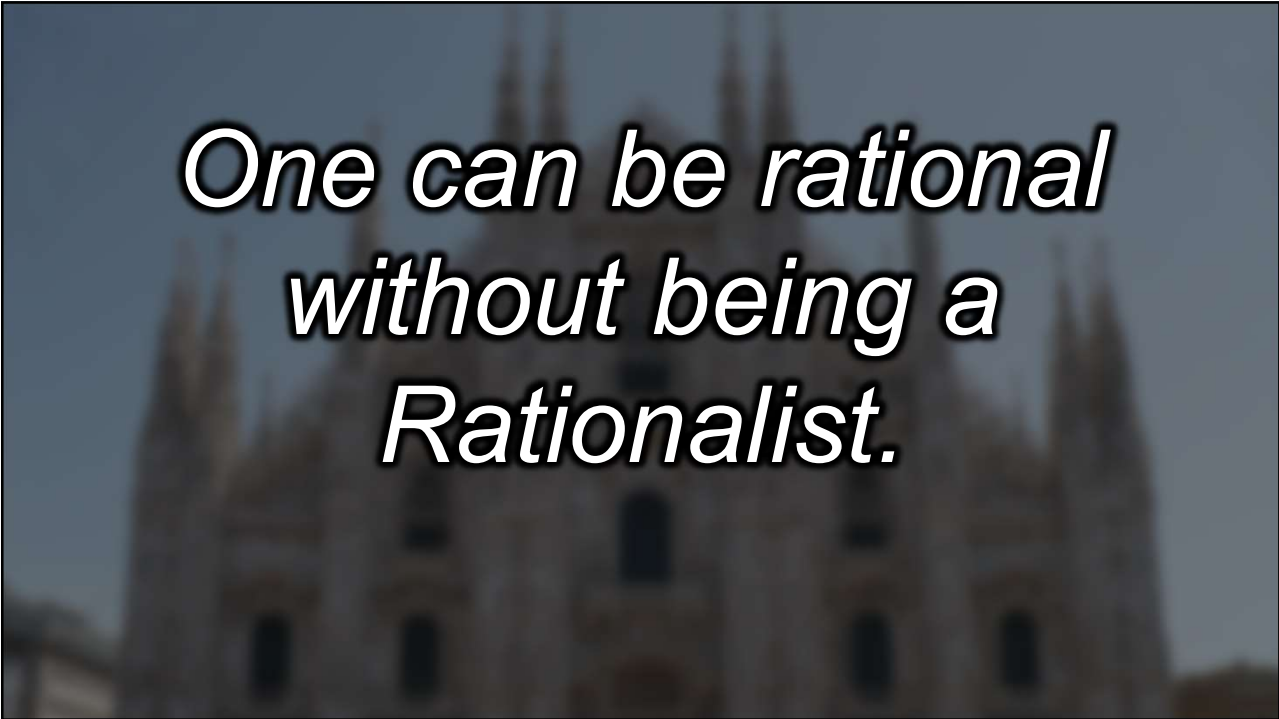


The Continental Rationalist Philosophers





Rational vs. Rationalism



*One can be rational
without being a
Rationalist.*

'Rational' is the quality of being coherent and reasonable.

'Rational' means being consistent with the laws of logic and of common sense as opposed to being overly emotional, irrational, unreasonable.

'Rationalism' is a particular theory of knowledge (epistemology) that maintains that reason is the primary or superior source of knowledge about reality.

Truths of Rationalism

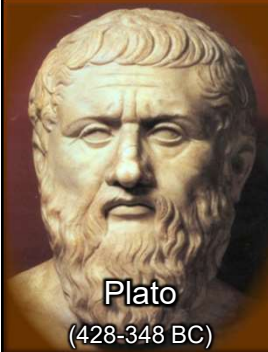
Examples of truths about reality that reason can know include:

- *logical truths, e.g., the law of non-contradiction*
- *mathematical truths, e.g., $2 + 2 = 4$*
- *metaphysical truths, e.g., If a is bigger than b and b is bigger than c, then a is bigger than c.*
- *ethical principles, e.g., Harming an innocent person is always wrong.*

Rationalism and Sense Experience

Rationalism either:

- *denies that knowledge comes from empirical experience*
- or*
- *Maintains that at least some knowledge is attainable only by reason apart from empirical experience.*



Plato
(428-348 BC)

Plato: Sense experience is an unreliable and inadequate route to knowledge, if not outright deceptive.



Descartes
(1596-1650)

Descartes: Sense experience is unreliable and inadequate as a basis for knowledge, but it may play some secondary part in knowledge.

Characteristics of Rationalism

- ✓ *The fundamental truths about the world can be known a priori.*
- ✓ *They are either **innate** or **self-evident** to our minds.*

❖ ***innate**: ideas that are in-born*

❖ ***self-evident**: a truth immediately known to be true as soon as one understands it*

- *Note: A truth can be self-evident to one person and not to another. For example, the mathematical equation $2 + 2 = 4$ might be self-evident to an adult but not to a young child.*