Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Reviving Rationality Theory: a comprehensive framework for reconstructing rationality in the age of crisis

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Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 04 September 2025
Received in revised form 24 October 2025
Accepted 27 November 2025
Published online 14 February 2026

Keywords:
Reviving Rationality, Critical Realism, Epistemic Pluralism, Human Dignity, Constructive Criticism, Evolutionary Responsibility

ABSTRACT

A Reviving Rationality Theory offers a knowledge-based and practical framework to rebuild rational thinking in response to the complex crisis of our time. This crisis comes from the limits of traditional rationality, modern instrumental rationality, and postmodern relativism, which have led to stagnation, alienation, environmental destruction, and theoretical paralysis. Reviving Rationality defines rationality as an evolving system of knowledge and action based on three principles: coherent epistemic pluralism, constructive criticism, and evolutionary responsibility. Using multilayered critical realism, it examines reality at four levels (empirical, event-based, structural, and evolutionary) and draws knowledge from five sources (logical reasoning, empirical experience, practical intuition, social dialogue, and historical wisdom). By solving the paradox of fallibilism through distinguishing between the content, method, and purpose of knowledge, and emphasizing human dignity as a core principle for both knowledge and action, this theory moves beyond classic dualities like structure versus freedom or individual versus society. It systematically critiques instrumental rationality, postmodern relativism, and static traditionalism, proposing a three-stage process (analysis, synthesis, decision) and four criteria (logical coherence, alignment with evidence, practical effectiveness, and ethical consistency) to evaluate beliefs and decisions. Reviving Rationality is not a return to traditional or modern rationality, nor a full acceptance of postmodern critiques; instead, it provides an evolutionary, responsible, and inclusive framework that combines the strengths of scientific methods and logical analysis with diverse knowledge sources and ethical considerations to tackle complex issues like climate change and social inequality. This framework is a theoretical tool for rational and humane thinking, open to critique and improvement.

Cite this article: Gholami, R. (2026). Reviving Rationality Theory: A Comprehensive Framework for Reconstructing Rationality in the Age of Crisis. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 20(54), 155-174. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2025.69001.4184

Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Intruduction

Rationality today faces a complex crisis with deep historical roots, affecting not just philosophy but also politics, society, economy, and individual lives. Traditional rationality, marked by absolute thinking, stagnation, and inability to meet modern human needs, has clear weaknesses. Similarly, modern instrumental rationality, focused on pure calculation and controlling nature (Weber, 1946; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1972), has caused environmental destruction, human alienation, and dehumanizing systems. Meanwhile, postmodern critiques, while good at pointing out flaws in rationality (Lyotard, 1984; Foucault, 1980), have led to relativism and theoretical paralysis, making rational decision-making difficult (Habermas, 1987; Bernstein, 1983). The effects of this crisis are clear: growing intellectual extremism, irrational populism, spreading conspiracy theories, polarized public opinion, ineffective democratic institutions in addressing complex issues like climate change, and deep confusion among younger generations facing an uncertain future (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000).

We urgently need to redefine rationality in a way that avoids returning to pre-modern rationality, which doesn't fit today's complexities, or sinking into postmodern relativism, which blocks logical action (Taylor, 1989; MacIntyre, 1981). This new definition must consider historical experience—the successes and failures of rationality in recent centuries—embrace the complexity of humans and the world without being simplistic or extreme, offer practical solutions for today's problems, and stay ethically sensitive to human dignity and justice.

To meet this need, Reviving Rationality is introduced as a knowledge-based and practical approach that defines rationality as an evolving system of knowledge and action. It can be practically defined as a system of knowing and deciding based on three key features:

1. **Disciplined Methodological Pluralism**: Using at least three knowledge sources (logical reasoning, empirical experience, and other valid sources) with a clear method to weigh each source based on the issue.
2. **Priority Criterion**: When the four evaluation criteria (coherence, evidence, effectiveness, ethics) conflict, priority goes to the criterion that reduces the most potential harm to human dignity in that context.
3. **Self-Regulating Mechanism**: Every decision must include preset review points to check its effectiveness.

"Reviving" here has two meanings: First, it's not just recreating old traditions or rejecting modernity but an effort to recover forgotten strengths of human rationality—like its ethical side, responsibility, and ability to blend diverse knowledge sources—and combine them creatively with modern and contemporary philosophical and scientific achievements. Second, in the critical challenges facing humanity, this rationality can reduce risks and pave the way for a better future for human society.

This approach rests on three core principles:

1. **Coherent Epistemic Pluralism**: Logically combining multiple knowledge sources, including logical reasoning, empirical experience, practical intuition, social dialogue,

and historical wisdom, without reducing one to another (Goldman, 1986; Alston, 1991).

2. **Constructive Criticism**: All beliefs and systems are open to critique and correction, but this critique must follow rational standards like coherence, evidence, effectiveness, and ethics, aiming for improvement (Popper, 1963; Bartley, 1984).
3. **Evolutionary Responsibility**: Knowledge is not just an intellectual game but carries responsibility for its individual, social, and future consequences, requiring constant adaptation to experience (Jonas, 1984; Apel, 1988).

