

## Problems for Foley's Accounts of Rational Belief and Responsible Belief

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In this paper, we argue that Richard Foley's account of rational belief faces an as yet undefeated objection, then try to repair one of Foley's two failed replies to that objection. In §§I-III, we explain Foley's accounts of **all-things-considered rational belief** and **responsible belief**, along with his replies to two pressing objections to those accounts—what we call the **Irrelevance Objection** (to Foley's account of rational belief) and the **Insufficiency Objection** (to his account of responsible belief). In §IV, we argue that both of Foley's replies to the Irrelevance Objection fail as currently developed, and raise the question whether either of his replies can be salvaged. In §V, we invoke cases involving religious beliefs (broadly construed) to show that one of Foley's failed replies to the Irrelevance Objection conflicts with his reply to the Insufficiency Objection; and we provide reason to think Foley should resolve this conflict in the latter's favor. We conclude in §VI by suggesting a way to repair Foley's other failed reply to the Irrelevance Objection, yielding an improved overall defense of Foley's accounts of rational and responsible belief. We look forward to discussing the important question to what extent this improved overall defense succeeds.<sup>1</sup>

### I

Let's start with Foley's account of **all-things-considered rational belief** (cf. 2008: 49, 2005a: 318, 2001: 220):

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity's sake, we here restrict ourselves to interacting mainly with just three of Foley's numerous recent publications: 2008, 2005a, and 2005b. These three pieces helpfully summarize views Foley has been developing and defending since (at least) his 1987 book *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality*. But while we'll be interacting mainly with just the three aforementioned publications, our paper is informed by a broader range of Foley's work. So far as we can tell, none of our arguments hang on simplifications Foley makes in the three indicated publications for purposes of concisely conveying his distinctive and influential epistemological views.

**Rational Belief (RAB):** It's **rational all-things-considered** for S to believe P *if and only if* it's epistemically rational for S to think that believing P would effectively promote her total goal set.<sup>2</sup>

Note two things about RAB. First, the concept *epistemic rationality* in the analysis is a target analyzandum of recent work under headings like 'the structure and nature of epistemic justification'. Writes Foley: "Foundationalists, coherentists, and others have different views about what properties a belief must have in order to be epistemically rational" (2005a: 317; cf. 2008: 48).

Second, RAB has it that a wide range of nonepistemic considerations help determine whether it's rational for you to believe P (cf. 2005a: 316-7, 2008: 48-9). That's because a wide range of nonepistemic considerations help determine whether it's epistemically rational for you to think that believing P would effectively promote your total goal set. E.g., the consideration that simply believing you'll succeed probabilifies your succeeding (no matter the character of your relevant evidence) helps determine whether it's epistemically rational for you to think that believing you'll succeed would effectively promote your total goal set (which includes your succeeding).

Now for Foley's account of **responsible belief** (cf. 2008: 52, 2005a: 322, 2001: 223):

**Responsible Belief (REB):** S holds belief B **responsibly** *if and only if* (i) S holds B and (ii) it's epistemically rational for S to think his overall procedures with respect to B have been acceptable given his total goal set and relevant constraints (e.g., limitations on S's time and energy).

Foley makes two important claims about REB. First, REB (correctly, as Foley sees it) assimilates responsible *belief* to responsible *action* and related notions. Writes Foley (2008: 55):

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<sup>2</sup> Including the present-tense epistemic goal of now believing truths and not now believing falsehoods, as well as longer-term intellectual and nonintellectual (e.g., moral, prudential, professional, social, political) goals.

Understanding [responsible] belief in this way has the... advantage of making the concept of [responsible] belief closely analogous with the concepts of [responsible] behavior, decisions, plans, and so on.

Second, the account's analyzandum is a concept we employ in everyday evaluations of people's beliefs and related attitudes (cf. 2005b: 338).

We'll now explain two pressing objections to RAB and REB that Foley considers in recent work.

## II

We'll call the objection to RAB the **Irrelevance Objection**. As we've seen, RAB has it that whether a belief is rational depends in part on a wide range of nonepistemic considerations. As Foley himself notes, though, the thesis that a belief's rationality status depends (even in part) on nonepistemic considerations is *prima facie* implausible (2005a: 316; cf. 2008: 46-7):<sup>3</sup>

...[A]s a rule, in assessing what it is rational for you to believe, we would regard as irrelevant [nonepistemic considerations like] the fact... that were you to believe P, it would make you feel more secure.

