BRANDT'S SEARCH FOR RATIONAL DESIRES

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Introduction
This paper will address the metaethical theory presented by Richard Brandt in his influential work, *A Theory of the Good and the Right*.[1] The book analyzes desires and aversions, which Brandt calls "valences," and presents a method whereby such valences may be labeled rational or irrational. Brandt then proposes that this notion of rational and irrational valences may be substituted in ethics for talk of the good and the right.[2]

This paper will present an overview of the general features of Brandt's work, and then offer criticisms that show that Brandt's account of rational and irrational desires is in its present state unworkable. The paper will close with some speculations concerning the appropriateness of the terms "rational" and "irrational" in reference to valences at all.

I. An Overview of Brandt's Program

Rationality concerns confrontation with and proper response (actual or potential) to relevant facts and logic. So, Brandt proposes, if desires and aversions can be influenced, altered, extinguished, or created by the agent's exposure to relevant facts and logic, then they can be labeled with terms of rationality. "In the case of desires ... there can be 'criticism' only in the sense that the desire ... is shown to be what it would (or would not) be if it were maximally influenced by evidence and logic."[3]

That such influence is indeed possible Brandt justifies by appeal to contemporary psychotherapeutic models that make use of exposure to facts and logic in the alteration of action. Specifically, Brandt culls from recent research the fact that many therapeutic methods incorporate cognitive elements--that is, elements that confront the patient with relevant facts and logic concerning the fulfillment of a given valence. These cognitive elements are viewed as significant and even essential ingredients in the alteration of behavior. From this Brandt concludes that these cognitive

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[1]Richard Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Hereafter cited in text and notes as *TGR*.
[2]When the word "desire" is used--whether for stylistic purposes, in quotations, or because of the carelessness of the author, it is to be understood as a synonym for "valence." The question of whether or not aversions are simply negative desires will be bracketed for this discussion, though it may have important implications for the development of Brandt's program.
[3]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 11.

elements have valence-alteration power. If the action is changed, it is because the motivating valences have changed.[4]

Brandt formulates the notion of *cognitive psychotherapy* (CP) as the "process of confronting desires with relevant information, by repeatedly representing it, in a ideally vivid way, and at an appropriate time ... ."[5] Each of these phrases defines a vital aspect of the proper procedure, and they are developed and defended over almost one hundred pages of detailed investigation of contemporary psychotherapy and psychological research.

The terminology "cognitive psychotherapy" is unfortunately misleading. It must be kept distinct from any specific psychotherapeutic model, and even from the general school which often goes under the rubric of Cognitive Psychotherapy.[6] Brandt distills from the methods only these aspects which are purely cognitive--those procedures that confront the agent with facts and logic under the appropriate circumstances. These are the procedures named in the definition of CP above, and they are all that Brandt will accept from the psychotherapeutic models. There are many non-cognitive elements employed in actual psychotherapeutic models that Brandt leaves out of the procedure.

He goes on from the above definition to clarify: "I call it [CP] so because the process relies simply upon reflection on available information, without influence by prestige of someone, use of evaluative language, extrinsic reward or punishment, or the use of artificially induced feeling-states like relaxation."[7] Such distillation is necessary, Brandt believes, because each of these other elements can be a conduit for valuational influences. He wants to close the door to all except rational and empirical influences on valence.[8]

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[4]See especially chapters two and four of *TGR* (pp. 24-45, 70-87). Brandt asserts that "What an agent does is always a function of his desires at the time; there is no such thing as motives by belief alone. Present desires for outcomes (and beliefs about how acts will produce them) ... motivate persons" (p. 83). Here he clearly sets himself against more explicitly rational motivation theories like that of Thomas Nagel in *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), see especially pp. 14ff. Nagel could respond that Brandt has merely trivialized the notion of desires to mean "anything that motivates"--see for example *TGR*, p. 25: "For something to be valenced for a person at a time is for that person to be in a certain 'central motive state' ... perhaps ideally describable in complex physiological-chemical terminology as 'a readiness of certain neuron sets to fire.'"

