pacific Journal of Social Science, October – December 2020

⁴¹ Generic Identity Theory for the Twenty-first Century: Towards grand unified approaches in identity formation, identity transformation and identity dilution or neutralization Sujay Rao Mandavilli Elk Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences Volume 5, Issue 3, 2019

⁴² Articulating comprehensive frameworks on socio-cultural change: Perceptions of social and cultural change in contemporary Twenty-first century Anthropology from a 'Neo-centrist' perspective Published in ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences Volume 3, Number 4 (July 2017 – September 2017) Sujay Rao Mandavilli

⁴³ Formulating 'Extended identity theory' for twenty-first century social sciences research: Modeling extended identity in relation to real-world observations and data Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT, July 2023

⁴⁴ Promoting science activism for the twenty-first century and beyond: Positioning science activism to promote course corrections in science and to lead to higher scientific output across societies and scientific disciplines Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT January 2024

⁴⁵ Aligning theorization and hypothesis-building with cultural and cross-cultural frames of reference: A heuristic aid to better theorization and hypothesis-building Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT June 2024

⁴⁶ Attempting Diachronic extensions of symbiotic approaches to socio-cultural change: Developing techniques to assess socio-cultural changes over a period in time Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT, September 2023

⁴⁷ The relevance of Culture and Personality Studies, National Character Studies, Cultural Determinism and Cultural Diffusion in Twenty-first Century Anthropology: As assessment of their compatibility with Symbiotic models of Socio-cultural change ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Social Science Volume 4, Issue 2, 2018 Sujay Rao Mandavilli

⁴⁸ Enunciating the Core principles of Twenty-first Century Historiography: Some additional extrapolations and inferences from our studies and observations on Historiography Sujay Rao Mandavilli ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Social Science (ISSN: 2394-9392) in Volume 2, Issue 4 July to September 2016

⁴⁹ Historiography by Objectives: A new approach for the study of history within the framework of the proposed Twenty-First Century School of Historiography Sujay Rao Mandavilli ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences Vol 1, Issue 2 (2015)

⁵⁰ Propositioning Investigative Historiography as a niche subfield within Twenty-first Century Historiography: Making a case for Investigative historiography in Twenty-first Century Social Sciences Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT, August 2023

⁵¹ Presenting the art and the science of Qualified Historiography: Anchoring history-writing in the event of uncertainty and unreliability of narratives Sujay Rao Mandavilli IJISRT Volume 7, Issue 7, July 2022

⁵² Introducing Anthropological Historiography as an integral component of Twenty-first Century Historiography: The role played by Anthropological Historiography in the attainment of long-term Anthropological goals and objectives, *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, February 2018, Volume 3, Issue 2, Sujay Rao Mandavilli

Egyptian economist Samir Amin in the 1970's, and is widely used today. We had applied this term in our readings on Indology as well, and most readers will concur with our observations. The terms Indocentrism, Sinocentrism and Afrocentrism are of course, far more recent, and may even be reactionary. However, we must eschew these as well because there may also leave harmful and undesirable effects and footprints. For example, the Out of Africa theory may be fallacious, and may be associated with Afrocentrism, and the desire to counter a certain viewpoint. The world is also beginning to lament the loss of true multipolarity in recent times with the oversized rise of China, and its larger than life role in parts of the world. Therefore, we need real, deep-rooted and fecund multipolarity not only in the geopolitical sphere, but in the intellectual domain as well. An emic perspective refers to an individual's – usually, a culture's perspective about itself, while an etic perspective is a third party perspective. Both perspectives, are extremely important, useful, valuable and even necessary. However, the two always need to be balanced against each other by dint and force of habit because relying on or referring to only one among them may be grossly inadequate and misleading. This would constitute some form of a cross-cultural debate and a cross-cultural dialogue, and even a dialectical approach. We have been discussing all these concepts off and on in our previous papers including our papers on cross-cultural research design. Therefore, all concepts must be critically examined and reexamined both foundationally and fundamentally to ascertain their relevance in different parts of the world.

- Must be free from ideologies and counter-ideologies of all sorts and kinds. An ideology may be defined as a system of ideas and ideals, and most commonly one which is the basis of an economic or political theory and an economic and political policy or doctrine. The term "Ideology" is traceable to the French word "ideologie" which is attributed to Antoine Destutt de Tracy, who was a noted French Enlightenment thinker and philosopher, who conceived it in the year 1796 as a "science of ideas". The philosopher and literary critic Terry Eagleton and other thinkers also provided other definitions of the term "ideology" which has over the past century or so, acquired a rather pejorative and a negative connotation for the most part. The term "intellectualism" refers to the exercise of the intellect and the use of intellectual faculties, sometimes to the detriment of emotion and interpersonal skills. The idea can be traced back to the times of the Ancient Greeks, and Socrates was one of the philosophers who first attempted to define the term comprehensively and satisfactorily. Intellectualism is also often determined by ideology, and we have had schools of thought such as Marxist intellectualism and Marxist historiography. Therefore, intellectualism is not necessarily a neutral or an ideology-free exercise, though it undoubtedly should be. All this can only happen if there is a robust intellectualism in different parts of the world, including developing countries. This will give a much needed boost and a short in the arm to rationalism as well.

