

Living in a Emotionally Rational World

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In the 21st century, emotions have overtaken reason. Where once experts and facts could put an end to disputes, they are no longer capable of settling arguments to the extent that they once did. Where once we celebrated roaring individualism, cold rationality and truth-seeking courage of the scientific pioneers, it has become a cliché. We now bear witness to the decline of modern reason, as emotions have overwhelmed the citadel of truth.

This digital age has created a turbulent sea of hard knowledge that is rapidly filled with rumors, fantasy and guesswork, all too quickly twisted and exaggerated to align with preferred narratives. Reason itself is in peril. It is unarguable that amidst this jeopardy, the digital environment is weaponized to maximize sensitivity to the constantly changing tides of public discourse. A question arises: who might be seeking to strategically trigger specific feelings for the sake of increased engagement?

Feelings serve as the very means of how we orient ourselves in the world, while providing a reminder of our shared humanity. However, the information that feelings convey in-the-moment can conflict starkly with the facts that are subsequently established. Being “emotional” now carries the implication that we have lost objectivity and are succumbing to the ways of irrational forces.

We cling to the illusion of being in control of our own fate, willfully blind to the ways in which emotions dominate our thoughts and actions. Emotions have the power to narrow our mind, making us focus on ideas that satisfy our immediate desires. Rationality, then, becomes the capacity to counteract these emotional effects, to think rather than merely react to our feelings. In an age where emotions frequently overwhelm reason, this ability to rationalize is of paramount importance. It is the only way to ensure that our actions and decisions are grounded in truth, rather than be held to the mercy of the shifting waves of emotions.

In confronting the tyranny of emotion, the task at hand is three-fold: to scrutinize the emotions that continually infect our ideas and decisions, to understand the fundamental

irrationality underlying our emotional responses, and to cultivate an elevated perspective that transcends the immediacy of our senses and feelings.

We must turn a critical eye inward, examining those emotions that so readily sway our thoughts and actions. Learn to ask yourself: Why this anger? Why this fear? Why this particular emotion, and what deeper needs or insecurities might it be masking? By subjecting our emotions to such rigorous self-examination, we can begin to loosen their grip on our decision-making.

We must come to terms with the inherent irrationality of our emotional lives. Everyone is capable of irrational decisions, but can we adjust and learn from these mistakes? The roots of our feelings often lie beyond the reach of our conscious awareness, and our attempts to make sense of them are frequently misguided. We dwell on our emotions, amplifying and prolonging them, when a more adaptive response would be to increase our reaction time and open our perspective to the broader context of why we feel what we feel.

We must strive to adopt an elevated perspective, one that transcends the myopic focus on immediate sensations and emotional responses. We tend to live in-the-moment, responding to what we see and hear, to what is most dramatic in an event. When we limit our thinking to what our senses provide, we succumb to the consequences of our own actions. Often by raising our perspective, we may realize that the wisest course is sometimes to do nothing at all, to let time reveal the true nature of events rather than being swept away by the currents of emotion.

Perhaps the great virtue of the scientific method is not its intelligence, but its slow pace and emotional detachment. In an age where speed and intensity often triumph over reason, we may need to rediscover the value of slowness and care – in our thinking, our feelings, and our interactions with the world. For emotions can be eminently reasonable, if granted the time and space to be fully articulated and understood, as even the most advanced intelligence can become entirely unreasonable when it moves at a pace that defies genuine dialogue.

So let us raise our sails, and rise against our natural inclination to veer towards emotions when faced with adversity. Let us navigate by the compass of logic, for it is only through the cultivation of rational, emotionally-balanced thinking that we can sail the treacherous waters of the 21st century.