

Rationality and the Good

Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology
of Robert Audi

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Rationality and the Good

An Overview

ROBERT AUDI

A child is born. It is immediately immersed in sensation and greeted with discomfort. It is relieved by fondling and feeding. It experiences touch and taste, hearing and sight, scent and movement. The earliest sensations are doubtless blurry. But soon, discrimination begins. This is a differential responsiveness to experiences. The child reaches out for milk, smiles at Mama, cries from loud noises.

It is not clear when the first beliefs are formed. Their formation is facilitated by discrimination, but belief-formation is not entailed by discrimination. Belief requires understanding. Whereof one cannot understand, thereof one cannot believe. Understanding, in turn, requires concepts. Concepts arise in interlocking formations. Beliefs do not arise in isolation either, one doxastic atom at a time. Like concepts, they are formed, and work, in families.

We are blessed not only with a receptiveness to learning from experience but also with a capacity to learn from what we already know. One route to learning is generalization: if a small yelping dog jumps at a child, the child expects much the same of a big one. Another, overlapping, route to learning is inference. Inference, too, appears early in life. We infer certain consequences of some of the things we believe. A child told that the family cannot have animals needs no logical prowess to infer that the puppy offered by neighbors will not be accepted. We also make inferences to the best explanation. The same child may infer from canine squeals at the door that the puppy is outside.

The picture so far drawn is intellectual. But just as belief and knowledge develop spontaneously from the impact of the world upon a child's experience, conduct evolves spontaneously as the child acts upon the world. Here the rewards of success and the punishments of error are great teachers. Action enriches the content of the intellect. We learn much by doing. Action also evokes desire and aversion, and so shapes the will.

I. Belief

I have been using metaphor. It can encapsulate theories, aid memory, and stimulate imagination. Permit me to use it more. My first metaphor is architectural. Buildings have both structural and material elements; they come in many kinds; they are strong or weak; they can be changed for better or worse; they are beautiful or ugly. They also have foundations and superstructure. A body of beliefs has such elements too. Foundational beliefs are grounded in experience or reason—or, we may say, just in experience if we take reason, in its grounding role, to work through intellectual experience.¹ Good grounds are solid; but not all grounds are bedrock, and even bedrock can be altered.

The superstructure of a building is sustained by pillars. In cognition—say, in our belief systems—this sustaining role is often played by inference. But it is also played by a process of inferential belief formation that is more automatic than what we usually call *inference*.² Beliefs may produce others without our focusing on premises or drawing conclusions. The plurality of superstructures is indefinitely rich. There is no limit to what we can build, especially from good foundations. This limitlessness applies to both breadth and height. We all have foundational beliefs of ample scope and potential to empower us to make numerous inferences. From a single set of premises, we may go in many directions and as far as we like.

If indefinite cognitive extension is possible, so is unending cognitive revision. As the pressure of wind can make us reduce the height of our construction, the force of criticism—or the sheer erosion of confidence as we reconsider—can make us reject what once seemed clearly true. Moreover, foundations can be rebuilt from superstructure as well as shifted from the fulcrum of their fellows. Deduction of untoward consequences from foundational elements is a common route to rebuilding them. The same holds for inductively inferred conclusions that oppose what we believe on the basis of experience or, perhaps, on testimonial authority. That authority, as Thomas Reid so clearly saw, is a social basis of knowledge.³

The architectural metaphor should make clear something still not widely realized. The stereotype of epistemological foundationalism that has fueled so many postmodernist enterprises is groundless. Foundationalism as I am sketching it concerns the structure, not the content, of a body of knowledge or justified beliefs. It does not imply that knowledge or justified beliefs must have any particular type of content; nor that foundational beliefs are indefeasibly justified; nor that only deductive inference can carry justification from foundations to superstructure. And it provides a role for coherence to play in the rationality of our beliefs.⁴

II. Desire

I have described experience as engendering beliefs—though not every experience must do so.⁵ It is not just perceptual experiences that do it; “internal experiences,”

such as imaginings, can also do it. This applies to desire too. The sight of a fruit bowl can evoke an appetite; imagining a sip of fine wine can arouse desire.