[5]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 113.

[6]See Norman Daniels, "Can Cognitive Psychotherapy Reconcile Reason and Desire?" *Ethics* 93 (1983): 776, text and note 9.

[7]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 113.

[8] See Brandt, "The Explanation of Moral Language" and Normal Daniels, "Two Approaches to Theory Acceptance in Ethics," both in David Copp and

Brandt's theory rests on three definitions, offered very early in his work then unpacked throughout. The first of these definitions is that of an intrinsic valence. Intuitively, intrinsic valences are distinguished from extrinsic ones in that the former concern things (objects, situations, etc.) desired or averted for their own sakes, while the latter concern things desired or averted as a means to some intrinsically valenced thing. So Brandt defines "intrinsic valence" as one "which would persist at *t* if the person involved bracketed, ignored, or put out of mind at *t* any thoughts or judgments about the probable consequences of [the valence] S, and indeed any thought about S not included in the concept of S."[9]

Brandt is not clear about why he works only with intrinsic valences. One could conceive, however, that it is such valences that would give the most resistance to CP, so that proof that it works on them is also proof that it works on extrinsic valences as well. Also, that facts and logic influence extrinsic valences seems in need of little argument.[10]

Second, Brandt defines a rational valence as one "that is *not irrational*. I do *not* meant that it would be irrational *not* to have [it]; I mean merely that it

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David Zimmerman, (eds), *Morality, Reason, and Truth: New Essays on the Foundations of Ethics* (Totawa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984)--Brandt, pp. 104-119; Daniels, pp. 120-140. Here Brandt defends this approach on what Daniels calls the *empiricist constraint* and the *disalienation constraint*. The former states that "justification in ethics must rest on facts and logic alone," and the latter that "a moral code must appeal to the agent's actual desires or to his rational desires," Daniels, p. 125. Daniels' major criticism of *TGR* is that Brandt cannot consistently hold to these two criteria, which he sets for all ethical theorists in the above article. More generally, Daniels maintains that the two requirements are inconsistent with any attempt at moral empiricism. See pp. 125ff. See also the earlier form of this criticism in Daniels, "Cognitive Psychotherapy," pp. 777-781.

[9]Richard Brandt, "Rational Desires," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 43 (1969-70): 45. This work marks the formal beginning of Brandt's project, which he then developed throughout the decade. The definitions given here are those offered from this paper, even though they are modified and tightened up in *TGR*. This is because the latter definitions are more technical and contain language that would require additional space for explanation. For the purpose of this survey and critique, the definitions in "Rational Desires" are quite adequate and not misleading. For the full discussion, see *TGR*, pp. 24-32.

[10]Stuart E. Rosenbaum points out that Brandt must make his program work for intrinsic valences, since extrinsic valences (or "instrumental desires," as he calls them) "are simply *beliefs* to the effect that pursuing a certain thing will enable one to satisfy a genuine (intrinsic) desire." "A Note on the Impossibility of Rationalizing Desire," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 18 (1984): 66. Emphasis his.

is not irrational to have." He then defines an irrational valence as "one which would *not* survive, in a given person, in the presence of vivid awareness of knowable propositions."[11] That is, an irrational valence is one that would not survive the proper application of CP [over time].

It is important to note that Brandt considers rational and irrational valences as *contradictories,* and not simply as contraries. Therefore, not only are there such things as rational and irrational valences, but all valences--including intrinsic ones--are either one or the other.[12] Surprisingly, Brandt gives no argument for ruling out non-rational valences.[13] He only comments that "This result is consistent with the general view that a desire ... is rational if it has been influenced by facts and logic as much as possible." This strikes one as a substantive claim in need of further clarification.[14]

With these definitions in place, Brandt is ready to offer the reforming definition which is the foundation for the moral system he builds in the second part of the book. His proposed replacement of all value-laden talk with empirically testable propositions takes the form of two claims.