This definition sets Reviving Rationality apart from its rivals: It rejects the stagnation and absolutism of traditional rationality; unlike instrumental rationality, which focuses only on efficiency, it seeks the common good (Weber, 1946); unlike emotionalism, it values emotions but places them under reason; unlike static traditionalism, it sees tradition as a living source of wisdom, not a fixed rule (Strauss, 1953; Kirk, 1953); and unlike relativism, it accepts the possibility of objective knowledge, though gradual and revisable (Lyotard, 1984; Rorty, 1979). Additionally, Reviving Rationality has a cross-cultural vision: It can create a shared framework for philosophical dialogue among diverse traditions—from Greek and Christian philosophy to Islamic thought, from Eastern wisdom to modern Western rationality—promoting exchange and synergy. Thus, Reviving Rationality is not just a theoretical project but a civilizational effort to rebuild a shared rational-ethical foundation in a diverse world.

Theoretical Foundations of Reviving Rationality

Ontology and Epistemology

Philosophically, Reviving Rationality is based on multilayered critical realism, which rejects both the oversimplification of naive realism and the abstraction of absolute idealism (Bhaskar, 1975; Archer, 1995). It sees reality as neither one-dimensional and directly accessible through experience nor entirely a mental construct, but as having multiple layers that can only be understood through diverse methods of knowing.

Reality is recognized at four interconnected levels:

1. **Direct Empirical Level**: Includes feelings, observations, and daily interactions, real but limited, always shaped by language, culture, and social context (Husserl, 1913/1982).
2. **Event-Based Level**: What actually happens, even if not observed or correctly interpreted, such as economic processes, social changes, or unconscious psychological reactions (Harre, 1972).
3. **Structural Level**: The underlying rules, patterns, and mechanisms—like natural laws, social structures, economic systems, or cultural norms—that organize events (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977).
4. **Evolutionary Level**: Long-term processes of change, like biological evolution, cultural shifts, or historical transformations, which not only affect other levels but also reshape structures (Teilhard de Chardin, 1959; Luhmann, 1995).

For example, understanding poverty requires examining all these levels: the suffering of poor individuals and visible inequalities (empirical), statistical data on income, unemployment, and access to services (event-based), economic systems, tax laws, and educational institutions (structural), and changes from globalization or technology (evolutionary). This shows that understanding reality is valid only if its multilayered complexity is acknowledged.

From this multilayered ontology comes the need for a multi-source, interactive epistemology. Unlike one-dimensional modern approaches or postmodern relativism, Reviving Rationality recognizes five main sources of knowledge that together provide a fuller picture of reality:

1. **Logical Reasoning**: The ability to analyze logically, spot contradictions, make deductive and inductive inferences, and form coherent theories.
2. **Empirical Knowledge**: Gained through systematic observation, experiments, data collection, and hypothesis testing in natural and social sciences (Hacking, 1983).
3. **Practical Intuition**: Insight from lived experience, specialized skills, and a holistic understanding of situations, often aiding practical decision-making and creativity (Polanyi, 1958).
4. **Social Dialogue**: An interactive process where diverse perspectives are critically examined, creating collective and intersubjective knowledge (Habermas, 1981).
5. **Historical Wisdom**: Awareness of historical experiences, recurring patterns, and critical use of intellectual and cultural traditions (Gadamer, 1960/1989).

The core idea of Reviving Rationality is that no single source is enough, and none is always superior; knowledge becomes more reliable when these sources interact dynamically and suit the issue. For instance, in public health policy during the COVID-19 crisis, valid decisions required combining logical analysis of policy effectiveness (logical reasoning), statistical data and scientific studies (empirical knowledge), doctors' and managers' experiences (practical intuition), discussions with stakeholders and society (social dialogue), and lessons from past pandemics (historical wisdom) (Zagzebski, 1996; Sosa, 2007).

Thus, Reviving Rationality offers a model that aligns with the multilayered complexity of reality and, by embracing diverse knowledge sources, provides a way to overcome the limits of instrumental rationality and relativism. This model is not just an analytical tool but a practical framework for addressing real-world issues.

Correctability and Human Dignity

Solving the Paradox of Fallibilism

A major challenge in modern epistemology is solving the paradox of fallibilism: How can we accept that our knowledge is fallible without falling into complete relativism? This question becomes trickier when we want to maintain the possibility of valid knowledge without slipping into rigid dogmatism.

Reviving Rationality addresses this by making a three-part distinction:

1. **Content of Knowledge**: Theories, beliefs, and specific claims that are always open to correction and improvement (Peirce, 1877).
2. **Method of Knowledge**: Evaluation criteria and processes that, while evolving, have relative stability (Dewey, 1938).
3. **Purpose of Knowledge**: The overall aim of better understanding reality and improving human life as a guiding principle.

This is clear in medical science. Specific theories about diseases (content) constantly change with new discoveries. Clinical trials, peer reviews, and statistical standards (method) remain relatively stable. The goal of human health (purpose) provides a steady guiding value, directing medical research despite changes in content and method.