In the following passage, Tom Kelly helpfully brings out just how intuitive is the Irrelevance Objector's claim that nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a *belief's* (as opposed to an *action's*) rationality status (2002: 165):

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<sup>3</sup> This may go without saying, but it's important to distinguish carefully between the (uncontroversial) claim that *belief B can be assessed from nonepistemic viewpoints* and the (controversial) claim that *nonepistemic facts help determine whether B is rational*. In particular, it's important to note that the "assessability" claim doesn't entail (at least, not obviously) the "determination" claim. Writes Tom Kelly (2002: 164): "It is uncontroversial, I take it, that one can evaluate one's own beliefs practically as well as epistemically: an athlete, for example, might realize that holding optimistic beliefs about her abilities would result in better performances than holding pessimistic beliefs about her abilities. More controversial is the suggestion that a realization of this sort might make a difference to what it is rational for the athlete to believe about her abilities."

In contrast [to the rationality of an action], the rationality of a belief seems to depend not on its expected consequences but rather on its *epistemic status*. Our paradigm of an irrational belief is not that of a belief which predictably leads to the frustration of the believer's goals, but rather that of a belief which is held in the face of strong disconfirming evidence. An athlete who has an overwhelming amount of evidence that she is unlikely to do well, and bases her belief that she is unlikely to do well on that evidence, would seem to qualify as a rational believer—even if her rational belief frustrates, in foreseeable and predictable ways, her goal of doing well. (Indeed, in such circumstances her rationality would seem to be part of her problem.)

Defending RAB from the Irrelevance Objection involves (at a minimum) offering a plausible error theory for the widespread sense that nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status.

Let's turn to the objection to REB, which we'll call the **Insufficiency Objection**.<sup>4</sup> The Insufficiency Objector argues that REB's right-hand-side is not a sufficient condition for responsible belief. The argument runs as follows: Suppose S forms belief, B, *irresponsibly* at t1 (maybe S failed to properly gather and/or process evidence bearing on B). By a (perhaps much) later time t2, it has become epistemically rational for S to think that her overall treatment of (irresponsibly formed) B has been acceptable given her total goal set and relevant limitations. REB entails that, at t2, S holds B responsibly. But, compatibly with our assumptions so far, we can suppose that S has never gained any new epistemic reasons or support for B. The Insufficiency Objector now claims that

**if** S forms B irresponsibly at t1 *and* gains no new epistemic support for B from t1 to t2,  
**then** S still holds B irresponsibly at t2.

Contrary to REB, then, S holds B irresponsibly at t2—notwithstanding the fact that it's then epistemically rational for S to think her overall treatment of B has been acceptable given her total goal set and relevant limitations.

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<sup>4</sup> Foley considers this criticism in his 2005b; it's inspired by objections Wolterstorff presses in his 2005.

We'll now explain Foley's defenses of RAB and REB from (respectively) the Irrelevance and Insufficiency Objections.

### III

Foley offers two replies to the Irrelevance Objection to RAB (2008: 49-51; cf. 2005a: 318-20):

#### **Reply 1** (2008: 49)

Part of the solution is that our discussions and debates concerning what it is rational to believe usually take place in a context of trying to convince someone, perhaps even ourselves, to believe something. But insofar as our aim is to persuade, introducing nonepistemic goals is ordinarily ineffective. [...] Thus, insofar as we are interested in persuading someone to believe something, there is a straightforward explanation as to why we ordinarily are not concerned with [nonepistemic] reasons for belief. Namely, it is normally pointless to cite them because they are not the kind of reasons that generate belief.

#### **Reply 2** (2008: 50)

There is a second and complementary explanation for why in general we do not deliberate about the [nonepistemic] reasons we have for believing something. It is ordinarily redundant to do so, because ordinarily our overriding pragmatic reason is to develop and maintain an accurate and comprehensive overall stock of beliefs. [...] Most decisions have to be made without the luxury of extensive evidence gathering, consultations, or deliberations. We are instead forced to draw upon our existing stock of beliefs, and if that stock is either small or inaccurate, we increase the likelihood of making unfortunate decisions. So ordinarily the beliefs that are likely to do the best overall job of promoting the total constellation of our goals are those that are both comprehensive and accurate. [...] But then, since epistemically rational beliefs are by definition beliefs that are rational for us insofar as our goal is to have accurate and comprehensive beliefs, it is ordinarily rational, all things considered..., to believe those propositions that are epistemically rational for us.

