

Otázka: Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of reason as a way of knowing

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Every day we use reason, and even though we might not know we are using it, we still do. It is a way of knowing we could not be without. Our perception of the world, language, emotion and behavior are influenced by individual reasoning. When we think, argue with others and have our own opinion, as well as deciding on something, we are using reason. It leads our lives, and directs the choices we make in our life, yet, we cannot reason completely consciously, or even incorrectly. Even though reason is seen as the most pure way of knowing, it can be often deceiving and ambiguous. Being able to see through the weaknesses of reasoning, knowing the way of knowing can help us decide, whether we can rely on the reason or not. It is important to mention that lack of justified reasoning leads to misunderstanding of others and the world around us.

Reason can be defined as a cause, explanation or justification for an action or event, and can be considered as the most correct way of knowing. When we think, we use reason, though involuntarily. We get the information from the world around us and try to somehow work with it, analyze it and use it through reason. All this is obtained by our senses that include smell, vision, hearing, taste and touch. After we obtain some information, we make judgments, implications and generalizations using knowledge. This leads to the knowledge of what the information means. All these steps are logical, as humans are logical and have to have knowledge of everything around them. As we know, logic is reason and therefore without Reason we would not be able to obtain such information about the world around us. For example If I was not able to reason and saw old photo of my own dog, I would not be able to differentiate it from any other dog, or even any other object, as I could not connect and reason the information obtained. I could have the pleasure of looking at the photo, seeing a happy dog, but I would not be able to connect the photo with death of my dog, which is connected

with death and would eventually make me mournful. This shows that we cannot use purely reason without using emotion and vice versa. It also implies that the emotion may and may not depend on reason. I can either experience via emotion or come to the conclusion using reason.

When we think and create assumptions, judgments and generalizations, we form a conclusion and think about a certain idea in our own perception. Moreover, when different people process the same raw information, they draw different conclusion, all using the same way of reason to process it, yet, differently. This shows us that a great weakness of reason as any conclusion we make, disregarding its validity, is prejudiced by individual's bias, as every single person has different perception of the world. This means that not every reasoning is valid and therefore not all decisions should be made using it, as it may apply only to itself, and using rational logic and verifying the reason behind can prevent it. Nonetheless, people are stubborn and always need to be right, so they always try to find only evidence for their point, using Confirmation Bias, which is one of the fallacies that result in incorrect logic and lack of validity of the argument. Another reason why people reason in such a way is pride, prejudice or ignorance. This shows how can reason seem to be valid, yet is far from being valid. On the other hand, this weakness is strength at the same time, as the fact that we are affected by others and their opinions means that we learn from experience and also from what others think, which affects the way we reason. It also helps us distinguish between valid reasoning and invalid reasoning (fallacy). Last thing to mention that such experience may also be bad, as it may affect our perception and our reasoning in a bad way, as we are introduced to invalid fallacy and then accept it.

Another weakness, as well as strength of reason is that it is highly affected as well as connected to language. As with thought, people cannot usually reason without using language in which we do the reasoning. There is only one case of people who reason without language and those are children that haven't learned language yet, but that is the only exception. Majority of people use language as a medium to express their opinion and also just for reason. When people use reason, there will be always use of language. As previously mentioned, they might benefit from hearing reasoning of others, but on the other hand also suffer. Language is the way we obtain such information from others and explain our own reasoning, which is why language makes triangle with emotion and reason. Imagine that you were to reason without having neither language nor emotion. It is both impossible, as both have to be at least partially present when we reason. Another weakness of language in reason is that if person is unaware of the language and his vocabulary is rather limited, he is incapable of expressing his opinion and reasoning, which would eventually lead to confusion of himself or others he is talking to.

This basically means that the person has the idea in his mind, but is incapable of expressing it verbally in the form of language. Even though language causes various problems when reasoning, it has high importance on the result, as without language, we would not be able to express our reasoning to others, nor ourselves and vice versa.

Application of reason in real life situations has various advantages and disadvantages. When we solve mathematical equations, we will obviously use much more reason than emotion, as reason has advantage in pragmatic work, such as any science or mathematics. For example, when we try to solve quadratic function, using emotion would lead nowhere, as we need pure reason to deduce and calculate the answer. We may use emotion to describe our relationship towards the quadratic equations, but once the process of solving starts, we can rely solely on pure reason. On the other hand, using way too much reason in other scenarios is considered inappropriate, as not everything works like mathematics, having laws that don't change and unalterable system. In this scenario reason has the greatest advantage, but in any other situation, it is as equal as other ways of knowing. If we take any social situation, for example sympathizing with your friend who has recently lost his grandmother, your use of reason will be rather limited and use of emotion will increase, as reason is quite useless in such scenario. Most of the social encounters we daily face require more or less the same levels of reason and emotion. Nevertheless, even in such situations, reason is also important part of the ways of knowing, as it helps us to handle our emotion and not overreact. Even though in some situation emotion is used more to explain and react to something, reason is present everywhere, as it controls the emotion and gives valid deductions and reasoning regarding the issue.

If we could not reason and it was not a way of knowing, raw information that we would accept would not be analyzed and therefore we would be left with the first step of information use. Bad use of reason by person who is unaware of its potential is dangerous, as it creates illusion not only for him, but also for people around him. On the other hand, good use of reason can solve many issues we face daily and is one of the most important ways of knowing, as it is present in any real life situation. Even though the language might seem like a barrier for reasoning, it helps us reason, as without language the reason would not exist and vice versa. Therefore, if we use reason as a way of knowing, we always have to look objectively, try to use other ways of knowing as well, as only one way of knowing is never an option. Reason has proved to have both advantages and disadvantages that affect our daily life and decisions and we have to objectively decide whether the levels of reason in specific scenario are adequate.