Consider a second, arboreal metaphor, parallel to the first. A tree is grounded in soil, the main source of its nutrients. Its roots anchor it; they are its foundations. Its trunk and branches serve as pillars in the superstructure. Its foliage shows its scope and character. If it is well grounded—being in good soil, nourished by its roots, and carrying nutrients along the normal pathways—it flourishes. Is *our* flourishing (as a certain Humean instrumentalism says) simply the fulfillment of our basic desires? Or might there be good and bad nutrients that yield desire and good and bad ways to transmit their influence to the superstructure? Surely the latter view is more plausible. But what of desire? Isn't getting what we want—satisfying our basic desires—constitutive of a good life? Not necessarily. Desire is both fallible and manipulable.

With the arboreal metaphor in mind, let us go back to nature. From babyhood onward, pleasure and pain are among the elemental nutrients of desire. They stimulate conative growth toward the pleasurable and away from the painful. This is not to endorse hedonism. But perhaps if we were not built so as to enjoy some things and be pained by others, we would not learn to want anything. Still, genetic primacy is one thing, motivational hegemony quite another. It may be that we would not learn to value nonhedonic goods if we were not first motivated by hedonic ones; but our early years under the tutelage of pleasure and pain need not prevent our developing autonomous desires. Loving our parents may begin with their relieving our pains and giving us pleasures, but it does not end there. And if love has roots in our own pleasure and desire satisfaction, its growth requires learning to care about the well-being of others. Recall some of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (vv. 4–7)

There are many kinds of trees and many shades of foliage. The foliage of a single tree changes in color and is seasonally replaced. There is continuity as well as plurality. There are also structural differences between trees. Brittle trees are hurt by the stresses of wind and the weight of snow. A tree that can bend need not break. (The implicit lessons, especially for parents and teachers, are numerous.)

There are cognitive analogues of all these points. The dogmatic, for instance, tend to have stiff trunks; the fallibilistic can be resilient. The unpredictable, many-faceted growth of trees is a metaphor for the development of desire as well as of belief. Much as, in almost any realm we are exposed to, theoretical inference generates new beliefs, practical inference generates new desires. The most pervasive kind of practical inference is instrumental.⁶ Wanting a good meal can lead, by way of the instrumental belief that cooking lobsters would provide it, to the conclusion that this is the thing to do and, through that, to wanting to cook lobsters. Desires also arise without reasoning. Tasting lobster for the first time may evoke a desire for more.

III. Action

The agent so far portrayed has belief and desire and the makings of intellect and will. Experience is what I have above all emphasized. Nothing experienced, nothing discriminated. Nothing discriminated, nothing believed. No pleasure or pain, or other positive or negative experiences, nothing wanted. Nothing wanted, nothing done.

But, however many beliefs and desires we have, neither belief nor desire entails intention. Desire is a pressure toward intention; but we resist some pressures and eliminate others. Why is intention so important? As Kant saw, good will—the volitional heart of good people—is a construct from intention.⁷ In our character, intention is fundamental. Both points are central for ethics. But they are significant in part because of another point.

We come now to my third metaphor: the itinerary. Intention is essential for putting a destination on our itinerary. By sheer good fortune, we may land in wonderful places; but good lives require itineraries. We can revise them often, but we need a sense of where we are going. If we simply wait for life to take us where it will, we are impoverished. We may exercise freedom, but not autonomy; we may have pleasant surprises, but not the enduring satisfactions of earned achievements.

A good itinerary requires a good map, but even the best of maps does not tell us what path to take. A good itinerary rewards us by leading us to worthwhile destinations. Our belief system is our map of the world (though it is far more). Our desires are our inclinations toward destinations. Desires that prevail in our intentions put destinations on our itinerary. If we are rational, knowledge or at least justified beliefs underlie our map of the world, and we have worthwhile destinations on our itinerary.⁸ We cannot be rational without minimal rationality in both the theoretical and practical domains.

In both domains, experience has high normative authority. Sensory experience provides basic grounds for beliefs about the world; intuitive and ratiocinative experiences yield grounds for beliefs with logical and other a priori content; and logic constrains what beliefs we may hold on the *basis* of other beliefs. Rewarding experiences—most clearly (though not exclusively) those that are pleasurable or are marked by relief of pain—provide basic grounds for rational desire.