Human Dignity as an Epistemological Principle

The link between knowledge's correctability and human dignity in Reviving Rationality goes beyond ethics. Human dignity is not just a moral principle but an epistemological one, based on three foundations:

1. **Anthropological Foundation**: Humans are capable of rationality, meaning-making, creativity, and responsibility, making them unique and able to actively participate in knowledge creation (Kant, 1785/1998).
2. **Epistemological Foundation**: True knowledge comes from free and respectful dialogue, not suppressing or silencing perspectives (Habermas, 1981).
3. **Functional Foundation**: Systems that violate human dignity are self-destructive in the long run and cannot produce stable, valid knowledge (Rawls, 1971).

This has important implications: every person has the right to join rational dialogue, diverse perspectives enrich knowledge, suppression hinders true understanding, and justice is a condition for a knowledge-based society. These principles form both the ethical and functional conditions for valid knowledge.

Historical Sifting Criterion for Tradition

Another challenge Reviving Rationality faces is resolving the apparent contradiction in its approach to tradition. It criticizes the rigidity and stagnation of classical traditions while recognizing historical wisdom as a key knowledge source. How is this resolved?

Reviving Rationality uses a "historical sifting" criterion. Elements of tradition are accepted if they pass three tests:

1. **Continuity Test**: Has the element been accepted and used for at least three generations, showing historical stability and intellectual endurance?
2. **Adaptability Test**: Can the element apply to changing conditions? Elements that only worked in specific historical contexts are set aside.
3. **Dignity Test**: Does the element align with human dignity? This is the final test for accepting or rejecting traditional elements.

For example, the principle of justice in Islamic tradition is accepted because it has historical continuity, adapts to modern conditions, and aligns with human dignity. In

contrast, purely hierarchical systems, despite historical continuity, are rejected if they conflict with dignity.

This criterion prevents arbitrary cherry-picking and provides an objective, defensible framework for evaluating tradition. It allows the use of historical wisdom without blindly accepting all traditional elements.

Integrating Principles into a Comprehensive Framework

If Chapter One emphasized the need to rethink rationality and revive its historical and civilizational strengths, this discussion shows that Reviving Rationality only makes sense by embracing three principles together: knowledge correctability, commitment to human dignity, and critical evaluation of tradition.

These theoretical foundations are now shaped into practical and functional principles. They ensure the dynamism and flexibility of knowledge while providing ethical standards for judging intellectual and social systems. The interplay of these principles offers a framework that avoids rigid dogmatism and complete relativism, creating a third path for rational and responsible knowledge.

Anthropological Foundations of Reviving Rationality

Human as a Complex Adaptive System

From an anthropological view, Reviving Rationality sees humans as complex adaptive systems operating at four levels:

1. **Biological Level**: Includes brain structure, nervous system, basic physiological needs, genetic patterns, and bodily limits and possibilities (Bertalanffy, 1968; Damasio, 1994). For example, genetic differences or brain capacities can affect learning and decision-making.

   Psychological Level: Includes cognitive processes like memory, attention, and learning, as well as emotions, motivations, personality structures, and adaptive mechanisms (Piaget, 1952). Experience and education can shape these processes, creating mental flexibility.
2. **Social-Cultural Level**: Includes social identity, roles, language, symbolic systems, cultural norms, values, and social networks (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Interaction with society and culture shapes individual meanings and beliefs.
3. **Historical-Evolutionary Level**: Includes one's place in historical time and space, the impact of major social events, generational ties, and orientation toward the future and life's meaning (Ricoeur, 1984). Historical and societal experiences shape one's ability to predict and plan.

The principle of dynamic interaction emphasizes that these four levels constantly connect, and humans are formed by their interplay (Varela et al., 1991). This view sets the stage for exploring the complex relationship between structure and freedom, and the link between individual and society.

Dialectic of Structure-Freedom and Individual-Society

A key anthropological issue is the relationship between determinism and freedom. Reviving Rationality moves beyond classic dualities with the concept of structure-freedom (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977). Humans exist within four types of structures:

1. **Material Structures**: Genetics, brain, and physical environment.
2. **Social Structures**: Institutions, laws, inequalities.
3. **Cultural Structures**: Language, meanings, norms.
4. **Historical Structures**: The era's conditions and past legacy.

Yet, within these structures, humans are free: they can interpret and give meaning, choose among options, create and innovate, and gradually change structures. For example, someone born into a poor family faces economic and social limits but can interpret their situation differently, choose the best options, and slowly change restrictive structures.

Reviving Rationality also transcends the individual-society duality, seeing humans as both social and unique (Taylor, 1989; Sandel, 1982). Humans are inherently social, as their identity, values, meanings, and growth come from interacting with society. They are also fundamentally unique, as their individual experiences and creativity cannot be fully generalized, and they bear ultimate responsibility for their choices.

Thus, a true individual discovers and shapes their real self through dialogue and interaction with others, and a healthy society enables true individuality to flourish. Reviving Rationality sees humans as both connected to society and uniquely individual, with rational and ethical growth possible only when these aspects are balanced.

Human Dignity as an Operational Principle

In Reviving Rationality, human dignity is not just an abstract idea but a practical, guiding principle that must shape social, scientific, and political structures. It has five key dimensions:

1. **Existential Dignity**: Every person deserves respect simply for being human, regardless of their actions, traits, or conditions (Nussbaum, 2000).
2. **Cognitive Dignity**: Every person has the right to think freely, access information, and join rational dialogue (Sen, 1999).
3. **Dignity of Choice**: Every person has the right to participate in decisions affecting their life.
4. **Dignity of Development**: Every person has the right to conditions needed to fulfill their potential.
5. **Dignity of Meaning**: Every person has the right to create meaning and purpose for their life and strive for it.

