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## Robert Audi, REASONS, RIGHTS, AND VALUES

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Reasons, Rights, and Values*, by Robert Audi. Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. x + 301. \$34.99 (paperback).

RYAN W. DAVIS, Brigham Young University

Robert Audi's *Reasons, Rights, and Values* articulates an expansive, unified view of moral philosophy, beginning with the nature of reasons and extending through normative ethics to first order questions of social and political philosophy. The chapters comprising the volume are selected from journals and other collections, collectively spanning the last decade or so. *Reasons, Rights, and Values* organizes them in a way that helpfully illuminates the coherence and systematicity of Audi's significant contributions to practical philosophy. The book is divided into three parts of three or four chapters each, focusing in succession on reasons and rationality, obligation and virtue, and political philosophy—notably with an eye to the role of religion in politics. After a brief review of the book's themes, I'll raise a few concluding questions about the argument that might be of particular interest to philosophers of religion.

The first chapter introduces several categories of practical reasons. Audi says we have "adequate" reason to perform an action when there is a practical reason favoring it, and no such reason opposing it (15). If it would be irrational not to perform an action, then there is "compelling" reason in favor of it (15). Practical reasoning is analogous to theoretical reasoning in that a reasoner generally moves from purposive and instrumental premises to practical conclusions (which specify the action to be done). When the premises make it as reasonable to believe the practical conclusion as its opposite, then the reasoning meets what Audi calls a "minimal adequacy pattern" (23). If they would render it irrational not to draw the conclusion, the premises meet the "standard adequacy pattern" (23). This mode of reasoning from ends to means might evoke Kant's hypothetical imperative—an idea the chapter develops at length. One aim in elaborating this idea is to support the claim that hypothetical imperatives' normativity depends on the existence of a categorical imperative.



The next chapters advance an account of intrinsic value as a source of reasons. For Audi, experiences are the bearers of intrinsic value. It follows that only subjects capable of having experiences can be centers of intrinsic value, and so intrinsic value is mind-dependent. An object can have inherent value if the experience of it is intrinsically good. Reasons for action are tied directly to intrinsic value (and indirectly to inherent value). Contrary to some philosophers, such reasons need not always be understood as facts.

Audi is a well-known defender of the view that access to moral principles is available through intuition. Following Ross, Audi proposes principles of “justice and non-injury, of fidelity and veracity, of beneficence and self-improvement, of reparation and gratitude . . . and of liberty and respectfulness” (130). Some intuitions are self-evident, or non-inferentially justified. In such cases, simply understanding the proposition in question can be sufficient justification for believing it. Clarifying specifically moral concepts will include, at least in part, appeal to the Rossian principles. A puzzle for this project is how to unify the *prima facie* moral obligations this intuitionist strategy yields. In response, Audi appeals to the Kantian “Humanity Formula” of the categorical imperative. If the Humanity Formula is to be a “basic guide” to our moral judgments, it can inform our search for final moral obligations (150). Without prior moral inputs, the Humanity Formula shows that the Rossian principles are reasonable to accept. Given the intuitive appeal of the Rossian principles, the fact that the Humanity Formula can explain them in a unified way is, in turn, a source of abductive support for the Humanity Formula itself.

The Humanity Formula articulates both a negative standard (forbidding using persons as a means) and a positive one (that persons ought to be treated as ends). Audi interprets the negative standard to prohibit, *inter alia*, actions treating others in ways that show disregard for any “non-instrumental aspects” of the person (170). For example, one should not make an employee do something dangerous without any consideration of the employee’s welfare. We should also develop our characters in ways that cultivate a disposition to treat others as ends. Audi then proposes a series of principles for weighting the Rossian obligations. In general, if there is a conflict among *prima facie* obligations, but one action is better supported by the Humanity Formula, or one action better complies with multiple *prima facie* obligations, that can break the tie. Other weighting principles include aggregation, equality, priority of the worst off, etc. Particularly noteworthy, Audi forwards what he terms a “principle of secular rationale” (177–178), which places citizens under a *prima facie* obligation not to advocate for a law without adequate secular reason supporting it. This principle is supported by a “principle of tolerance,” forbidding proponents of coercion about some question to regard themselves as epistemically superior to proponents of liberty about that question (178).

The volume next addresses questions of moral virtue (chs. 7–8). One can, of course, do the right thing without the right reason—thereby failing to be virtuous. Audi discusses a variety of dimensions to virtue, which include motivation, among others. As Kant realized, it can be difficult to know one's own motivations, and we can also lack direct control over them. However, we do have means for resisting motivations, and so a kind of indirect or negative control.

Generally speaking, virtues are praiseworthy character traits, involving both cognitive and motivational aspects. Audi uses justice, generosity, and fidelity as examples. (Moral virtues are good in themselves, whereas non-moral virtues could be effective means to immoral projects.) A person can possess moral virtues even while holding certain kinds of skeptical views about morality. Even if I am skeptical about justice, I could still be robustly and non-instrumentally disposed to provide the goods associated with justice to other moral agents. Audi sketches how virtues could provide guidance in action and in identifying morally good persons. Rather than relying on the question, "What would a virtuous person do?" Audi recommends a "narrative approach," envisioning how various answers would fit into the unfolding of an imagined or historical case (218–219).

