

**Robert Audi:**  
*The Architecture of Reason*  
(2)

Chapter 3

Action, Belief and Desire

Belief  $\leftarrow$  world

action  $\rightarrow$  world

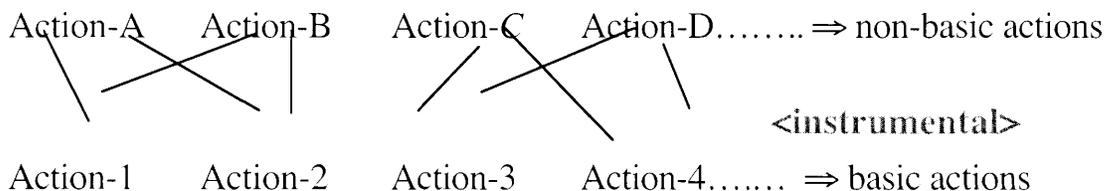
Belief	Action
Have truth value	Have no truth value
Are not "events"	Are events
Have intentional objects	Have no intentional objects

The domain of practical reason is above all that of action, and the theory of practical reason must clarify rational action.

§ Several Analogies between Beliefs and Actions

[1]. The hierarchy of action  $\leftrightarrow$  the hierarchy of belief

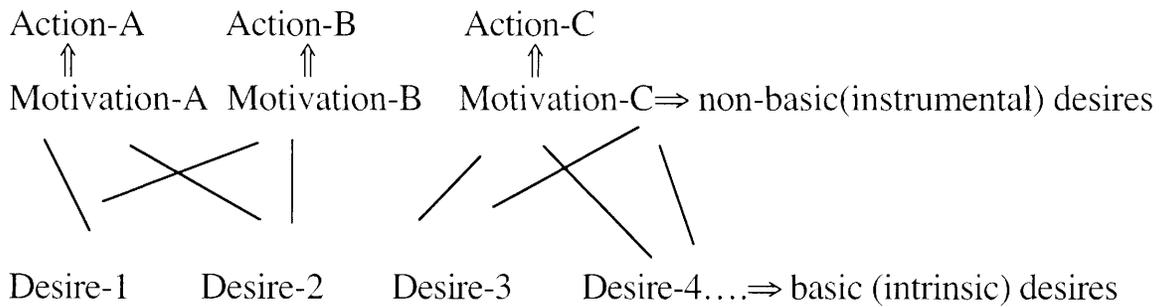
Just as (normally) beliefs not themselves grounded in basic sources rest on other beliefs, so actions not performed in a kind of basic way rest on other actions.... The structure of action is hierarchical: at any given time when we act, there is something we do basically, and everything we do non-basically we do by doing one or another thing basically.



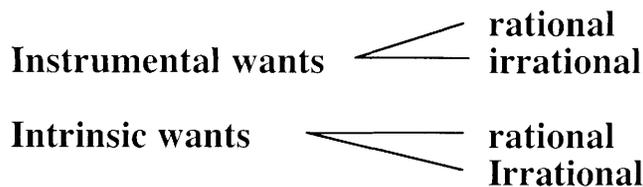
[2]. Intentional Action  $\leftrightarrow$  Inferential Belief

Some actions are based on motivational elements that express reasons for them, just as some beliefs are based on others that express supporting reasons for them.

At any given time, my action is ultimately grounded in one or more of my intrinsic desires.



Much as an inferential belief is not justified if it is (wholly) based on another belief that is not justified, an action is not rational if it is (wholly) grounded in a desire that fails to provide a good reason.



*Q:* Are there rational intrinsic desires?

It is difficult to conceive a rational person who *has* desires, but none that are both rational and intrinsic.

### [3]. Rationality Constraints on Both Reasons

Practical reason is like theoretical reason both in having a psychologically foundational structure and in related normative respects.

Just as a non-inferentially justified belief may have only *prima facie* justification, a rational intrinsic desire may be only *prima facie* (and defeasibly) rational.

### [4]. Defeasibility

Just as epistemological foundationalism is committed only to the possibility of non-inferentially, but defeasibly, justified belief, its practical counterpart is committed only to the possibility of non-intrinsically, yet defeasibly, rational desires. And just as one cannot in general read off the rationality of a person's belief from the content of the belief, one cannot in general read off the rationality of a person's desire from the object of that desire.

## [5] Content

A belief has proposition as its content, and some contents makes the belief rational.

**Q:** What kind of content would make an intrinsic desire rational?

- \_\_\_ desire for pleasure
- \_\_\_ desire to avoid pain, ...

## § Superstructure of Practical Reason

**Q:** How are the superstructure elements linked to the foundational ones?

\_\_\_ Belief is the crucial connective tissue that links instrumental desires to intrinsic desires on which they are based.

§ Epistemological Coherentism [Theoretical Reason] ↔ Instrumentalism [Practical Reason]

For instrumentalism,

1. There are no *rational* intrinsic desires.
2. We do have intrinsic desire, but they are not by themselves "rational."
3. Our extrinsic desires can be deemed rational, and their rationality derives from how well their realization would, on our beliefs, contribute to satisfying our intrinsic desires.
4. The rationality of actions is subordinate to sheer intrinsic desire and may be conceived as governed only by *coherence* criteria.
5. Defeat by an incoherence might render an action irrational relative to one's intrinsic desires when it is performed instead of an alternative that would serve them better.

For example: Hume