> The first is that there is no sentence in which the word 'good' appears, at least in that core complex of uses which have been important for philosophy, which makes an identifiable point which cannot be made by a sentence containing 'rationally desired,' doubtless in some complex, clause but in which no 'value word' is present.

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[11]Brandt, "Rational Desires," p. 45. Emphasis his.

[12]Brandt does back away from the explicitly dependent definition of "rational valence." "I shall call a person's desire ... 'rational' if it would survive or be produced by careful cognitive psychotherapy for that person. I shall call a desire 'irrational' if it cannot survive compatibly with clear and repeated judgements about established facts. What this means is that rational desire .. can confront, or will be produced by awareness of the truth; irrational desire cannot" (*TGR*, p. 113). The dependence is disguised, here, but not erased. The text definitions are again taken from "Rational Desires," because it is clear from them that Brandt is basing the notion of rational valence on the notion of irrational valence. This point will be important in the coming criticisms. See *TGR*, p. 126, where the dependence of rational valence on irrational valence is once again made explicit.

[13]From this point, the absolute term "valence" will be used to mean "intrinsic valence."

[14]For examples of types of "mistaken" or "irrational" valences, see *TGR*, pp. 115-126, where Brandt explicates four general types. See also "Rational Desires," pp. 47-61.

The second claim is that there are various things we want to say, on reflection, which can be said by talk of 'rational desire,' but which cannot be said by 'good' or 'intrinsically good' in ordinary use of these terms.[15]

This latter claim is designed to show that, given the first claim, Brandt's replacement candidate for moral language will do all we want moral language to do, and even more.   We will have not just a sharply definable and analyzable moral system, but one that brings in points for consideration that the old value-laden language could not. Says Brandt, "'Good' seems to be not flexible enough, in its standard English uses, for us to be able to raise the important questions we want to raise about desires."[16]

But the first claim is clearly the central one for Brandt's project, and may justifiably be called his major thesis. All substantive moral discourse is replaceable, without perversion or loss of content or truth value, by discourse concerning valences optimally influenced by relevant facts and logic. I have labeled this position "The Substitution Thesis" (that is, the idea of "rationally desired" may be substituted for the idea of "good").

II. Criticisms of Brandt's Program

This section offers five criticisms of Brandt's program: First, that Brandt's stipulated definitions of "rational valence" and "irrational valence" beg substantive questions on the nature of rationality; second, that those stipulations also present a weak, proceduralistic notion of rationality; third, that the substitution thesis is suspicious in nature and inadequate in scope; fourth, that Brandt's distillation of cognitive elements from psychotherapeutic methods is illegitimate; and finally, that Brandt fails to account for the phenomenon of overdetermination in valence alteration.

A. Rationality and Irrationality as Contradictory Notions

Brandt's definitions make rationality and irrationality contradictory categories—at least as they apply to valences—rather than simply exclusive or contrary categories. This is by no means a closed question in philosophy. Yet Brandt's thesis depends on its being so, and it is declared so only by stipulative definition.

This position could have serious consequences for Brandt's thesis. If rationality and irrationality are not contradictory, even when applied to valences, then there is the possibility of valences that are simply non-rational. In fact, one could propose, using the CP criterion, that irrational valences are those that would alter under CP, rational valences are those that could be created or strengthened under CP, and non-rational valences are those on which CP would have no effect. This trifurcation may even be intuitively more appealing than Brandt's bifurcation.

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[15]Brandt, *TGR*, pp. 127, 128.
[16]Brandt, *TGR*, pp. 127, 128.

But an even more serious implication of the idea that rationality and irrationality are not contradictory arises when it is remembered that it is actually Brandt's definition of irrational valences that contains all the substance, while rational desires are merely those that are not irrational. But, given a third possibility, there arises the idea that there may be no such thing as rational desires *at all*. There may only be desires that are irrational to have and those that are not. There is no entailment, given the three possibilities, between a valence being not irrational and its being rational.