One might think, as Humean instrumentalists do, that desires do not admit of rationality, though they can be *irrational*, as where we can easily see that their objects are impossible.⁹ On this view, practical rationality consists simply in maximizing the satisfaction of basic (noninstrumental) desires.¹⁰ But instrumentalism misses a profound parallel: just as, in virtue of a clear and steadfast visual impression of faces before me, it is (prima facie) rational for me to believe there are faces, so, in virtue of being pained by the touch of a hot kettle, or of enjoying conversation with a friend, it is rational for me to want to avoid the former and to have the latter.¹¹ We do not flourish in just any soil; and some destinations should never appear on our itineraries.

IV. Value

The parallels I have suggested between theoretical and practical reason leave room for important differences. The broadest is perhaps this: belief is, in a certain objective

way, successful when its object is *true*; desire—in the basic cases—is, in a similar objective way, successful when its object is *good*.¹² What is objective may, of course, be internal: there are truths about matters internal to the mind, and there are objective goods internal to experience, such as the enjoyment of a silent recitation of a beautiful sonnet. The same holds for the pain of vividly recalling an injustice.

How should we think of value, the realm of the good and the bad? All my metaphors apply. Take goodness. I see it as grounded in qualities of experience. The experiential soil can be good or bad, nourishing or desiccating. There are fertile fields of grain and barren sandy deserts. And much as there are foundational beliefs and others based on them, there are basic goods and instrumental goods that lead to them.

Here I introduce a fourth metaphor: the aesthetic. Consider paintings and poems. Both can have value “in themselves.” But the phrase ‘in itself’ is too coarse to stand alone in clarifying basic value—*intrinsic* value. The phrase does encompass the goodness of intrinsically good experiences: these are *noninstrumentally* good; they need have no relational kind of goodness. But ‘good in itself’ also applies to things whose goodness is not experiential. The goodness of a beautiful painting resides in its beauty, and that, in turn, is consequential upon its intrinsic properties (its nonrelational ones). This makes it natural to think of the painting as good *in itself*.

Aristotle implicitly spoke to this question. For him, one good is more “final” than another if we seek the latter for the sake of the former, and *the* good—that which makes life “choiceworthy”—is not sought for the sake of anything else.¹³ We value beautiful paintings in order to *view* them with a certain kind of reward. Viewing them in that way yields an aesthetically valuable *experience* (i.e., one that is good from the aesthetic point of view, not one that is a good *object* of aesthetic appreciation, though that status is not ruled out for special cases). Experiences that have such value are intrinsically good. They are also “more final” in Aristotle’s sense than their objects. Do beautiful paintings contribute to the ultimate choiceworthiness of life simply by their physical existence around us, or through our *viewing* them—hence visually experiencing them—in a way that is aesthetically good? Plainly they would not so contribute if we never viewed them or, upon viewing them, we never had a good experience. Good things are good in virtue of the experiential qualities that enable them to contribute to good lives.

Call artworks and other things that are good in themselves but not intrinsically good, *inherently good*. They can be *constituents* in, and not merely *means* to, experiences that are intrinsically good. They are thus not merely instrumental goods and are sources of noninstrumental reasons for action, for instance for viewing paintings “for their own sake.”¹⁴

The inherent good shares another property with the intrinsically good: it is organic. The value of an organic whole need not be the sum of the values of its parts or aspects. It can have parts and aspects that have no inherent or intrinsic value, such as a blank space in a painting, a harsh dissonance in a symphony, and ellipsis marks in a poem. But the overall inherent value of these artworks may be positively affected by such elements, so that the value of the whole is greater than the sum of the values of the parts or aspects. This can hold even if all of the parts and aspects are inherently good. Similar points apply to intrinsically valuable experiences (and even to disvaluable ones).