When applied practically, these dimensions provide clear measures of dignity: Does a person have a say in decisions affecting them? Do they have access to basic growth opportunities? Is their voice heard and respected? Can they express their true identity? Are they secure enough to take constructive risks?

The importance of this principle lies in Reviving Rationality's refusal to leave dignity as a mere ethical slogan or theoretical advice. It turns dignity into a practical measure for

evaluating policies, institutions, and knowledge. In this system, dignity acts like a "regulating principle" in science: it provides a guiding horizon for assessing the validity and value of social structures and knowledge efforts.

Thus, the connection between knowledge correctability (explained in Chapter One) and the practical role of dignity is that just as theories must always be open to critique and revision, social and political systems must be continuously evaluated based on dignity measures. This leads us to Chapter Two, where Reviving Rationality emerges as a practical framework for designing and critiquing institutions, showing how justice, freedom, and human development can be redefined and rebuilt through the lens of dignity.

Systematic Critique of Existing Schools of Thought

Critique of Traditional Rationality

When we talk about traditional rationality, various forms of rationality rooted in tradition come to mind. Here, traditional rationality refers to the type grounded in the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle, which in Islamic civilization primarily developed through Peripatetic philosophy, Eastern wisdom, and Transcendent Theosophy. This rationality played a significant role in systematizing thought and fostering logical reasoning (Plato, 1997; Aristotle, 1984; Avicenna, 1985; Mulla Sadra, 1981).

Although this rationality was primarily theoretical, its practical influence, especially in Islamic civilization and similar Eastern traditions, cannot be overlooked. However, it faces serious shortcomings. First, its ontology is limited to metaphysical causality, meaning it focuses on explaining the world through the four causes and an eternal order, without sufficient attention to new experiences or social-historical changes (Nasr, 2007). Second, it suffers from epistemic dogmatism; many traditional philosophical discussions became rigid and closed, making it difficult to question or rethink them (Corbin, 1964). Third, it neglects lived experience and social dynamics; while traditional philosophy focused on abstract concepts like existence, essence, and levels of being, it often failed to provide clear, practical answers to human issues such as social justice, freedom, historical change, or real-life crises, remaining trapped in idealism (Rahman, 1975). Fourth, it lacks the ability or willingness to engage with radical critiques; for example, when modern philosophers like Hume (1978) or Kant (1998) challenged causality or traditional rationalist epistemology, Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions generally failed to offer adequate responses or subject their own critiques to rigorous evaluation. Fifth, it shows a reluctance to engage in dialogue with materialist or non-idealist philosophies; while modern philosophies emphasizing matter, experience, or social history could have opened new avenues for rethinking traditional rationality, Greek and Islamic traditions often ignored these or, at best, responded with critiques from a position of superiority rather than equal dialogue (Gutas, 2001).

In response to these shortcomings, Reviving Rationality seeks to redefine reason not as confined to metaphysical explanations or abstract ontological debates but as rooted in historical, social, and ethical life. It views reason as open to critique and transformation, advocating for a dialogical and realistic rationality instead of dogmatism.

Moreover, contemporary traditionalism often sees tradition as a set of fixed rules to be followed unquestioningly, but this approach has several issues: selectivity (which elements of tradition are important and why?), stagnation (how can tradition adapt to new conditions?), and denial of critique (are all elements of tradition acceptable?) (Strauss, 1953; Kirk, 1953). In contrast, Reviving Rationality views tradition as a living source of wisdom, not a fixed law, but a gradual process of collective learning where useful elements are identified through experience and historical testing. Tradition remains alive only when it continuously engages with modern thought and responds to new challenges (Gadamer, 1960/1989).

Critique of Instrumental Rationality

Instrumental rationality, as articulated by Max Weber and critically examined by the Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno and Horkheimer, remains dominant in many areas of thought and practice (Weber, 1946; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1972). This rationality reduces knowledge to quantitative measurement and calculable criteria, marginalizing qualitative aspects of human experience and reducing values to individual preferences. As Horkheimer observed, "Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion" (Horkheimer, 1947, 3). Anything that cannot be measured is deemed invalid. This framework deepens institutional and epistemic divides between science and ethics, reason and emotion, and reality and value, leading to a hierarchical separation of human life's domains (Habermas, 1981).

The practical consequences are significant: humans are reduced from ends in themselves to resources for exploitation or endless consumption; the environment is sacrificed for short-term efficiency; dehumanizing bureaucracies emerge; and technocracy, indifferent to social responsibility, becomes the model for governing societies. As Adorno and Horkheimer warned, "What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 2). Furthermore, instrumental rationality harbors a hidden contradiction: it claims neutrality and freedom from values, yet in practice, it selects goals without clear rational criteria and conceals the role of power in defining efficiency and success (Taylor, 1985).