These difficulties show that Brandt's definitions do too much of the work in his theory, especially since no argument is given to show that the idea of rational desires--as simply those that are not substantively irrational--has any intuitive force at all. At the most crucial turning point in his program, Brandt relies on unargued, stipulated definitions and assumes that the point has been made to the satisfaction of any moral theorist. The argument for these definitions, which we noted above to be sorely lacking, now seems demanded to support the very large program Brandt suggests in the later chapters of the book.[17]

B. A Proceduralist Notion of Rationality

The stipulated definitions beg another substantive question concerning the nature of rationality, namely that rationality has to do with the specific process of a subject's deliberation and not with its correspondence to some substantive objective criterion. Of course the confrontation with facts and logic in CP is a confrontation with objectivity, but what makes desires rational or irrational is simply how the subject *does* or would respond to these stimuli, and not any kind of comparison with how she *should* respond, or how others do in fact respond to similar confrontations in similar situations.[18]

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[17]Noah Lemos points out another problem for Brandt's definitions, namely that they label desires and actions we naturally consider rational as irrational, and others we naturally think irrational as rational. "Brandt on Rationality, Value, and Morality," *Philosophical Studies* 45 (1985): 45ff.

[18]Kurt Baier has identified four elements in a conception of rationality: "a capacity, an ability, an appropriate standard of excellence in that ability, and a tendency." Concerning the third element, Baier states,

> Rationality in this third, evaluative sense is the person's measuring up to some standards of acceptability in the way he complied with the reasons for the solution of the problem at hand. Ordinarily, the standard implied by 'rationality' is *the minimal standard of acceptability*, a kind of 'pass' in some activity of reason, 'irrationality' the corresponding 'fail.'"

"Rationality, Reason, and the Good," in Copp and Zimmerman, pp. 193-211. Quotation from pp. 196, 197. It is this third sense that is missing in Brandt's account. Response that this element is a normative one forces a

Does the altering power of similar facts and logic on similar valences in other people have anything to say about the rationality of the response of a given valence in a given subject? If not, why not? Brandt does not even consider this possibility, and its omission is a critical oversight.

Brandt forgoes such possible accounts of rational desires that are more content-based, and insists that it is simply the psychology of a given individual as he comes or would come into contact with a given set of relevant facts and logic that rules a given valence either rational or irrational. Thus, Brandt-rationality[19] does not take into account whether or not the reaction of the valence to the facts and logic is what it *should* be (in a non-valuative sense), given the nature of the facts and logic. It has only a methodological objectivity--not substantive objectivity, as rationality seems to have when applied to beliefs. Brandt-rationality is solely dependent on the subject. It is a highly relative and unstable notion, and one that bears little resemblance to its doxastic analogue.[20]

To illustrate the force of this criticism, consider the autistic child or fully psychotic adult. Empirical studies in psychology demonstrate that cognitive psychotherapeutic methods have no effect on such drastically withdrawn individuals. Therefore, were such a person a candidate for cognitive psychotherapy, all her valences would come out Brandt-rational. Yet surely one is wont to suggest that such people demonstrate paradigm cases of irrational beliefs and behaviors.

Of course Brandt can rightfully object that his program is not designed to account for such psychological phenomena. He is concerned with the criticism of desires in those people considered normally functional. Yet one could make the case that the autistic or psychotic is different from such normally functional people--at least in terms of valences--in degree only, and not in kind. It is a defensible position that each of us, or at least many of us, has some desire that resembles those of the psychotic. That is, there are many normally functioning people who have some desires that are of the type that , were they of sufficient number and linked together in appropriate

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further question--is there any account of rationality that contains nothing like this ostensibly value-laden element, and yet retains the substantive objective accountability or intersubjective agreement that seems intrinsic to the concept?

[19]I am indebted to Robert Audi for this very useful term.