Consider a pause in musical work: experienced in itself, it may be aesthetically empty but, as part of the overall musical experience, valuationally important. Or take Shelley's wonderful lines about Ozymandias, a king who vaingloriously sought immortality in a statue that is now decayed by the ravages of nature:

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.¹⁵

The empty silence of its surroundings is far more memorable than the statue; and the contrast between the two heightens our sense of each. Listen to Shakespeare's sonorous invocation, when Prospero summons his supernatural minions to do his final bidding. It depicts landscape and seascape, the swift and delicate, the dance and the chase, the playful and the powerful. He says:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back; you demipuppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid—
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war.

(*The Tempest*, 5.1.34–44)

Some of his words are individually evocative, but others are workaday tools we use with no sense of aesthetic value. Yet, joined together in these incomparable ways, they are uniquely rewarding. In a single sentence, we have depiction, narrative, dramatic movement, and powerful resolution.

If intrinsic value is organic, and if the intrinsically good has the normative authority that goes with its grounding of reasons for action, we should find that *overall* reason for action may also be organic. Recall the role of pleasure and pain as grounds of rational desires and hence *prima facie* reasons for action. *In* the fact that criticizing a discouraged student's paper I would cause pain, which is intrinsically bad, I have *prima facie* reason *not* to do this. But, in general, in the fact that I would enjoy doing something, I have *prima facie* reason to *do* it. Now imagine that my mood is sadistic and I would greatly enjoy causing pain. Suppose that intrinsic value, and the practical reasons it grounds, were additive. Then, if the student's pain would be minor and my pleasure great, there might be overall reason for me to do the deed. But this pleasure ill befits its object, so much so that the *overall* value of the sadistic pleasure is negative—and *less* than that of an equally intense, equally lasting pleasure in something valuationally neutral.¹⁶ Here, then, there would be better reason for me to avoid the sadistic deed than to perform it.

V. Obligation

If the good and the bad are sources of reasons for action, and if the pursuit of the former and the avoidance of the latter are as important in human life as they seem, might the deontic realm be subordinate to the axiological? Are the right and the wrong ultimately derivative from the good and the bad? I include the obligatory—in the widest sense of what we ought to do—in the realm of the right and the wrong; I conceive what is obligatory in this widest sense as what it would be wrong not to do.¹⁷

There is certainly a sense in which it is bad to do what we ought not to do and good to do what we ought to do. And isn't it true that the more good we bring about, the better? These points make it natural to believe—as consequentialists in ethics do—that the right is subordinate to the good. If, as I think, the good is organic, this projected subordination of the deontic to the axiological can be developed in a way that takes account of that point. *Maximize the good* would be our categorical imperative.

If you are imagining Kant turning over in his grave at this thought, remember that some goods are realized only in action. Excellence is achieved *in action*, for instance in intellectual and aesthetic activities. Moreover, some goods, such as a just distribution, are *moral*.¹⁸ These points suggest a better formulation connecting the deontic and the axiological; instead of requiring maximization of the good, our imperative might be more Aristotelian: *Realize the good*. This imperative allows that the good we bring about may be not an external consequence of the action by which we produce it, but intrinsic to it.

If we can frame an adequate realization theory of the basis of obligation, we may be able to derive sound standards of moral obligation from a conception of what is needed to realize the good. I leave open, then, that from a certain kind of organic theory of the good, we might derive sound standards of the right. But since *moral* goodness would be included at the base, this would not be a consequentialist project like Mill's: a derivation of the right from the *nonmorally* good. Hence, even if the standards of right and wrong are in some way derivable from those of the good and the bad, the corresponding deontic *concepts* need not be reducible to axiological concepts.

The architectural metaphor is clarifying here. Two independent foundational girders can jointly support the same superstructure. Similarly, certain moral standards can be supported both by meeting deontic demands that *right* action must satisfy *and* by meeting axiological requirements that *good* action must fulfill. I mean standards of prima facie obligation, such as Ross's in *The Right and the Good* (and those I develop and defend in *The Good in the Right*). There are obligations of justice and noninjury, of fidelity and veracity, of beneficence and self-improvement, of reparation and gratitude, and of liberty and respectfulness.¹⁹