The final part of the book (chs. 9–11) turn to questions of specific moral and political rights. Audi identifies rights as fundamental protections of agency, such that violations of rights typically impair or limit one's option set in an objectionable way. Again working with a broadly Kantian system, Audi distinguishes between rights that entail a permission to punish or enforce from those that do not. Sometimes, the fact that an action would treat another as an end does not entail that the agent has a right that the action be performed. This creates space for moral failures that are also "morally protected" (240). In still other cases, a moral ideal might be voluntary; acting on such ideals is good, but optional and supererogatory.

With this conceptual background, Audi turns to two cases of disputes about rights. The first is about science education in a pluralistic democratic society, which includes religious members. At issue: can evolutionary biology be taught in a way that respects religious members of the society? Audi considers whether the "scientific habit of mind"—roughly, a disposition to seek evidence before accepting hypotheses—is rightly associated with a kind of non-theistic naturalism (257). Although one might suspect there is some tension between theism and a disposition of this sort, Audi notes that the conflict can be managed with resources internal to religion. Many religious traditions provide reasons in favor of scientific study of the natural world. Borrowing Audi's terminology from Part I, we might say that religious traditions can understand this investigation as inherently good—a candidate for a choiceworthy human pursuit. Likewise, one could understand theological claims as, themselves, amenable to testing. So it is a mistake to see a deep contradiction between scientific method or disposition on one hand, and religion on the other.

Audi favors general principles according to which governments should allow free exercise of religion and maintain neutrality among different religious groups. Here he again applies the principle of secular rationale. For example, a high school teacher should not introduce materials (at least in a coercive way) without meeting this criterion. Audi's principle has attracted some criticism in the philosophical literature. Objectors worry that the principle demands that religious citizens make a mental distinction between religious and secular considerations that, internal to their own view, might not be well-supported. And they fear that it misunderstands how religious citizens think about their lives, which does not easily allow for a switch to thinking in a secular mode. Audi declines to cede ground to these concerns. He maintains that one can think of one's religion as "concerning my whole existence" and still differentiate between religious and secular reasons (269). Indeed, some religions may even provide grounds—like respect for other persons—for treating such differentiation as a virtue.

The volume's final chapter takes up competing values of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Defenders of the former ideal regard moral reasons relating to members of their national group as having some measure of priority, while defenders of the latter ideal are concerned with humanity in general. In the end, Audi is skeptical about the prospects for a "perfectly general answer" to the debate between these alternatives (296). One can give priority to one's own group and still promote general human interests.

As this overview hopefully illustrates, *Reasons, Rights, and Values* is a wide ranging but coherent volume. To underscore the latter virtue, I will raise two questions that draw on multiple aspects of the work. First, what exactly grounds the principle of secular rationale? Audi appeals to the idea of respect for persons, one interpretation of which is given in his principle of tolerance: we should regard political opponents as our epistemic peers. This seems like generally sensible advice. If we want to coerce other people, we would do well to think of ourselves as in their justificatory debt. Nevertheless, it seems that we sometimes are in position to know that another agent is *not* our epistemic peer. Perhaps we can see that they inhabit a perverse epistemic environment, or perhaps we can observe from their lack of compliance with moral or practical principles that they are failing to apprehend what Audi might agree are self-evident moral truths? If we are in a position to know moral truths (as Audi allows), and another rational agent with the same evidence comes to deny a known moral truth, then it seems we can infer this agent is making a mistake. They might not be our epistemic peer, after all. Perhaps there is no reason, secular or otherwise, that such an agent might actually accept as a justification. Why suppose, in such cases, that we are better respecting them by offering a secular reason, rather than a religious one?

Second, consider again the final chapter's moderate position within the debate between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Why does it follow

from Audi's theory that we cannot say something more general between these two candidate values? After all, we can look back to Audi's augmented list of Rossian principles to find that no virtue of patriotism or loyalty is listed among them. And this does not seem to be mere oversight. It is at least plausible to suppose that—say—justice and non-injury could be accepted as moral principles from a mere conceptual understanding of morality. However, it seems significantly less plausible that privileging co-nationals above other persons could follow from a mere investigation of moral concepts. But let us be generous in assuming that somehow, we could follow Audi's procedure and place a kind of patriotic loyalty on the list. In that case, how should we adjudicate between a *prima facie* cosmopolitan duty (supported by our obligation to beneficence) and the *prima facie* patriotic duty? Among his weighting principles, Audi includes a principle to defer to the greater number of affected persons. In most normal cases, it seems that this would support favoring the cosmopolitan position above the nationalist one.

I raise these questions to draw appreciation to Audi's work as much as criticism of it. My suggestion is that the theoretical resources he provides might be called on to help answer questions in more ways than the volume considers explicitly. Given the continuing importance of debates about global politics and religion in political society, the arguments offered in *Reasons, Rights, and Values* provide a contribution of ongoing philosophical value.

*An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, by Thomas H. McCall. IVP Academic, 2015. Pp. 183. \$22.00 (paper).

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As a named entity, analytic theology has only been around since the 2009 Oxford University Press publication of the edited volume *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, which introduced the phenomenon to the academic world. However, the practice of utilizing contemporary analytic philosophy for theological purposes stretches back at least as far as the 1960s and '70s in the pioneering work of the likes of Alvin Plantinga, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, and William Alston, among others. Despite a slew of articles and introductions over the past few years that describe and offer apologia for analytic theology, there have been two lacuna amidst these treatments. First, analytic theology has lacked a book-length, one-stop shop that surveys what analytic theology is, is not, and could be. Although the 2009 book edited by Oliver