[20]This criticism seems to be at the heart of Judith Wagner Decew's criticism of Brandt's "fully rational person." Says Decew, "[H]is own description of the limitations of cognitive psychotherapy and the necessity of utilizing cost efficiency arguments, show that his conditions of fully rational choice are not ones that we do accept or could be persuaded to accept." "Brandt's New Defense of Rule Utilitarianism: Ideal Rules and the Motivation to be Moral," *Philosophical Studies* 43 (1983): 113. This quotation sums up a discussion that runs from pp. 111-113.

ways, would be sufficient to label the person psychotic. Anyone who has
wrestled with a deeply ingrained habit or obsession does not need to be told
how little effect cognitive elements have on the alteration of that valence.
Such valences, reminiscent of the autistic child and psychotic adult, are
Brandt-rational in our normally functioning adult.

Brandt is fully aware that such valences exist in many people, and yet he
seems not the least bit disturbed by it. "One implication of our definitions
may be surprising. It arises from the fact that some valences, or dispositions
to enjoy something, may resist extinction by inhibition and anything else,
since they have been so firmly learned at an early age. By my definition
these qualify as rational."[21]

So the desire of a person who eats compulsively, even though fully aware
of the dangers to himself, is Brandt-rational. The alcoholic who cannot
control his drinking even when his family leaves him, he loses his job, and
none of his friends will have anything to do with him is Brandt-rational. Any
attempt to suggest that these people are not *really* fully appreciative of the
facts involved is non-empirical speculation at best and question-begging at
worst.[22] Brandt considers such results no real problem for his program, but
this is a serious mistake. These seem to be paradigm cases of irrational
behavior, and even perhaps of immoral behavior.

C. Failure of the Substitution Thesis

My final criticism of Brandt's specific program for discerning rational
valences concerns the substitution thesis itself--the idea that all substantive
moral discourse is replaceable. In summary, this thesis claims that
philosophically interesting talk of "the good" (and hence, for a teleologist, all
substantive moral talk) can be reformed or reduced into value-free talk of
rational valences, without loss of any "identifiable point" made by the
valuative language. This mentioning of the "identifiable point" to be made
may arouse one's suspicions. Just what are these "identifiable points" that
Brandt is interested in preserving; and more importantly, what kinds of
points would he label as "unidentifiable," and therefore deem unworthy of
preservation or analysis?

Again, the theory threatens to beg substantive questions. One is
suspicious that Brandt would call "identifiable" only those elements of moral
discourse that can be effectively reduced to non-valuative, descriptive
language. But such a move makes the desirability substitution thesis

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[21]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 113.
[22]A similar criticism is developed in Lemos, pp. 82f. "Even if some such
intense desires and aversions would vanish under this sort of treatment [CP],
it is not clear that all intense cravings and aversions would vanish. So even if
cognitive psychotherapy could remove some intense desire, it is far from
clear *why* we should think that being free from such craving and aversions is
important to the concept of rational action" (p. 82).

trivially true and therefore uninteresting. Brandt is probably thinking of the meatier claim that identifiable points are those which carry "meaning," such that any attempted paraphrase that did not transfer these points adequately would not be a proper paraphrase. But here there is much philosophical water to tread, and again Brandt is more interested in pontificating than proving. "The claim is a large one. I shall not try to support it further, but merely offer two examples to make clear what claim is being made."[23]

But at this point in the argument, more support is exactly what is needed. One clear point that has been defended in the noncognitivist tradition is that moral language does contain what Hare calls "prescriptive meaning."[24] The claim that such meaning is either reducible to talk of Brandt-rationality or dispensable as "unidentifiable" is a larger one than can be dismissed with a couple of examples. If Hare is right, then there is something irreducible in ethical statements. It is far from certain that he is wrong. Though Brandt addresses Hare specifically, he does not dispose of the notion of prescriptive meaning.

