In the wake of radical critiques of disciplinary claims and practices, especially those that target claims about objectivity, universality and certainty, no concept has come under fire with such force as that of reason, the pivot around which the very possibility of any systematic inquiry is established. These radical critiques have come from a variety of quarters: feminist, cultural relativist, post-structuralist and postmodernist, to name a few. There have also been attempts, in these debates, to resurrect older skeptical concerns regarding nature and limits of reason, and the grounds and scope of rational inquiry. As one would expect, there have been equally strong and wide-ranging arguments in defense of reason as well. Some of these defences have sought to show the problematic character of these criticisms; others have argued that skeptics of reason depend upon or make use of reason in their questioning; yet others have foregrounded the indispensability of reason in envisioning emancipatory projects and attending to public affairs. At the same time, these debates have forced philosophers working in different areas and practitioners of different disciplines to rethink the very foundations of their forms of inquiry as well as the nature and scope of reason.

In view of the importance of these debates, the Second Summer School in Philosophy of Education (June 8 – 19, 2015) shall be devoted to an examination of the concept of reason, various debates that have arisen around it and their implications for the contemporary discourse on education. Instead of plunging directly into the specific debates between 2 skeptics and defenders of reason, we will proceed on the assumption that the term is used in a wide variety of senses, and hence that different concepts of reason get invoked in different domains of inquiry. In the course of the Summer School, we will

- Explore the nature and limits of some of these senses of reason;
- Consider the various ways in which the concept of reason has been criticized both within respective domains and in general;
- Consider the charge that the concept of reason is embedded in the ideology of the European Enlightenment, whose legacy is problematic;
- Inquire whether a viable conception of reason can be defended in the face of these criticisms, and
- Debate claims about the indispensability of reason in thinking about education.
The programme of the Summer School will consist of lectures by resident and invited resource persons, discussions, group reading sessions and presentations by participants. Topics for discussion include Reason as Faculty and Method, Reason and Epistemic Norms, Reason and Science, Public Reason and Reason and Education.

Programme Outline

Day 1 [June 8, 2015]: Introduction to the Theme (Indrani Bhattacharjee and Varadarajan Narayanan, Azim Premji University)

In this session, the task would be to appreciate the variety of senses and contexts in which the word ‘reason’ is used, to understand the different ways in which these senses could be classified, and delineate, through a brief discussion, the historical trajectory of some of these senses. We shall also seek to understand the general criticisms levelled against reason and the nature of debates surrounding these. In the process, we hope, this introductory session will help participants gain the broad contours of issues and concerns that shall occupy us through the workshop.

Day 2 [June 9, 2015]: Two Philosophical Configurations of Reason (C. Tomy, IIT Delhi)

In this session, we shall discuss two influential ways in which reason has been thought of: as method and as a human faculty. Both these ways of conceiving reason have a long and interesting history, and it is equally true that both these conceptions have been challenged. Through a discussion of historical and contemporary debates, we shall make an attempt to understand how reason is thought of in each of these senses and the issues surrounding them.

Days 3 & 4 [June 10 and 11, 2015]: Reason and Epistemic Norms (Manidipa Sen - Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indrani Bhattacharjee)

The idea that one's knowledge claims need to be backed by reasons for thinking them true forms a core intuition in traditional and contemporary accounts of justification. This is by no means an uncontested framework for thinking about justification, or indeed about knowledge. In the third segment of our Summer School, we will explore the sources of epistemic normativity, i.e., the question of the grounds upon which knowledge claims are admissible as knowledge claims, from selected historical and contemporary perspectives. Through this exercise he participants will come to grapple with some of the senses of reason and rationality employed in epistemological discourse.
Day 5 [June 12, 2015]: Reason and Morality (Apaar Kumar, Manipal Center for Philosophy and Humanities)

That we engage in reasoning about the morality of our actions is perhaps difficult to deny. A more vexed question is that regarding the place of reason in the complex response to the world that philosophers call a moral judgment. If moral knowledge is possible then presumably there are moral facts and the possibility of reasoning with respect to them. To opponents of this view, it seems clear that we cannot have justified true beliefs about the moral status of actions, given the multiplicity of possible viewpoints and our emotional needs and imperatives. If this view is correct, then it is difficult to say what sorts of things moral facts are, and how indeed it is possible to reason about morality. In this session, we will discuss competing accounts of the grounds of moral thought and action and debate the role of reason in our moral lives.

Days 6&7 [June 15 and 16, 2015]: Reason and Scientific Hegemony (Ravi Subramaniam, Homi Bhabha Center for Science Education, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR),Mumbai)

The idea of scientific rationality underwrites the rich and diverse programmes of empirical science. Over time, it has come to acquire powerful cultural and ideological associations, and provoke numerous critical perspectives on the practice of science. It has been argued that reason in the service of the empirical sciences is less a perfectly objective, politically neutral tool, and more an instrument of oppression and perpetuation of unreasoned assumptions about a host of things from human nature to the status of science itself. In the fourth segment of the Summer School, participants will study and discuss viewpoints on the structure and upshot of scientific claims and arguments, with a view to understanding some of the criteria employed to assess these claims.

Day 8 [June 17, 2015]: The Idea of Public Reason (Nigam Nugehalli, Azim Premji University)

In the context of political and moral philosophy, one of the most vexing questions has been about the grounds on which principles could be justified and considered good enough to be accepted for every individual on whom these principles apply. The classic answers, one based on the notion of consent and the other based on the claim that these principles are true, have turned out to be unviable. The recent discussions around this issue have resulted in the emergence and elaboration of the notion of public reason, as an interesting alternative. This notion seeks to establish that it should be justified in the views or ‘arguments individuals endorse or accept’ and that such a ground for justification ensures their freedom and equality. While the notion of public reason seems to be extremely promising, many have sought to highlight the issues that this entails for political and moral decision making and some of these challenge the employment of reason itself in this context. This session will seek to reconstruct this debate and its implications for political and moral deliberations.
Days 9 & 10 [June 18 and 19, 2015]: Reason and Education (Rohit Dhankar, Azim Premji University)

Education can hardly have any meaning which does not involve ideas of truth, enquiry, justification and goodness, and their employment in judgment and action. Some notion of self-determination, be that expressed as autonomy or authenticity or appropriate participation in human ways of thinking, doing or feeling is also necessarily part of the aims as well as justification of education. The latter—autonomy, authenticity, etc.—would be impossible to pinpoint without reference to some or other notions of truth, enquiry, justification and goodness. From this point of view, then, the idea of reason and education are closely connected. The understanding of reason necessarily influences the ideas of knowledge, understanding, and judgment, which in turn influence the idea of education, its content and methods. Another issue in education is the relationship between emotions, actions and reason. The suggestions to deal with emotions or education of emotions range from formation of habits and dispositions through inculcation of virtues to self-conscious regulation of emotions. How reason plays out in this range of ideas is an important issue in education. Thus this last segment of the Summer School will explore the role of reason in education, and how various notions of reason may play out in thinking about and practicing education.