Combining Replies 1 and 2, Foley's overall defense of RAB from the Irrelevance Objection is essentially this: Our common knowledge that citing nonepistemic reasons for holding a belief is both ineffective and redundant—and so, doubly pointless—well explains, *compatibly with RAB*, the Irrelevance Objector's key claim that “we can usually safely ignore [nonepistemic] reasons in our deliberations about what to believe” (2008: 50).

Turning to the Insufficiency Objection, Foley (2005b: 339-40) replies by suggesting counterexamples to its linchpin:

**if** S forms belief B irresponsibly at t1 *and* gains no new epistemic support for B from t1 to t2, **then** S still holds B irresponsibly at t2.

Foley suggests counterexamples involving beliefs that have had (what he calls) “snowballing effects” as they've been held over time. We'll need to quote Foley at some length here (2005b: 339-40; cf. 1993: 111-2):

...[I]t can be responsible for me to go on believing [a] proposition even though my belief was originally acquired irresponsibly. This can be the case because the evidence of the original sloppiness has been lost with time, but it can also be the case... that my overall treatment of the issue has begun to look less inadequate with time. Even if I was sloppy in acquiring a belief, if the belief leads to no significant practical difficulties or theoretical anomalies, the relevance of the original sloppy treatment may be diluted over time... simply because the original sloppiness seems less and less problematic when viewed in the context of my overall history with the belief. Like people, irresponsible beliefs tend to become respectable with age as long as they don't cause serious problems.

Often enough there is even a self-fulfilling mechanism at work in these cases. The belief that was originally irresponsible may itself help to generate other opinions that help to undermine the suspicions about it. This isn't an especially unusual phenomenon, however. Whenever issues of rationality and related notions are at stake, phenomena of this kind tend to occur. Even if you have irrationally chosen some course of action over others that would have been better alternatives, this course of action can become rational for you at a later time just by virtue of your having stuck with it. [...] Actions can have

snowballing effects; they can engender subsequent actions that create momentum which makes it increasingly unreasonable to reconsider the original ill-chosen course of action. So too beliefs can have snowballing effects; they can engender other beliefs, the collective weight of which may make it increasingly unreasonable to reconsider your original belief, even if it was sloppily acquired.

Here, Foley defends REB from the Insufficiency Objection by invoking the following kind of case: While a given belief of yours is initially irresponsible and epistemically irrational, over time the belief becomes so central to your belief system and has such an impact on your behavior (decisions, actions, plans, etc.) that by a (perhaps much) later time you qualify as holding the belief responsibly—despite the fact you never gained any new epistemic reasons or support for the belief.

Examples involving religious beliefs specifically—and “big picture” or “worldview” commitments more generally—strike us as realistic instances of the kind of case Foley’s defense of REB invokes. Consider, e.g., a subject, Sam, who in his early twenties brings it about that he holds certain orthodox Christian beliefs simply in order to (say) impress a potential mate. When formed, these Christian beliefs are (let’s assume) irresponsible and epistemically irrational. Now fast forward to Sam’s mid-fifties, when his overall belief system and lifestyle have come to be built around those initially irresponsible and epistemically irrational Christian beliefs: Sam is now husband and father in a family of devout Christians, an elder at his Christian church, an active Christian missionary, CEO of a Christian charity, and so on. The above defense of REB seems to commit Foley to the following verdict about the case of Sam: *Even if* Sam has never gained any new epistemic reasons or support for his initially irresponsible and epistemically irrational Christian beliefs, Sam may well in his mid-fifties be holding those beliefs responsibly. Notably, REB itself seems to hold this implication for the case; for we can safely assume that, by the time Sam is in his mid-fifties, it has become epistemically rational for him to think his overall treatment of his orthodox Christian beliefs has been acceptable *given his total goal set and relevant limitations*.

Supposing cases of the sort Foley here invokes on REB’s behalf are possible, the Insufficiency Objection’s linchpin is false. That is, it’s possible that you now hold a particular belief responsibly *even though* the belief was initially irresponsible and epistemically irrational,

and you haven't gained any new epistemic reasons or support for it in the meantime. Indeed, Foley suggests that such cases are not only possible but (at least) fairly common. Recall this portion of the above quotation (2005b: 340):

Like people, irresponsible beliefs tend to become respectable with age as long as they don't cause serious problems. Often enough there is even a self-fulfilling mechanism at work in these cases. The belief that was originally irresponsible may itself help to generate other opinions that help to undermine the suspicions about it. This isn't an especially unusual phenomenon, however. Whenever issues of rationality and related notions are at stake, phenomena of this kind tend to occur.