- There must also be no dogma at any cost, and under any circumstances; this is only possible through cross-cultural debate and dialogue, and sometimes, subaltern studies and subaltern approaches. All these typically go hand in hand with each other. A dogma may be defined as a principle or set of guidelines and standard laid down by an authority or an individual holding a position of authority as incontrovertibly true. These cannot usually be challenged or falsified. Individuals or groups of individuals may also be termed dogmatic in their own right and in their own capacities if they are inflexible, and unamenable to change. No one is immune to dogma, skeptics and freethinkers included. Therefore, objectivity must be practiced as a mindset. We had written about objectivity in mindset earlier.
- Rationalist must be linked to social science theory, since the two go hand in hand, for e.g. Historiography. These must be suitably and gainfully employed for the furtherance and for the advancement of rational objectives. We had proposed the school of twenty-first century historiography to foster, instill and inculcate a sense of scientific temper, and had even published five papers on this general theme. We had also written extensively on sociocultural theory, identity theory, and scientific method as extrapolated and modified for the social sciences. There must be a bidirectional approach, and rationalists too can contribute greatly to social science theory.
- Rationalists must understand the human psyche, the human temperament, and individual's mental framework as dictated and determined by culture; Rationalists must also understand the processes of acculturation, (absorption of cultural traits, values and norms from the host culture) enculturation, (absorption of cultural traits, values and norms from the native culture) transculturation (partial merger of two or more cultures) and massculturation, and how these work practically and in the real world. They must also understand concepts such as cultural frame of reference and cross-cultural frames of reference; They must also understand, thoroughly grasp and comprehend concepts such as thoughtworlds; worldviews, mind-orientation, and cultural orientation; all real-world observations and data must also be always validated, and repeatedly so, against also these concepts; also refer our previously published papers for greater clarity and information. Rationalists must also admit that humans are not always optimizing but only satisficing individuals. Beef and Pork Friendship parties such as those organized by rationalist associations in India may seldom work. They may provoke and aggravate people and lead to self-reinforcing cognitive dissonance. In sum, they would be self-defeating. Instead, we need a foundational approach rooted in various fields of social science theory.
- No one size fits all bill; culture-specific approaches must be adopted. This point is of course related to our earlier points as well. Therefore, the role played by culture must not be discounted under any circumstances. There are many different definitions of the term culture, (by definitions here, we mean anthropological and

sociological ones) and we had presented some of them in our previous papers. These were by Edward B Tylor, Kluckhohn, Bronislaw Malinowski, Melville J. Herskovits, and others.

- The role played by religion must not be discounted: This aspect and this facet of human society and human culture have been deeply and comprehensively studied by both sociologists and anthropologists alike for over a century now. Needless, to say, religion serves many important roles in society, including social, cultural, economic, political and personal ones. Therefore, faith can at best only decline very slowly. We must accept this, and be prepared to wait. Rushed up solutions will not only not work, they may backfire, and boomerang horribly, and may lead to a loss of credibility, or people's trust.
- Must be solutions-oriented and solutions-driven for e.g. cultural remediation. This point and this aspect is of extreme and paramount importance, and must be taken with the seriousness it deserves. Otherwise, all efforts and endeavours will fall flat, and will ultimately be rendered unsuccessful. There is no point making a hue and cry over current states of affairs in a given region, if they cannot be tracked to remediation, preferably in a transparent and in a time-bound manner.
- Pedagogy and pedagogical reform must be one of the pillars of the rationalist movement. Pedagogy is the science of education, and must be contrasted with education itself. We had authored a book and two papers on pedagogy, and reader's are strongly encouraged to read them for further conceptual and theoretical clarify. Needless to say, we strongly believe that the entire field of pedagogy is comprehensively and badly outdated, and must be thoroughly revamped to suit the needs of the times. Revamping pedagogy will give a shot in the arm to the rationalist movement as well, as the two go hand in hand. Without pedagogy and pedagogical reform based on sound pedagogical theories, attempts to enlighten people will fall flat, and prove to be non-productive.
- Dialectical approaches on controversial issues such as the existence of supernatural entities must be adopted. The core philosophy here is that we must talk to as many different people from as many parts of the world as practicably possible – freely and across the table – to sort out intractable and seemingly complex issues. The idea of dialectics means that people holding contradictory opinions or viewpoints are encouraged to debate with one another. This approach was first advocated by the Ancient Greeks, and refined by GWF Hegel, and others. Marx used it in a narrow materialist sense, and his ideas were severely criticized in the one and a half centuries since he passed away. We had also proposed the concept of auto-dialectics in a previous paper, and another concept worth noting in this connection is John Rawl's theory of reflective equilibrium. Dialectical approaches can also be followed and instituted in strategy formulation, and these are undoubtedly and unquestionably important for the achievement and accomplishment of the goals of the rationalist movement. Rationalists must also draw a line between objective knowledge and subjective knowledge, and

admit in all fairness that there are many issues that cannot be determined beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt. This is another reason why dialogue is extremely important in all walks of life.

IV. CONCLUSION

We had begun this paper by defining and discussing what rationalism and rationality, and various interpretations of it were. We had also then debated and discussed the core concepts associated with closely related and allied ideas such as empiricism, positivism and liberalism, and had then weigh these in in relation to rationality and rationalism as well. The history of the rationalist movement worldwide, and in India were also traced and explored, and their aims, objectives, mission and goals examined as well. We also then scrutinized the activities, goals and objectives some rationalist groups, and individual rationalists from all over the world, and from all walks of life, and traced their history, by providing individual contributors' biographies as well as and when necessary. Some schools of thought pertaining to rationality and rationalism were also explored, not only in India, but also elsewhere in the world. Likewise, the interface of various concepts associated with rationalism and rationality and various strands of social sciences theory were also thoroughly probed, examined, and investigated. Lastly but not the least, we had explored various lacunae, deficiencies and shortcomings associated with the rationalist movements worldwide, and had proposed some course-corrections to address these. We expect and anticipate therefore, that this would give the much necessary shot in the arm for the rationalist movement, and make it more effective and efficacious in the context of the twenty-first century. It will also naturally help such movements win and gain people's trust as well. That is what the goal of this paper essentially is.