In response, Reviving Rationality redefines reason not as a mere tool for efficiency but as a capacity to understand the common good and organize a just life. Efficiency is seen as multidimensional, encompassing social, ethical, and environmental aspects alongside economic ones. Decision-making includes not only immediate stakeholders but also future generations and marginalized voices. Technology is understood not as an independent force dominating humans but as a tool serving human dignity and environmental preservation (Sen, 1999). Thus, critiquing instrumental rationality is not just a theoretical exercise but a practical necessity for rethinking the foundations of contemporary civilization.

Critique of Postmodern Relativism

Postmodern relativism, a legitimate reaction to modernity's absolutist claims, gradually became another extreme (Lyotard, 1984; Derrida, 1967; Rorty, 1979). Its historical roots lie in several key 20th-century developments:

1. The failure of modernity's grand promises, such as linear progress, solving all problems through science, and achieving justice through reason.
2. Two world wars, the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, and environmental destruction showed that modern rationality could lead to catastrophe (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/1972).
3. Thinkers like Foucault revealed that what is deemed scientific or rational often serves the interests of ruling classes (Foucault, 1980).
4. The history of science showed that scientific truths are shaped by social, political, and economic factors.
5. Cultural anthropology demonstrated that diverse knowledge systems exist, each logical and effective within its own context.

Based on these developments, postmodern relativism formed its core claims: truth is relative, and no narrative or claim is inherently superior; all truths are socially constructed; there are no objective criteria to judge between perspectives; power is the sole determinant of truth; reality is constructed through language and power discourses; modern rationality is critiqued for its reductionism and exclusion of diversity; and cultural and identity differences are valued.

Postmodern relativism rightly showed that absolute truth claims often serve power. Reviving Rationality accepts this insight but argues that complete relativism leads to a "functional paradox." To critique inequality or oppression, we inevitably rely on principles like freedom and human dignity, which themselves imply universal claims. Reviving Rationality proposes treating these principles not as absolute metaphysical truths but as "regulatory principles" whose validity stems from their historical role in reducing suffering and promoting human flourishing.

However, postmodern relativism faces several issues.

1. **Logical Self-Contradiction**: If all claims are relative, this claim itself is relative, and using reason to critique reason or claiming knowledge about the impossibility of knowledge is contradictory.
2. **Practical and Political Paralysis**: If no perspective is superior, decision-making, critiquing injustice, or resisting oppression becomes impossible.
3. **Ignoring Objective Realities**: Issues like human suffering, poverty, disease, oppression, and climate change exist beyond cultural interpretations or discourses.
4. **Implicit Conservatism**: By reducing everything to a matter of perspective, it hinders radical critique of the status quo and remains indifferent to social justice (Habermas, 1987).

While accepting some postmodern critiques, such as the role of power in shaping knowledge and the value of cultural diversity, Reviving Rationality transcends its

limitations. It promotes critical realism, viewing reality as existent but our knowledge of it as imperfect and revisable, avoiding both idealism and complete relativism (Bhaskar, 1975). Multiple rational criteria—logical coherence, empirical evidence, practical functionality, and ethical considerations—are applied, but these criteria themselves are open to critique and evolution (Popper, 1963). Reviving Rationality fosters open, inclusive dialogue that turns diverse perspectives into a source of epistemic richness. Knowledge is used not only to understand the world but to improve it, with a commitment to justice, reducing suffering, and protecting the environment. Cultural diversity is respected, but some principles, like human dignity, transcend cultural differences (Nussbaum, 2000).

To illustrate this difference, consider climate change. Postmodernism might view it as a narrative or discourse, emphasizing cultural differences in its interpretation. In contrast, Reviving Rationality sees climate change as an objective reality understood through scientific data, lived experiences of communities, and global dialogue. Solutions must emerge from integrating various knowledge sources—science, local experience, and historical wisdom—with the goal of reducing suffering and preserving human dignity.

Internal Structure of Reviving Rationality

Rational Process and Evaluation Criteria

Reviving Rationality is built on a three-stage process for knowledge and decision-making, where each stage plays a vital and complementary role.

1. **Analytical Stage**: This involves precisely identifying the issue, gathering comprehensive information, and systematically analyzing causes and factors. Here, analytical thinking dominates, aiming for a deep understanding of the situation's complexities. For example, addressing declining student academic performance requires analyzing family, economic, educational, and cultural factors, not focusing on a single cause.
2. **Synthetic Stage**: This stage integrates various knowledge sources and considers the issue's diverse dimensions. It showcases Reviving Rationality's unique strength in combining empirical knowledge, philosophical insight, and practical wisdom. For urban pollution, this stage involves integrating environmental science findings, economic needs, cultural values, and technological possibilities.
3. **Decision Stage**: This involves choosing a solution based on rational and ethical criteria. Decisions are made not only for efficiency but also for alignment with ethical principles and justice.

This process is iterative, meaning the results of each stage can lead to revisiting and improving earlier stages. This adaptability and self-correcting nature distinguish Reviving Rationality from linear, one-directional approaches (Dewey, 1938; Simon, 1957; Habermas, 1981).

To demonstrate Reviving Rationality's application, consider the water crisis in the Zayandehroud River Basin in Isfahan, Iran.

