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## Teleology of Rational Education in Plotinus's Grace-Oriented Approach

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### Abstract

**Aim:** Rational education is one of the important topics in the field of education. This study aimed to analyze the concept of rational life in the grace-oriented approach in order to formulate the goals of rational education from Plotinus's perspective. We used Frankenna's practical analogy for this qualitative, descriptive, conceptual analysis. Our results revealed that the main purpose of rational education is the rational unity of the soul with its origin through the human soul's attainment of rational life and spiritual experiences, which is realized through the following intermediate goals: meditation and the virtue of the soul, which refers to the sanctity and moderation of the spiritual aspects; the development of self-knowledge and rationality, which refers to the authenticity and inwardness of the spiritual aspects, and the cultivation of love and imagination, which refers to the attraction of the beauty and dynamism of the spiritual aspects, and finally, benevolence and unity-seeking of the soul, which refers to the transcendence and splendor of the spiritual aspects. Educating and cultivating the human soul and the purposefulness and meaning of life is the result of the realization of these goals. From Plotinus's perspective, rational life is a perfect life with cognitive, practical, volitional, skillful and aesthetic aspects. The basic and normative proposition of this research is the acquisition of a rational life of the human soul, the realization and benefit of which depends on cultivating intermediate goals, including various dimensions of the intellectual life in cognitive, practical, emotional (attitude), voluntary aspects in learners.

**Keywords:** *Grace-oriented, Teleology, Plotinus, Rational education, Self-transcendence, Spirituality*

### Introduction

The present study aimed to analyze the concept of rational life and its characteristics in Plotinus's grace-oriented approach. To this end, Plotinus's perspective was used to formulate trainees' rational education goals and spiritual orientation. The predominance of instrumental approaches in education and upbringing has challenged rational and spiritual education, leading to shifting human relationships to the path of violence and aggression. Mental problems and anxiety caused by this approach have deprived the trainees of experiencing and enjoying real life. Without an ultimate goal, learners will not achieve a dignified life, and their lives will become void and meaningless. Miles believes that materialistic and positivist education and training systems are based on logical thinking, quantitatively oriented, and indifferent to the inner qualities of students. He regards spiritual education as the harmony and balance of trainees' inner and outer states (Miles, 1999). An individual's true life is a function of their existential growth and valuable goals. Man has a purposeful rational education with theoretical and practical dimensions, and the lack of purposefulness leads to a void and purposeless life (Gutek, 2018). True and spiritual rationality resists instrumental rationality, and should arise from the human essence and originate from their value-recognition and value-orientation principles (Tomer,

2008). Plotinus's grace-oriented rational approach is a suitable alternative to instrumental rationality due to its emphasis on human essence and internal development. Accordingly, the following two basic questions are posed for the present study.

1. What are the indicators of rational life and its constituent elements from Plotinus's perspective?
2. What is the role of reasonable life in determining the goals of rational education from Plotinus's perspective?

## Methodology

We used Frankenna's practical analogy for this qualitative, descriptive, conceptual analysis. First, the grace-oriented rational education was analyzed and described, and then practical analogy and normative analysis were used to extract the goals of rational education.

The statistical population of this research included the first-hand documents and translations of the text of Plotinus' *Enneads*, 54 treatises, articles, books, and theses written about Plotinus' thought, which were examined with a focus on rational education from Plotinus's perspective. For the consistency of the textual references, the Persian translation of Mohammad Hassan Lotfi (2010), which is based on the translation of the German text by Richard Harder (1956), was used as the basis of analysis. In some cases, the textual comparison was matched with the English translation of Stephen McKenna (1872), and the Arabic translation of Theologia by Ibn Na'ima al-Himsi (1959) and Emilson's (2007) interpretation of Plotinus's opinions on reason.

In response to the first research question, the focus was on understanding the theoretical foundations of Plotinus's philosophy to clarify rational life and its constituents. Through explaining the characteristics of rational life, the goals of rational education were explained from Plotinus's perspective, and the initial realistic and normative propositions of the rational education goals were extracted. For the second research question, Frankenna's reconstructed progressive model was used since it leads to creating and producing educational approaches and goals. Bagheri considers the fundamental value or goal as the result of a practical analogy by adding an initial normative and descriptive proposition. The basic concept is considered a descriptive proposition that expresses a reality, whether supernatural, philosophical, natural, epistemological, value-oriented, or theological. The basic propositions reveal their impact on determining the characteristics and basic goals of education and training (Bagheri, 2011).

## Results

From Plotinus's perspective, rational life comprises cognitive, practical, rational, volitional, skillful, and aesthetic aspects. In line with its requirements from Plotinus's viewpoint, practical analogies are as follows:

First introduction of practical analogy 1: Humans should live a happy life. (Normative statement)

The second introduction of the practical analogy 1: A happy life is associated with prosperity and depends on living a rational life. (Descriptive realistic statement)

The result of practical analogy 1: Man should live a rational life to find happiness. (Normative statement)

The first introduction of practical analogy 2: Rational education should guide the trainees toward a rational and perfect life (normative statement).

The second introduction of practical analogy 2: Self-cultivation is the requirement of living a rational life. (Realistic statement)

The result of practical analogy 2: A trainee should cultivate the soul (to achieve a rational life). (Normative statement)

The first introduction of practical analogy 3: Rational education should guide the trainees toward a rational and perfect life. (Normative statement)

The second introduction of practical analogy 3: Living a rational and perfect life depends on the virtue of the soul. (Descriptive statement)

The result of practical analogy 3: To live a rational life, one should cultivate virtue in trainees. (Normative statement)

The first introduction of practical analogy 4: Rational education should guide the trainees toward a rational and perfect life. (Normative statement)

The second introduction of the practical analogy 4: Self-knowledge and rationality are part of the knowledge of rational life and perfect rational life. (Realistic statement)

The result of practical analogy 4: To realize a rational life, one should cultivate self-knowledge and rationality in trainees. (Normative statement)

The first introduction of practical analogy 5: Rational education should guide the trainees toward a rational and perfect life. (Normative statement)

Introduction to the second practical analogy 5: Imagination and loving are part of the emotional and aesthetic dignity of rational life. (Descriptive realistic statement)

The result of practical analogy 5: For rational education, it is required to cultivate imagination and love in the trainees. (Normative statement)

The first introduction of practical analogy 6: Rational education should guide the trainees toward a rational and perfect life. (Normative statement)

The second introduction of practical analogy 6: Benevolence and unity are part of the willful dignity of rational life. (Descriptive statement)

The result of practical analogy 6: For rational education, it is required to cultivate benevolence and goodwill in the trainees. (Normative statement)

## Discussion and conclusion

According to the results of this research, the main goal of rational education is the rational unity of the soul with its origin through the human soul's attainment of rational life and spiritual experiences. The intermediate goals of this attainment include the following: meditation and the virtue of the soul, which refers to the sanctity and moderation of the spiritual aspects; the development of self-knowledge and rationality, which refers to the authenticity and inwardness of the spiritual aspects, and the cultivation of love and imagination, which refers to the attraction of the beauty and dynamism of the spiritual aspects. Finally, benevolence is the unity-seeking of the soul, which refers to the transcendence and splendor of the spiritual aspects. Educating and cultivating the human soul and the purposefulness and meaning of life is the result of the realization of these goals. The initial normative proposition of this research is the necessity of happiness and goal orientation of the human soul.

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