

Rinard: There are practical reasons for belief (and epistemic reasons are just practical reasons). **Kelly and Cohen:** There are no practical reasons for belief (and the only reasons for belief are epistemic ones).

A | RINARD

Argument: *the initial case in favor of the view that reasons for belief are practical, and against the view that reasons for belief are epistemic, is that the former, but not the latter, does the following two things:*

- (1) *it makes for a theoretically pleasing symmetry between reasons for belief and reasons for action, and*
- (2) *it gives the intuitively correct verdicts in the four cases described.*

Purported examples of genuine practical reasons for belief:

1. Claim: one reason that counts in favor of believing you'll win the race is the fact that having this belief would boost your performance.
2. Claim: one reason that counts in favor of believing you'll survive is the fact that having this belief would increase your chances of survival.
3. Claim: one reason that counts in favor of believing in an afterlife is the fact that this belief would give you great peace and comfort.
4. Claim: one reason that counts in favor of having faith in humanity is that doing so would give you strength to carry on important work.

Note: Rinard's position is that all reasons for belief are practical (including the epistemic ones),¹ and Kelly and Cohen's position is that all reasons for belief are epistemic (and that the epistemic is not a subset of the practical).

B | KELLY AND COHEN

Argument: *The best explanation for why apparently rational people do not count as irrational in virtue of what would otherwise be egregious failures to respond to "practical reasons for belief" is that there are no such reasons.*

Examples of apparently rational people failing to respond to "practical reasons for belief," and seeming not irrational:

1. *A Cruel Game:* A cruel but whimsical despot flips a fair coin and quickly covers it with his hand before anyone can see how it landed. He then threatens to torture you unless you believe that it landed tails. (intended verdict: you are *not irrational* if you fail to believe that the coin landed tails. You are also not irrational if you are shown the coin, and see that it came up heads, and do fail to believe that the coin landed tails.)

1. in my reading, but you may disagree

2. *Unfaithful Partner*: An unsuspecting spouse happily believes that her partner is faithful. She then walks in on her partner in the act with another person. Seeing this, she immediately becomes completely confident that her partner is cheating. (intended verdict: spouse is *not irrational* for not continuing to think that her partner is faithful.)

Further Argument for the *Rationality Argument*:

1. If there are practical reasons for belief, then believers who are aware of their practical reasons for belief would count as irrational to the extent that their beliefs fail to reflect those reasons.
2. But believers whose beliefs perfectly reflect their evidence do not count as irrational, even if their beliefs fail to reflect their "practical reasons for belief," and they are aware of the relevant facts.
3. Therefore, there are no practical reasons for belief.

Other Arguments:

1. **Additional Reasons**: There is no need to posit an additional category of "practical reasons for belief" to explain intuitions: all we need is practical reasons to *bring about* beliefs.
2. **Theoretical Simplicity**: Other propositional attitudes, like intention and desire, also seem to admit of non-pragmatic rational evaluative standards. The pragmatist threatens to flatten all these sorts of evaluations into practical ones.

C | RINARD REPLY

1. **Reply to the Rationality Argument**: agents are not irrational for failing to do things that they cannot do, and in Kelly and Cohen's cases, the agents cannot form the relevant beliefs. (If they could form them, they would be irrational for not forming them).
2. **Reply to "Additional Reasons" Argument**: (1) In general we are fine with having practical reasons at multiple stages in a causal chain. In the belief case, it can be *because* we have a practical reason to believe that we have a practical reason to bring about the belief. So the practical reason to believe is not otiose. (2) It's actually Kelly and Cohen who posit a realm of unnecessary "epistemic reasons." All we need is evidential support and practical reasons.
3. **Reply to "Theoretical Simplicity"**: In cases where you *do* have control over preference or intention, then you also do have practical reasons for preferring or intending. So the parallel pragmatist argument *does* apply in these cases, contra Kelly and Cohen.