- **Analytical Stage**: Multiple factors are identified: climate drought (meteorological data), excessive agricultural withdrawals (Ministry of Agriculture statistics), urban

population growth (census data), mismanagement of resources (audit reports), and social erosion due to unequal access (sociological studies). Single-dimensional approaches, like restricting agricultural use or transferring water from other regions, ignore this complexity.

- **Synthetic Stage**: Various knowledge sources are integrated. Modern hydrological knowledge shows limited aquifer recharge capacity; historical wisdom from local farmers offers efficient irrigation methods; practical intuition from urban managers identifies real community priorities; and social dialogue among stakeholders (farmers, citizens, industries) reveals commonalities and conflicts. This synthesis suggests a solution involving gradual reduction of water-intensive crops, optimizing urban distribution networks, and creating fair compensation mechanisms.
- **Decision Stage**: The four criteria are applied: logical coherence (is the plan self-consistent?), alignment with evidence (is it consistent with hydrological data?), practical functionality (is it feasible?), and ethical consistency (does it distribute economic burdens fairly?). The result is a multi-stage plan: reducing rice cultivation by 30% over five years, compensating farmers 70% of losses through urban water savings, and investing in modern irrigation technologies.

Four Evaluation Criteria

Reviving Rationality provides four fundamental criteria to evaluate beliefs and decisions, each assessing a different aspect of validity:

1. **Logical Coherence**: Checks whether a belief or decision is internally consistent. This is the foundation of any rational system. For example, if someone believes education is the most important investment but advocates cutting education budgets, the contradiction requires reevaluation.
2. **Alignment with Evidence**: Assesses whether a belief or decision aligns with the best available information and evidence. In health policy decisions, alignment with scientific findings and reliable statistics is essential.
3. **Practical Functionality**: Evaluates whether a belief or decision produces desirable, constructive results in practice. Economic development programs must not only be theoretically sound but also improve living conditions.
4. **Ethical Consistency**: Examines whether a belief or decision aligns with human dignity, justice, and core ethical values. Economic policies that increase inequality, even if profitable, are unacceptable.

Priority Determination Matrix

When the four criteria conflict, Reviving Rationality applies a "Priority Determination Matrix," a three-step framework to resolve conflicts:

1. Check if the decision directly violates human dignity; if so, it is rejected regardless of other considerations.
2. Assess the quality of available evidence; if evidence is weak or contradictory, the decision is delayed until better information is available.

3. Analyze short-term and long-term consequences; in case of conflict, long-term priorities prevail unless immediate harm is irreversible.

Practical Example: Mandatory Vaccination

In deciding on mandatory vaccination during a health crisis, the ethical criterion (individual freedom of choice) conflicts with practical functionality (public health). Using the Priority Determination Matrix:

- Step 1: Check if either option violates human dignity. Since neither directly does, proceed to Step 2.
- Step 2: Evaluate the quality of scientific evidence. Assuming strong evidence exists, move to Step 3.
- Step 3: Analyze consequences. Given the irreversible health risks and long-term priority, the decision favors public health.

Comprehensive Example: Population Policy in Japan

To fully illustrate Reviving Rationality and the matrix, consider population policy in a country with negative population growth, like Japan.

- **Analytical Stage**: Analysis reveals multiple factors: economic shifts from industry to services, rising urban living costs, changing cultural values among the youth, and excessive work pressure in modern society. Single-dimensional approaches, like financial incentives or immigration law changes, have shown limited success (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research OECD, 2022).
- **Synthetic Stage**: Integrating knowledge sources provides a broader perspective. Demographic data highlights the economic impacts of an aging population (IPSS, 2023). Sociological studies identify reasons for declining birth rates. Experiences from countries like South Korea and Singapore reveal successful and failed policies. Dialogue with young families uncovers their real priorities, such as work-life balance, job security, and quality living spaces.
- **Decision Stage and Matrix Application**: Policy options are evaluated using the four criteria. Policies relying on coercion or restricting individual freedoms are rejected in Step 1 of the matrix. Policies with weak evidence are deferred. Applying the criteria and matrix leads to a comprehensive policy: reducing legal work hours, increasing parental leave, investing in childcare centers, and redesigning urban spaces to be family-friendly (OECD, 2022).

This policy, unlike instrumental approaches relying solely on financial incentives, addresses cultural and structural roots and uses the Priority Determination Matrix to resolve conflicts.

Principle of Gradualism and Correctability

Unlike ideological systems claiming instant access to absolute truth, Reviving Rationality is built on two core principles:

1. **Gradualism**: Knowledge is a gradual process that deepens and broadens over time. This promotes epistemic humility and allows continuous learning and progress, as

seen in the evolution of scientific theories from Newtonian mechanics to Einstein's relativity.

2. **Correctability**: All beliefs and decisions are subject to change if contradicted by evidence. Inspired by Karl Popper and central to modern science, this principle enables error correction and continuous improvement, preventing beliefs from becoming sacred dogmas. In public policy, it allows policies to adapt based on practical outcomes, avoiding inflexible approaches.

Climate Migration Example

Climate migration illustrates the complexity of contemporary issues.