The principles expressing these obligations seem to have a kind of epistemic independence relative to axiological principles. Indeed, I consider these principles of obligation self-evident, in this sense: first, an adequate understanding of them suffices for being *justified* in believing them; second, if we believe them on the *basis* of such an understanding, we know them.²⁰ The self-evident need not be obvious or even uncontroversial. It is simply accessible to reason in a certain way. Many self-evident truths are never in fact accessed; at most a few are on everyone's cognitive map. But

it is a blessing of our nature that so many can be readily seen and, if sometimes with difficulty, internalized.²¹

If this moral epistemology is sound, and if moral principles provide (*prima facie*) reasons for action, then there are moral reasons for action, say, to avoid injustice, to keep promises, and to relieve suffering.²² Moreover, through our understanding of the principles expressing the obligations that correspond to these reasons, the intellect can ascertain moral reasons for action. This entitles it to a practical function in guiding action.

Does the intellect, then, have executive power? Perhaps it sometimes does, but I doubt that it must.²³ Its motivational power seems to depend on the cooperation of the will or at least on supporting desires. But the will is no mere handmaiden of desire. It tends to respond to natural desires that are rational. Compassionate desire, for instance, can mitigate anger and lead to irenic intentions where enmity would have ruled. But the will is also guided by practical judgment, and some of its deliverances can guide desire and even the intellect. The will may be wayward and misguided, but in a rational person it tends to support moral judgments: not only the self-addressed ones that express a sense of obligation but also practical judgments about what is right, needful, wise, or otherwise called for.

VI. Rationality

We now have a sketch of a conception of rationality in three interconnected domains: the theoretical, the practical, and the moral. The moral, being both a realm of knowledge and a source of standards essentially concerned with guiding action, is at once theoretical and practical. Theoretical rationality is a central concern of epistemology, practical rationality of the philosophy of action. Rationality in the moral domain cuts across these realms. What grounds rational moral judgment? And what are the rationality conditions of moral action? Moral judgment is practical in content; moral action is practical in nature.

Rationality is also a property of persons themselves—this is *global rationality*. It requires both theoretical and practical rationality. Recall the vital itinerary. Without a rational cognitive map, we would find worthwhile destinations only by good fortune; without desires and intentions to go to worthwhile destinations, a good map would not help us to live a rewarding life.

In a globally rational person, the practical and the theoretical are integrated. Emotions bear on this integration. To have no feelings about what one judges to be good or condemns as wrong is to be in a certain way impoverished. To have feelings like those of anger where one sees nothing wrong is to be in a dissonant and disorienting condition. These feelings, like anxiety at the prospect of flying despite a judgment that it is safe, ill befit one's cognition. Feeling and emotion can be fitting or ill befitting to cognition, and, in a rational person, fittingness in this realm predominates. We should be pleased by our friends' successes and distressed at their misfortunes. Indignation befits the sight of a confidence trickster cheating an old man; it ill befits the experience of being asked to wait in line to be served.

Intellectualist associations commonly surround the notion of rationality. But emotions can be rational as well as irrational. They may be called for by what a

person perceives, as where the roar of an apparent landslide makes fear rational. But fear may also be inappropriate to experience, as where one should realize that the roar comes from an airplane. Emotions may be integrated or discordant with other elements in us, such as beliefs and desires. Hatred of others may be unreasonable given our theology or our factual beliefs about others, or both.

On the integration of emotion with intellect I find a poem of Emily Dickinson's the *mot juste*:

The Heart is the Capital of the Mind—
 The Mind is a single State—
 The Heart and the Mind together make
 A single Continent.

One—is the Population—
 Numerous enough—
 This ecstatic Nation
 Seek—it is yourself.²⁴

The importance of emotions helps us to see why (as I have said) the will is not the handmaiden of desire; it is not even the handmaiden of the intellect. Consider weakness of will, in a paradigmatic form in which we act against our better judgment. A father might judge that he must punish his teenage daughter for staying out late and frightening her parents. But, when it comes to issuing the punishment, he looks into her fearful, distressed face and feels compassion. He turns away, feeling foolish but relieved. Might his emotions and sensitivity to the child's vulnerability run ahead of his punitive judgment—and deeper? Perhaps his judgment, though rational given his generally reasonable standards, ill befits his deepest values. His action responds, partly through the influence of his emotions, to these values; and it can be rational despite opposing his judgment. Its global integration with what is deepest in him and—we may suppose—perfectly rational outweighs its local disparity with his judgment at the time.²⁵