If Foley's suggestion here is correct, then instances of a certain kind of counterexample to the Insufficiency Objection's linchpin—specifically: cases involving beliefs which, though initially irresponsible and epistemically irrational, over time become responsible despite remaining epistemically irrational—are not only possible but (at least) fairly common.

This section has explained Foley's defenses of RAB and REB from the Irrelevance and Insufficiency Objections. The next section will argue that, as currently developed, Foley's replies to the Irrelevance Objection (Replies 1 and 2) fail due to (what we'll call) "explanandum drift". Then, after raising the question whether either of those replies are salvageable, we'll argue in §V that Reply 2 conflicts with Foley's defense of REB from the Insufficiency Objection; we'll also provide reason to think Foley should resolve this conflict in the latter's favor. We'll close in §VI by suggesting a repair to Reply 1 that yields an improved overall defense of RAB and REB.

#### IV

Foley's defense of RAB from the Irrelevance Objection fails due to explanandum drift. The Irrelevance Objector makes trouble for RAB by citing the widespread sense that nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status. To defend RAB from this objection, one needs to provide an error theory for the indicated intuition, a plausible explanation of that thought according to which it's misleading or ill-founded. Unfortunately, though, Foley's target explanandum here *isn't* the widespread sense that nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a



belief's rationality status. As we've already seen, Foley's Replies 1 and 2 focus instead on a fact about our *conversational* (or, *dialectical*) *behavior*—viz., the fact that we typically ignore nonepistemic considerations (we treat them as if they're irrelevant) when discussing a belief's rationality status. Simply put, Foley's replies to the Irrelevance Objection subtly shift focus *from* a fact about how things seem to us (what we take to be or regard as true) *to* a fact about how we behave in certain conversational contexts.

We see the alleged explanandum drift take place in passages like the following (Foley 2008: 46-7):

...[W]hen considering what it is rational for S to believe about some matter P, we as a rule would regard it as irrelevant that were S to believe P, it would make her feel more secure, which we can assume might be one of her goals. More notoriously, in assessing whether it might be rational for S to believe in God, we would be unlikely to join Pascal in regarding as relevant the possibility that S might increase her chances of salvation by having such a belief.

So far, so good: Foley is focusing squarely on what we *take to be* or *regard as* relevant to a belief's rationality status. Unfortunately, the passage continues as follows:

But why is this? Why do we ordinarily treat the potential practical benefits of belief as irrelevant in assessing what it is rational for someone to believe?

Here, Foley conflates a

**how-it-seems fact:** *it seems true to us* that nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status

with a

**how-we-behave fact:** *we behave as if* nonepistemic considerations are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status.

In developing Replies 1 and 2, Foley focuses exclusively on the “behavior” fact, providing an interesting explanation of it that’s compatible with RAB. But defending RAB requires explaining away the “intuition” fact too. And unfortunately, Foley’s (correct, let’s just grant) explanation of the behavior fact doesn’t also explain the intuition fact.

On the one hand, Foley’s explanans—viz., the fact that we know it’s pointless to cite nonepistemic reasons for holding a belief when trying to convince someone of the belief’s rationality—doesn’t *directly* explain the intuition fact. In general, there’s no obvious tight connection between

(i) knowing it’d be pointless to cite consideration C in order to convince someone that belief B has property P

and

(ii) regarding C as irrelevant to B’s having P.

Indeed, we think it’s (at least) fairly common for facts of form (i) to hold absent facts of form (ii). A “philosophical” example: You’re talking with someone who’s worried no one knows there’s an external world. You know it’d be pointless to cite the fact that you know you have hands in order to convince your interlocutor that at least *you* know there’s an external world. Accordingly, you will (in this context) treat your knowledge that you have hands as if it’s irrelevant to your knowledge there’s an external world. Still, you may all the while know—and so, think it true—that your knowledge you have hands is in fact highly relevant to your knowledge there’s an external world (perhaps you know that the latter is based on the former, in “Moorean” fashion).

