



# **The Fragmentation of Reason: Preface to a Pragmatic Theory of Cognitive Evaluation (MIT Press)**

*Stephen Stich*

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From Descartes to Popper, philosophers have criticized and tried to improve the strategies of reasoning invoked in science and in everyday life. In recent years leading cognitive psychologists have painted a detailed, controversial, and highly critical portrait of common sense reasoning. Stephen Stich begins with a spirited defense of this work and a critique of those writers who argue that widespread irrationality is a biological or conceptual impossibility. Stich then explores the nature of rationality and irrationality: What is it that distinguishes good reasoning from bad? He rejects the most widely accepted approaches to this question approaches which unpack rationality by appeal to truth, to reflective equilibrium or conceptual analysis. The alternative he defends grows out of the pragmatic tradition in which reasoning is viewed as a cognitive tool. Stich's version of pragmatism leads to a radical epistemic relativism and he argues that the widespread abhorrence of relativism is ill founded. Stephen Stich is Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University and author of *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science*.

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