We are naturally endowed with at least two interacting ways to determine what destinations are worth visiting. If we are fortunate, if we are loved, cared for, and educated, worthwhile experiences and activities will be prominent in our lives. These experiences produce desires and intentions. If we are unfortunate early in life, our actual path through these years will be clouded. But our itinerary can still be informed by suffering: pain is a powerful teacher, and aversion is more easily educated than desire. Cognition takes stock of what we like and dislike, and influences both desire and aversion. Emotion is responsive to both cognition and desire, but it may also beneficially influence them.

Must morality play a part in the constitution of a rational person? Must others be important to us as more than means to our own ends? This much seems very likely true. If there are (as I think) objectively ascertainable—indeed, a priori ascertainable—reasons for action, and if these have high normative authority, then moral conduct well grounded in them is never *irrational*. Still, this point does not imply that every rational person must actually believe moral principles and thereby have moral reasons for action.²⁶ But suppose that is so. There remains a question whether moral action is always rationally required.

People differ in their experiences and hence in their grounds for rational belief and rational desire. There is, then, *one* kind of relativity that even an objectivist account of rationality must countenance: relativity to grounds. This point leaves room to argue that for *certain* people with a certain range of experiences and beliefs, some moral conduct is rationally required. My view, however, is more measured: for people who (like most of us) live in friendly relations with others and believe that we are all alike in basic rationality, motivation, and sentience, morality is a *demand* of reason. By and large, even where it would not be irrational for such people to fail to do what morality requires, it would be *unreasonable*.²⁷

Much should be said about the reasonable. Like rationality, reasonableness is a kind of responsiveness to reasons and, ultimately, to experience. But reasonableness is a stronger notion and implies a greater responsiveness. A rational person, such as a shrewdly selfish one, can be quite unreasonable. One might think that to be reasonable is above all to do good reasoning, as opposed to merely being rational. But my conception of both rationality and reasonableness is less intellectualist. Reasonable belief need not be *reasoned*; it need not be grounded in any inferential process, even when based on other beliefs.²⁸ And reasonable action need not be reasoned action. It need not be based on practical reasoning. The rationality and reasonableness of beliefs, desires, or actions depend on their being well grounded; their well-groundedness is a matter of the kind of basis they have, not of the process by which they are arrived at. God never *has* to reason.

* * *

Experience is the raw material of human life.²⁹ But, unlike any ordinary fabric, it is neither decorative nor instrumental. It is constitutive. In its absence there would be not the statuesque forms that have inspired artists and sculptors, but a naked substratum.

Fabric can also serve as a metaphor for the organicity of goodness. Fabrics may have indefinitely many patterns or none at all. Some patterns are coherent, some not. But coherence alone is not enough for goodness. Good design is more than coherence, and even good design is enhanced by good content: by the colors and shapes whose presence and relationships yield beauty.

Even the best fabric can be indelibly stained or permanently discolored. It may be sullied by dirty hands, as well as smoothed by caring ones. It may be loosely woven and easily frayed, or tightly sewn and impossible to rip. It may befit its wearer and delight its viewer. If it fits badly, we can alter it; if it is torn, we can repair it. We can hold it up to the mirror of self-scrutiny, expose it to the appraisal of our peers, and test it in heavy wind and deep water.

Philosophy is central for achieving the widest and deepest self-scrutiny. It articulates and refines our methods of analysis. It discerns the structure of our worldviews—their foundations and their modes of construction from their base—and it probes the solidity of its own grounding and the strength of its support of its own superstructure. Philosophy draws on experience, but need not accept its content at face value: neither the deliverances of the senses nor even the intuitions of reason. There are rigorous rational criteria that guide philosophical inquiry: above all, the constitutive intellectual standards in the realms of perception, reason, introspective thought, and memory, interacting with the socially constituted standards of testimony, dialectic, and experimental inquiry.