D. The Distillation of Cognitive Elements from Hybrid Psychotherapeutic Models

A different kind of problem for Brandt's notion of rational valences concerns the evidence on which he bases the claim. As explained in part one above, Brandt clings to the empirical findings of modern psychotherapeutic research, but wishes only to make use of the cognitive elements of effective clinical techniques. He has already been quoted as ruling out various non-cognitive elements in the application of CP. However, many of the psychotherapeutic methods that employ the cognitive procedures Brandt wishes to take advantage of also use these non-cognitive elements as essential features of the therapy. For example, the popular "Relaxation Response Therapy" and "Imaging Therapy" both combine confrontation with relevant facts and logic with a self-induced relaxation or hypnosis.

These hybrid methods are effective, it is hypothesized, because the mind is more receptive to the introduction of information concerning valences when the body is relaxed. But if this is so, then it is not simply the cognitive elements that effect the valence alteration, but the cognitive elements *in inextricable combination with* non-cognitive elements. Psychological theory seems to indicate that analysis of the valence-altering power of the cognitive elements *alone* is much more complicated than Brandt claims--perhaps even unascertainable. Therefore, the extent to

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[23]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 127.

[24]R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: University Press, 1963). See especially pp. 22ff, and other passages listed in the index under "prescriptive meaning" and "prescriptivism." For Brandt's treatment of Hare, see *TGR*, pp. 196-199, 229-233, and 243-245.

which valences can be properly labeled "rational" or "irrational" based on their response to such elements is itself uncertain.

One might even ask of Brandt why he chooses to include the specification that cognitive psychotherapy requires the relevant information to be represented *repeatedly, "in an ideally vivid way, and at an appropriate time."*[25] Are the italicized conditions cognitive? There seems to be little non-arbitrary account for the retention of these elements and the expulsion of those listed in the quotation cited in note nine above. Proper appreciation of factual information--in belief formation, for example--does not seem to be intrinsically tied to its repetition, the ideality of its presentation, or the appropriateness of the timing.

Perhaps these non-cognitive elements are more innocuous than those he rules out--for example they do not seem to depend on preformed valuations like some of the others do. However, the point is that Brandt has not distilled *all* non-cognitive elements out, thereby admitting that cognitive elements require non-cognitive elements to be effective in valence alteration. He gives no argument to prove that the therapy will work without the ones that are removed, yet requires the ones retained. There is much arbitrariness on the road to defending the notion of rational valences based on the empirical phenomenon of cognitive psychotherapy.[26]

The fact that cognitive psychotherapy appear dependent on non-cognitive elements for valence alteration demonstrates the danger of relying on such pragmatic, behavior-oriented research to make judgments of philosophical significance. The caveat Brandt addresses early in the book concerning the dangers here should have been heeded.[27]

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[25]Brandt, *TGR*, p. 113.

[26]"Brandt would have no need to mention cognitive psychotherapy if his intention were merely to state that in acting rationally one should not ignore facts concerned with the consequences of one's undertaking, nor would he need to hold that the facts be repeatedly brought to mind with full belief and maximum vividness.'" Lemos, p. 83.

[27]After noting that philosophers and psychologists alike will be wary of his project, Brandt offers two replies:

> First, I shall state explicitly the psychological generalizations on which I rely, and where possible shall indicate the evidence for them. I am claiming that these particular generalizations are sound, however dubious some parts of contemporary psychology may be. Second, even if these generalizations turn out to require modification, at least a demonstration of how psychological theory can be used to establish normative principles will be worthwhile in showing how someone can turn, to the same use, the theories of the future.

TGR, p. 2. The second point especially is well taken.