- Analysis: By 2050, up to one billion people may be forced to leave their homes due to climate change, economic poverty, political instability, and population density (UNHCR, 2023). Traditional approaches like border control or temporary humanitarian aid are incompatible with this long-term, complex crisis.
- Synthesis: Diverse knowledge sources are integrated. Climate models predict vulnerable regions (IPCC, 2022); anthropological studies reveal historical migration patterns and cultural adaptation (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2021); lived experiences of current refugees highlight real needs and practical solutions (UNHCR, 2023); historical wisdom from past migrations (e.g., Irish migration) offers lessons for integration (Fitzpatrick, 2018).
- Decision-Making: Using the four criteria, a multi-faceted strategy emerges: creating a "climate visa" as a new legal status (UNHCR, 2023), investing preemptively in vulnerable regions to reduce forced migration (OECD, 2022), developing new cities in climate-safe areas, and establishing an international climate adaptation fund (UNHCR, 2023). This solution is proactive and long-term, considering both scientific realities and human dignity.

Strengths and Limitations of Reviving Rationality

These two principles—gradualism and correctability—distinguish Reviving Rationality from dogmatism, which insists on absolute, unchangeable truths, and relativism, which denies the possibility of rational knowledge. This distinction offers a third way, balancing reasonable knowledge with necessary flexibility (Popper, 1963; Lakatos, 1970; Putnam, 1981).

Reviving Rationality's strengths make it suitable for contemporary challenges:

- **Flexibility in Complexity**: It can address multidimensional issues.
- **Self-Correcting**: It allows continuous improvement and learning from experience.
- **Integration of Wisdom and Science**: It combines empirical knowledge with ethical insight.
- **Stability Amid Change**: It ensures consistency while adapting.

However, it has clear limitations:

1. It is less effective in urgent crises where there is insufficient time for the three-stage process.
2. In societies lacking shared ethical values, applying this framework is challenging.

3. Its high implementation cost makes it unsuitable for all issues.
4. It assumes honest interaction among stakeholders, which may not hold in highly polarized conditions.

These examples show that Reviving Rationality offers more comprehensive solutions to complex issues with scientific, social, economic, and ethical dimensions compared to single-dimensional approaches. Drawing on Aristotle's practical reason and phronesis, William James' emphasis on pure experience in pragmatism, Gadamer's insights on interpretation in the humanities, MacIntyre's analysis of rationality in tradition, and Taylor's discussion of moral identity and modern rationality, it provides a robust and practical framework for addressing contemporary cognitive and practical challenges.

The chart below introduces the structure of Reviving Rationality in a simple way:

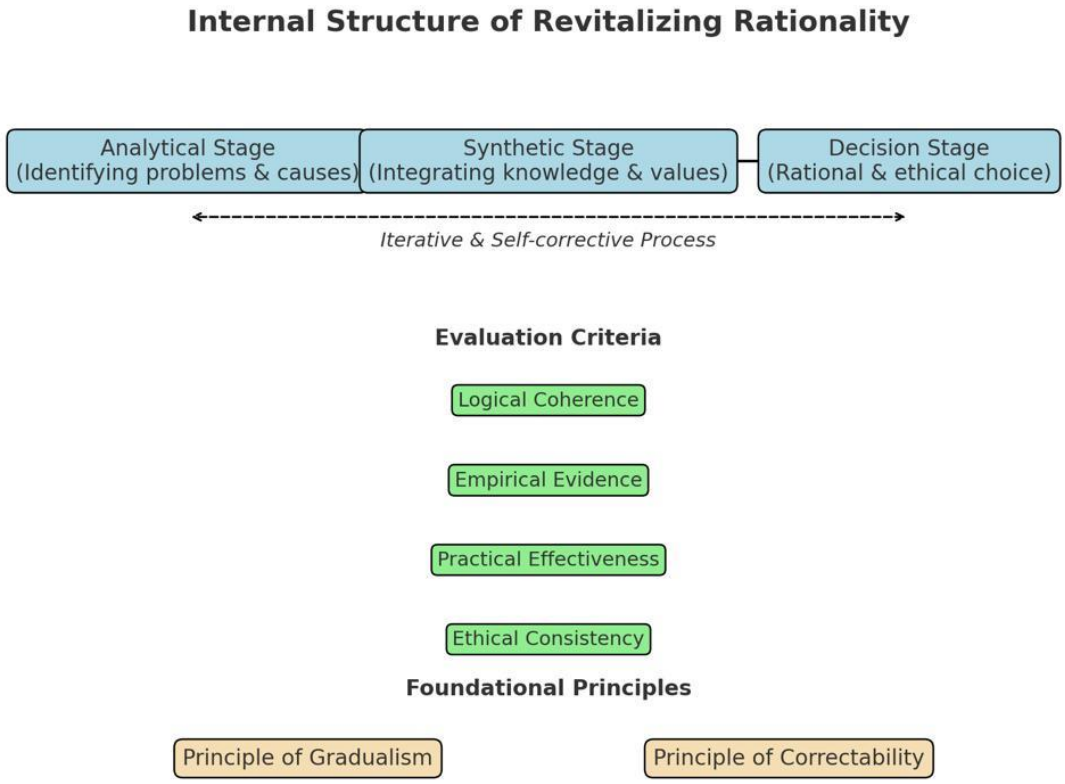

Figure X. *Conceptual model developed by the author based on the theoretical framework of the study.*

Explanation of the Chart

The chart depicting the system of Reviving Rationality can be described as follows:

1. **Three-Stage Rational Process**

At the top of the chart, three blue boxes represent the main stages of the rational process:

- **Analytical Stage**: This stage involves precisely identifying the issue, collecting data, and systematically analyzing causes and factors. For example, examining declining student academic performance requires analyzing family, economic, educational, and cultural factors.

