

the argument

We manage the fact that our environments present us with many problems that are too hard for us to solve individually. We manage it by shaping one another's thinking and by cooperating in practical and intellectual projects. Problems are difficult in many different ways, and there are many ways that we solve them: so many and so varied that we cannot as part of our thinking grasp the all the ways situations and capacities connect. So we cannot by systematic thinking regulate our responses to our limitations. In this way the concept of rationality - the understanding-based oversight over our thinking - is not very helpful, and since reactions to our limitations and failures are an important part of thinking well, rationality is in general not a helpful frame to put on thought. Instead, we can discuss connections between environment and thinking directly, talking both of knowledge and accomplishment and of intellectual virtues, which represent the variety of targets we can achieve. The difficulty of mapping the potential connections and disconnections also makes problems in anticipating whether one will succeed in solving a problem. There are important virtues that are specific to the consequences of this fact. Though we have no useful classification of our intellectual skills we can classify our virtues. The categories of such a classification must be very broad and include paradoxical-seeming virtues that in rationality-shaped terms will seem like vices. But such a classification represents our best hope of any systematic understanding of human limitation-management.