On the other hand, Foley’s explanans doesn’t *indirectly* explain the intuition fact by explaining the behavior fact. For the behavior fact clearly doesn’t explain the intuition fact. Indeed, supposing there’s an explanatory relation between these facts, it’d seem that the intuition fact explains the behavior fact. That is, (at least part of) what explains the fact that we ignore nonepistemic reasons for holding a belief when debating its rationality status is our intuition that the former are irrelevant to the latter.

As currently developed, then, Foley's defense of RAB fails due to its subtle shift of focus from the "how-it-seems" fact to the "how-we-behave" fact. Question: Can either of Replies 1 and 2 be revised so as to yield a promising reply to the Irrelevance Objection? In what follows, we'll take two steps toward answering this important question. The first step will be to argue that Foley should jettison Reply 2 because it's incompatible with his defense of REB from the Insufficiency Objection (§V). The second step will be to suggest a way to salvage Reply 1 (§VI).

## V

Foley should drop Reply 2 to the Irrelevance Objection because it's incompatible with his (successful, we think) defense of REB from the Insufficiency Objection. To begin to see the conflict between Foley's defense of REB and Reply 2—whose key claim, remember, is that "although what it is rational to believe, all things considered, in principle can be at odds with what it is epistemically rational to believe, in practice this is rare" (2008: 51)—, recall this inference at the heart of Reply 2 (2008: 50):

It is ordinarily redundant to [consider whatever nonepistemic reasons we may have for holding a given belief], because ordinarily our overriding pragmatic reason is to develop and maintain an accurate and comprehensive overall stock of beliefs.

Now focus on Foley's premise that, on balance, pragmatic considerations typically favor your having a belief system that's comprehensive and accurate. We think this premise is impugned by Foley's defense of REB, which—in emphasizing the considerable benefits of retaining beliefs that have "snowballed" over time—serves to highlight "[t]he advantages, theoretical and otherwise, of having a *stable* belief system" (Foley 1993: 112, our emphasis). In light of the point that you typically have strong prudential reason to have a *stable* belief system—which isn't equivalent, of course, to having a *comprehensive and accurate* belief system—, it's at best unclear whether (as Foley's premise has it) prudential considerations overall typically favor your having comprehensive and accurate beliefs. So, by highlighting the point that you typically have strong prudential reason to have a stable belief system, Foley's defense of REB undercuts the

key claim of Reply 2 to the Irrelevance Objection (viz., that *all-things-considered* rational belief and *epistemically* rational belief hardly ever part ways).

But things get worse: Foley's defense of REB seems *incompatible* with the key claim of Reply 2. The former not only undercuts but also rebuts the latter. To see this, note the plausibility of the thought that, typically, whenever you hold a belief B *responsibly*, your holding B is also *rational all-things-considered*. Given Foley's analyses of the relevant notions, this becomes the (still quite) plausible claim that, typically, whenever it's epistemically rational for you to think your overall treatment of belief B has been acceptable given your total goal set and relevant limitations, it's also epistemically rational for you to think that holding B effectively promotes your total goal set. So, Foley's defense of REB seems to commit him to

(i) epistemically irrational beliefs which are nevertheless responsible are (at least) fairly common,

and it just seems plausible (perhaps especially so on Foley's analyses) that

(ii) typically, responsible beliefs are also rational all-things-considered.

Now (i) and (ii) together strongly suggest that epistemically irrational beliefs which are nevertheless rational all-things-considered are (at least) fairly common. So, Foley's defense of REB seems to commit him to thinking that beliefs which are epistemically *irrational* yet rational all-things-considered are fairly common. But this apparent commitment is clearly incompatible with the key claim of Reply 2 (again: "...although what it is rational to believe, all things considered, in principle can be at odds with what it is epistemically rational to believe, in practice this is rare" [2008: 51]).

We conclude, then, that Foley's defense of REB from the Insufficiency Objection both undercuts and rebuts the key claim of Reply 2 to the Irrelevance Objection. We submit that Foley should resolve this conflict in favor of his defense of REB by simply dropping Reply 2 to the Irrelevance Objection. For one thing, resolving the conflict by dropping Reply 2 would at least leave Foley with raw material—viz., Reply 1 to the Irrelevance Objection plus his defense of REB—for a successful overall defense of RAB and REB (dropping the defense of REB, on

the other hand, would leave Foley without such material). For another thing, we find persuasive the objection to Reply 2 that (we've argued) flows from Foley's defense of REB. That is, we think the fact that we have strong prudential reason to retain beliefs that have "snowballed" over time really does defeat—by both undermining and rebutting—Reply 2's key claim that *all-things-considered* rational belief and *epistemically* rational belief hardly ever part ways.