- **Synthetic Stage**: This stage distinguishes Reviving Rationality from other approaches. Here, diverse sources of knowledge (empirical, philosophical, ethical) are combined to form a comprehensive picture of the issue. For instance, addressing urban pollution involves integrating environmental science, cultural values, economic needs, and technology.
- **Decision Stage**: The outcomes of the previous stages lead to choosing a solution. This decision is not based solely on technical efficiency but must also align with ethical principles and justice.

Arrows between these stages indicate that the process is continuous and evolving, not static.

2. Iterative and Self-Correcting Process

A dashed two-way line above the three stages shows that this model is not linear or fixed but follows an iterative cycle. This means the results of each stage can prompt a review or improvement of earlier stages. This flexibility and self-correcting nature are key features of Reviving Rationality.

3. Rationality Evaluation Criteria

In the middle of the chart, four green boxes represent the criteria for evaluating beliefs and decisions:

- **Logical Coherence**: A belief or decision must not contradict itself.
- **Empirical Evidence**: It must align with valid data and evidence.
- **Practical Effectiveness**: It must produce positive and constructive results in practice.
- **Ethical Consistency**: The decision must align with justice, human dignity, and core ethical values.

Combining these four criteria enables a comprehensive, multidimensional, and thorough evaluation.

4. Foundational Principles of Reviving Rationality

At the bottom of the chart, two yellow boxes outline the core principles of this epistemic system:

- **Principle of Gradualism**: Knowledge is a gradual process that becomes deeper and more comprehensive through continuous accumulation and revision.
- **Principle of Correctability**: No belief is sacred or unchangeable; it must be revised if new evidence emerges.

These two principles ensure that Reviving Rationality avoids both absolute dogmatism and extreme relativism, offering a balanced path for rational knowledge.

Overall, the chart illustrates that Reviving Rationality is a multi-stage, iterative, criteria-driven, and flexible system. In simpler terms, this structure allows it to address the complexities of contemporary issues, correct itself over time, and uphold both rational and ethical standards simultaneously.

Conclusion

Reviving Rationality is neither a return to traditional rationality, nor a revival of modern rationality, nor a full acceptance of postmodern critiques. It offers a new framework that draws on the strengths of all these approaches. It utilizes the scientific method and logical analysis of modernity (Hacking, 1983), embraces postmodern critiques such as attention to diversity and the role of power (Foucault, 1980; Lyotard, 1984), and overcomes their limitations by providing an evolutionary, responsible, and inclusive framework (Jonas, 1984; Apel, 1988).

The evolution of Reviving Rationality against relativism involves four steps:

1. Recognizing epistemic diversity, valuing sources like science, culture, and lived experience (Zagzebski, 1996; Sosa, 2007).
2. Constructively critiquing these sources using rational criteria without dismissing any (Popper, 1963).
3. Dynamically integrating these sources into a coherent framework tailored to the issue.
4. Applying knowledge practically to solve real-world problems with a focus on justice and responsibility (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 1999).

Reviving Rationality is not an ideology or a fixed guide but a theoretical framework defined in four dimensions:

- **Epistemologically**, it affirms the possibility of objective but gradual and revisable knowledge (Bhaskar, 1975).
- **Anthropologically**, it views humans as both structured and free, social and individual (Giddens, 1984; Taylor, 1989).
- **Ethically**, it places human dignity as the guiding principle (Nussbaum, 2000).
- **Methodologically**, it proposes coherent epistemic pluralism (Goldman, 1986).

Reviving Rationality has clear limitations that must be acknowledged:

1. It is less effective in urgent crises where there is insufficient time for the three-stage process.
2. In societies lacking shared ethical values, applying this framework is challenging.
3. Its high implementation cost makes it unsuitable for all issues.
4. It assumes honest interaction among stakeholders, which may not hold in highly polarized conditions.

Thus, Reviving Rationality is not a universal solution but a tool for addressing specific complex issues characterized by multiple knowledge sources, conflicting values, and the need for responsible decisions.

This framework does not claim perfection or promise to solve all problems. It is merely a theoretical tool for better thinking about the complex issues of our era—a tool that is itself open to critique and revision. The fundamental question Reviving Rationality seeks to answer is: In an era where both modern instrumental rationality and postmodern relativism have reached dead ends, how can we rebuild a mode of thinking and knowing that is both rational and humane, critical and constructive?

The answer is not a return to classical rationality, which is incompatible with modern conditions, nor maintaining the ineffective status quo. Instead, it is a revival of rationality at a higher level, with two key features: it considers historical experience and embraces the real complexity of humans and the world.

This framework enables us to address contemporary complex issues rationally and practically. From climate change to social inequality and democratic crises, all require an approach that is both scientific and ethical, local and global, urgent and long-term. Reviving Rationality claims such an approach is possible, but only if we accept that knowledge and action are evolutionary, revisable, and responsible processes.

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