Theoretical rationality is a kind of responsiveness to experience, a responsiveness governed, however unself-consciously, by these interconnected standards. But experience provides raw material for the will as well as for the intellect. There are rewarding experiences—especially the multifarious pleasures of human relationships, of the intellect, of the aesthetic sensibilities, of reaching spiritual heights; and there are aversive experiences—particularly those of suffering: the agony of injury, the grief at love’s loss, the anxieties and fears brought by a threatening world. Desire should be directed toward rewarding experiences and away from aversive ones. Practical rationality is a kind of responsiveness to these grounds of the good and the bad. It is a responsiveness in which, often enough, rational desires rise to intentions and thereby inform the will. When theoretical and practical rationality are well integrated in us, we are globally rational. And when our rationality is informed by a deep enough knowledge of others, inspired by curiosity, and blessed by imagination, we are capable of successfully pursuing both truth and goodness.³⁰

Notes

1. Intellectual experience must be understood broadly, to include any kind of abstract thinking but also our considering propositions and our making inferences. Memory is an indirect source of foundational beliefs whenever one retains a belief having lost from memory propositions (“premises”) on which it was originally inferentially based. Note too that not all foundations—cognitive or physical—need be built upon.

2. The crucial distinction here is between structurally and episodically inferential beliefs. This distinction is made and elaborated in “Structural Justification,” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 24 (1991): 473–92, reprinted in *The Structure of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). It is developed further in *Epistemology*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), chap. 6.

3. For a discussion of Reid’s view of testimony and an indication of why testimony-based beliefs are plausibly considered noninferential, see my “The Epistemology of Testimony and the Ethics of Belief,” in *God and the Ethics of Belief*, ed. Andrew Chignell and Andrew Dole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

4. In *The Architecture of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), I have criticized this stereotype of foundationalism in detail and indicated why it is not even adequate to plausible versions of the foundationalism of Aristotle and Descartes, though more nearly to theirs than to mine. See esp. chaps. 1–2.

5. This distinction is developed and defended in my “Dispositional Beliefs and Dispositions to Believe,” *Nous* 29 (1994): 419–34.

6. In a wide, structural sense of the term, all practical inferences are instrumental: even reasoning from a desire for a pleasant respite playing the piano and a belief that playing it now would be pleasant, to a conclusion favoring that action is instrumental if we consider the belief to express a constitutive means (as opposed to an ordinary instrumental means) to the desired pleasant break. Playing it now partly *constitutes* the desired end, hence it is not an ordinary means to it.

7. See Kant’s *Groundwork* for an identification of “its willing” as intrinsic to the will.

8. Only normally because rationality is a capacity concept and I do not assume that a person must have experiences yielding the “cartographic” justification or knowledge in question, nor am I ruling out the possibility of a certain kind of Cartesian demon massively influencing its victims.

9. If, as I assume, what we believe to be impossible (logically or at least nomically) we cannot want, but only wish could be, then the kind of desire in question would not occur, given a belief to this effect. Granted, the counterpart wish could have much in common with the desire. Just how it would differ is a matter for reflection that may not yet have been done.

10. Extensive critical appraisal of instrumentalism is provided in my “The Naturalization of Practical Reason: Humean Instrumentalism and the Normative Authority of Desire,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10, no. 3 (2002): 235–63.

11. The rationality in question is *prima facie*; I am speaking of defeasible rationality and will also presuppose defeasibility in speaking of justification. For convenience I will at times drop ‘*prima facie*’ hereinafter.

12. Two comments are needed here. First, the object may be only instrumentally good, but this is still a kind of goodness implying that there *is* something intrinsically good (on the assumption that instrumental goodness is not merely effectiveness as a means—something the expression “good as a means” does not rule out). Second, there *is* an objective sense in which a desire is successful when its object is merely realized; but this is not the kind of success analogous to truth as believed in the way I have in mind: being known or believed with a certain kind of justification. (The analogy is developed in some detail in *Architecture*.)

13. Aristotle says, “We call that which is pursued as an end in itself more final than an end which is pursued for the sake of something else.” See *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1962). I take Aristotle to be referring not to mere pursuit but to a kind that is “proper.” The idea of the self-sufficiency of happiness (the good), in virtue of which it makes life choiceworthy, is explicit in 1097b. Note that we can accept the idea that a life is choiceworthy in virtue of realizing intrinsic goods (and, overall, *the good*) and still question the idea—which I find plausible so far as it is clear—that the good cannot be sought for the sake of anything else.