So suppose Foley takes our advice and resolves the conflict between Reply 2 and his defense of REB by dropping the former and keeping the latter. Still, given that Reply 1 to the Irrelevance Objection fails as currently developed (due to "explanandum drift"), RAB faces an as yet undefeated objection. Question: Can Reply 1 be revised so as to neutralize the Irrelevance Objection? We'll close by proposing an improved version of Reply 1 that strikes us as an at least promising defense of RAB.

## VI

The improved Reply 1 we'll propose is built around this important insight from the original:

Given the common knowledge that nonepistemic considerations lack the power to persuade interlocutors that a given belief is rational, citing such considerations in order to so persuade interlocutors is conversationally or dialectically odd or infelicitous.

The improved Reply 1 offers the following error theory for the mistaken (as RAB's proponents see it) intuition that nonepistemic reasons are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status.

Irrelevance Objectors are right about this much (RAB's proponent should say): Nonepistemic reasons for holding a given belief lack the power to convince interlocutors that it's rational to hold the belief. Now, to parlay this intuition into the thought problematic for RAB—viz., that nonepistemic considerations don't help determine a belief's rationality status—, Irrelevance Objectors are (in all probability) implicitly invoking something like the following general assumption:

**Assumption:** X contributes to Y's having a certain status *only if* X can (at least in principle) be employed to convince interlocutors that Y has the relevant status.

We need to note two important things about Assumption. First, Assumption underwrites certain other prima facie respectable philosophical positions. Consider, e.g., anti-Foundationalist arguments like the following that employ claims linking a belief's justificatory status to its subject's ability to justify it:<sup>5</sup>

1. If Foundationalism is true, then there can be **basic beliefs**—i.e., beliefs which are justified but don't owe their justificatory status to any other *beliefs*.
2. If there can be basic beliefs, then there can be a justified belief whose subject can't (even in principle) justify its content to others.
3. There can't be a justified belief whose subject can't (even in principle) justify its content to others.

C. So: Foundationalism is false.

A claim commonly made on behalf of theses like 3 is that any justifier of a belief can (at least in principle) be employed to justify the belief's content to others.<sup>6</sup> This claim is an instance of the more general Assumption. So, Assumption underwrites certain other (than the Irrelevance Objection) prima facie respectable philosophical positions. Accordingly, attributing Assumption to Irrelevance Objectors seems charitable enough.

Second, while Assumption does underwrite some prima facie respectable philosophical positions, it is also on balance quite dubious. To return to a case we sketched above: Suppose your knowledge that you have hands in fact contributes to your knowledge there's an external world (perhaps the latter is based on the former, in "Moorean" fashion). Assumption entails that your knowledge you have hands can (in principle) be employed to convince an interlocutor that you know there's an external world. Plausibly, though, your knowledge of your hands lacks this

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<sup>5</sup> For prominent such anti-Foundationalist argumentation, see (e.g.) Davidson 1986 and Klein 2003. For critical evaluation of such argumentation, see (e.g.) Alston 1989, Audi 1993, Howard-Snyder and Coffman 2006, Pryor 2005a, and Rescorla 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See (e.g.) Davidson (1986: 331).

power—i.e., you can't rationally persuade a skeptical interlocutor that you know there's an external world by citing your knowledge that you have hands (the maneuver would be patently dialectically ineffective).<sup>7</sup> So, since Assumption is at best quite dubious, the Irrelevance Objection to RAB it underwrites is also at best quite dubious.

Essentially, then, what we're suggesting is that RAB's proponent try explaining away the widespread sense that nonepistemic reasons are irrelevant to a belief's rationality status via the (charitable enough) hypothesis that Irrelevance Objectors are confusing the "non-dialectical" property of

*contributing to a belief's being rational*

with the importantly different "dialectical" property of

*having the power to persuade someone of a belief's rationality.*

We think that revising Reply 1 as we've suggested, and then combining it with Foley's defense of REB, yields an at least promising overall defense of RAB and REB. We look forward to discussing the important question of how successful a defense this really is.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pryor's (2005b) diagnosis of the failure of Moore's (in)famous argument from the premise there are hands to the conclusion there's an external world.

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