E. Overdetermination in Valence Alteration
     There is yet another criticism that arises from the crossed purposes of
psychology and philosophy and makes the former a suspicious origin for
theories in the latter. This concerns the unmistakable phenomenon of
overdetermination in valence alteration. There are many powerful weapons
in the psychotherapist's arsenal for alteration of action and valence. Even if
valences can be altered by CP, there remains the question why they are also
alterable through chemotherapy, behavior modification, classical
conditioning, psychoanalysis and a host of other approaches. Brandt implies
that their susceptibility to CP indicates that valences can be viewed as
intrinsically information relative, and therefore rational or irrational. But the
behaviorist could also hold that valence susceptibility to operant
conditioning indicates that they are simply conditioned responses, and have
little to do with facts and logic. The chemotherapist could likewise insist that
valences are essentially neuron reactions, and are only accidentally linked to
conditioning or cognition.
     Daniels alludes to this problem when he notes that CP is unacceptably
weak because it does not allow for the extinguishing of mistaken desires that
are not susceptible to its power. He seems to have in mind the kinds of
problems dealt with in the autism/psychosis counterexample above. "Yet
Brandt does not strengthen cognitive psychotherapy so that the purification
process brings more powerful techniques to bear. We cannot resort to
psychotherapy by an expert, nor to drugs, nor to behavior modification
techniques involving reward or punishment." Though Brandt's fears of such
embellishments are duly noted, Daniels concludes that "An intermediary
approach would use more powerful techniques on clearly mistaken desires.
These points about the adequacy of cognitive psychotherapy are connected
to deeper worries: The classical learning theory underlying Brandt's account
may be only a fragment of an adequate learning theory."[28]

                                   Conclusion
     That Brandt's program offers much to be considered and used in
further research into the possibility of a rational moral philosophy is
indisputable. Commentators are almost unanimous in acclaiming the work
as a most significant part of the Kantian resurgence in ethics over the last
twenty years.[29] Still, the formidable problems accompanying his

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[28]Norman Daniels, "Cognitive Psychotherapy," pp. 776-777. Daniels
observes in a footnote that "Brandt makes little effort to connect his account
of learning theory to recent work in cognitive psychology, especially the
developmental literature." See for example *Ethics* 92, no. 3 (April 1982).
[29]Besides many of the works cited in these notes, see also Alan Gewirth, "The
Future of Ethics: The Moral Powers of Reason," *Nous* 15 (1981): 15-31.
Gewirth cites Brandt's theory as the most significant example of what he

development show that it is far from the forceful argument he imagines, and a poor candidate to oversee the kinds of sweeping reforms he believes to be necessary to bring moral discourse into a form that can be dealt with effectively.

In fact, one of the main contributions of Brandt's work may just be to show how extremely difficult it is to give an account of valences as rational or irrational. The criticisms above carry a faint echo of doubt that these terms are appropriate at all in reference to valences. Valences cannot be held to be essentially rational or irrational simply because they are, under certain conditions, susceptible to vivid awareness of relevant facts and logic. There must be an argument to show that such influence is due to the very nature of valences, rather than simply being accidental.

Beliefs, for example, are considered rational or irrational because of their direct susceptibility to relevant facts and logic. Other avenues of belief alteration are considered less crucial to identifying the nature of a belief, because it can be argued that such influences are accidental and not due to the essence of a belief. For example, beliefs may be altered by chemotherapy, but only by disrupting the normal belief formation and alteration process. There is no readily available argument that CP does not alter valences simply by disrupting normal valence formation and alteration processes.

The picture begins to emerge of an extremely complicated psychological phenomenon that yields little help to the philosopher in search of the role desires play in discerning the desirable or the good. Without further work, overdetermination in valence alteration leaves no room for the argument that any one of the overdeterminers is successful because it and it alone strikes at the heart of the construction and destruction of valences.

What is known from psychology is that valences are reachable by several means, but not easily altered by any. What cannot be proved is that the effectiveness of these methods is due to the very nature of the valences or can contribute to a philosophical analysis that would allow their being labeled with specific philosophical descriptions (e.g. "rational").[30]

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calls "probabilistic procedural rationalism" in ethics.   Gewirth believes that Brandt's program ultimately fails, as will all probabilistic procedural programs. He substitutes his own apodictic procedural rationalism in its place.