14. Two points will add clarity here. First, we *can* view a painting instrumentally, say visually study it as a means to some further end, such as learning about the tastes of a friend; but this is not the way it is normally designed (or “supposed”) to be viewed. Second, the idea of the inherently good’s capacity for *contribution* to good lives should be taken broadly if we are to do full justice to the value of persons (a point not brought out in my earlier work on value). Persons (or, on a Cartesian view, minds) conceived as essential “substratal” subjects of experience, are a kind of *constitutive* contributor to good lives. They themselves may of course *also* be objects of intrinsically good experiences, including experiences of oneself.

15. Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias,” in *Seven Centuries of Verse*, ed. A. J. M. Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 362.

16. *Schadenfreude* is treated in my “Intrinsic Value and Reasons for Action,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2003): 323–27, reprinted in *Metaethics after Moore*, ed. T. Horgan and M. Timmons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). This paper also indicates how the

inherent value of an organic whole may be less than that of the sum of the inherent values of its parts or aspects.

17. Not all obligations, then, represent perfect duties; there are indeed things we ought to do, and perhaps in the widest sense have an obligation to do, that are not strictly duties at all, but represent the demands of what I call involuntary ideals. These points are discussed in my “Wrongs Within Rights,” *Philosophical Issues* 15 (2005): 121–39.

18. That there are moral experiences and that some of these are intrinsically good is argued in my “The Axiology of Moral Experience,” *Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 355–75.

19. I offer an explication of these prima facie obligations in *The Good in the Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. chap. 5.

20. I defend these points about self-evidence in my paper of that title in *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 205–28.

21. Some moral truths and certain epistemic and logical principles are included here. I suggest that in both categories there are some easily seen but not easy to internalize, some easy on both counts (such as certain very elementary logical truths), and others difficult on both. What constitutes internalization deserves analysis; here I will only say that internalization admits of degree and it affects the guidance of thought and action.

22. For an ethical theory on which the “positive duties,” such as that of beneficence, are represented as ideals rather than obligations, see Bernard Gert, *Common Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

23. I have provided an account of the motivational power of moral judgment in “Moral Judgment and Reasons for Action,” in *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). This paper also addresses the conception of the practical power of intellect and supports the distinction suggested in the text between executive power—which I take to entail the power to produce intentions—with the weaker notion of motivational power, which is a matter of producing desires. I am also implicitly distinguishing in the text between an independent power and one that a “faculty” has in cooperation with another.

24. From *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson’s Poems*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Co., 1961), 278.

25. For an earlier version of this example and a theoretical account of the possibility of rational action against one’s better judgment, see my “Weakness of Will and Rational Action,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 3 (1990): 270–81.

26. Chapters 6 and 7 of *Architecture* explain how a life may be such that certain a priori principles do not become part of a person’s belief system and how a life might be narrow enough to make it possible not to have moral reasons (this would not entail, of course, lacking reasons for “moral actions,” in the weak sense of ‘actions required or permitted by sound moral standards’).

27. Relativity of various kinds is treated in detail in chap. 7 of *Architecture*. Reasonableness and, in relation to it, the status of moral reasons relative to other kinds, is treated in chap. 6.

28. I have argued in many places for the possibility that a belief or action *for a reason* need not be reasoned. See, e.g., *Practical Reasoning and Ethical Decision* (London: Routledge, 2006).

29. In one way this metaphor is misleading: one can’t “take off,” one’s experience, except by sleep or by death, and in those cases one cannot observe the result.

30. This essay has benefited from comments and discussion at Baylor University, Santa Clara University, University College Cork, and the University of Notre Dame. Given its wide sweep, I cannot acknowledge all those colleagues and students whose responses to it or ideas in it have benefited me, but I should particularly mention comments from and discussions with John Broome, Mario De Caro, Bernard Gert, John Greco, Alfred R. Mele, Derek Parfit, Bruce Russell, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Ernest Sosa, Mark Timmons, and Raimo Tuomela.