The Guise of the Good[1]

Abstract

According to the doctrine of the guise of the good, all that is desired is seen by the subject as good to some extent. As a claim about action, the idea is that intentional action, or acting for a reason, is action that is seen as good by the agent. I explore the thesis' main attractions: it provides an account of intentional behaviour as something that makes sense to the agent, it paves the way for various views in meta-ethics and normative ethics, and it offers a unified account of practical and theoretical reason. In response to common objections, I examine points of current debate: what is it for something to appear as good? Is value or normative reasons the basic concept at work? How to explain akrasia, perversity in action, and expressive action? I conclude with an overview of alternatives to the guise of the good.

1. Introduction

While working on this article, I got up, walked to the medicine cabinet, grabbed eye drops, put them in my eyes, then went back to work. Why did I do this? A brain scientist might be able to tell a story about what went on in my brain and how that connected with my bodily movements. Someone else might tell a story about how the doctor told me to do so—and how I was brought up to do what doctors say. I might be aware of these stories myself. But another story is simply that I felt my eyes were tired, and thought it was a good idea to use eye drops. Knowing me well enough, you might tell that story about me. But in order for your story to explain why I did what I did, it seems crucial that it reproduce the sort of story I told or would have told about myself. In particular, not only should you present circumstances as *I* took them to be (my eyes felt tired, there were eye drops in the cabinet etc.), but you should not pass over the fact that using eye drops made sense *to me* at the time. This is true even if, as it turns out, by mistake I pick an irritating saline solution, and even if I decide to use instead a powerful antibiotic whose side-effects I prefer to ignore. In the first case, I make a mistake of fact. In the second, I make a mistake of practical rationality (of prudence, one might say). Still, also in these cases what I do has a point from my

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perspective: I have to relieve my eyes from the sensation of tiredness. What is more, I might want to use eye drops for a reason that you do not necessarily approve of: perhaps, *just* in order to make the doctor happy. But if making the doctor happy seems like a good idea to me, then this is something your explanation cannot leave out.

The so-called doctrine of the guise of the good (GG) turns these common observations into a general, philosophical truth about the nature of desire and action: All that we desire to do is seen by us to be good in some way. Put in negative terms: If we don't see anything good in something, we don't desire to do it. As I will explain below, some philosophers also accept the converse: All that is seen by us to be good is desired by us. But the basic GG and its classical scholastic formulation only require the former idea: *quidquid appetitur, appetitur sub specie boni*, that is: whatever is desired is desired under the guise (aspect, appearance, form) of the good (see e.g. Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I -II:1.6, 8.1; Kant 1999: 187-8). And if action or at least intentional action is not logically possible without a corresponding desire, then also whatever we intentionally do, we do it under the guise of the good.

After resurfacing for a while into contemporary philosophy thanks to Elizabeth Anscombe (1963)[2] and Donald Davidson (1963), GG faced influential attacks (Stocker 1979, Velleman 1992). However, partly due to the general 'rediscovery of reasons' the past fifteen years have seen GG again at the forefront, making it an unavoidable calling point for anyone working in the philosophy of action, philosophical psychology, moral psychology, and value theory. In section 2 I discuss what I take to be the main features of GG and its principal attractions. In section 3 I proceed to illustrate a number of variations on how to articulate these main features, as they have emerged in the current debate. In section 4 I present two sorts of objections to GG, and briefly describe the resources that have been used to counter them. Finally in section 5 I lay out possible alternatives to GG.

2. Why the Guise of the Good?

[2] It is controversial whether Anscombe accepted GG as I explain it below. I will not touch on exegetical issues.

There is no existing consensus on how to state GG. This might suggest that, rather than being a single doctrine, we are dealing here with a family of similar-sounding theses. But while it is true that each author has their favourite statement (on which, section 3), we can usefully uncover a few features that GG advocates normally agree on:

1. The good, under whose 'guise' we are said to desire and act, is a normative or evaluative concept. When I want to rest my eyes and I see this as good, I'm seeing it as something worth doing. I do not just see it as something that the doctor prescribed or that would have a certain effect on my optical system, although if I had to justify why I see it as good I might well cite those matters of fact in its support.

2. The good is really an abstract characterization, a stand-in for more specific evaluative concepts: the beneficial, the agreeable, the morally right, the beautiful, what there is good reason to do, the lesser evil, and so on (see section 3). In GG 'the good' does not play a role as the object of some 'master' or privileged desire on which all our other desires and actions depend. GG does not decide the question 'what do we, ultimately, really want for its own sake'. Thus it is unlike the role that our own pleasure plays according to psychological hedonism. Of course, if it turned out that all and only our own pleasure were as a matter of fact desired (and thus seen as good), then GG and psychological hedonism would converge.

3. The action or the object of desire must be regarded *as good by the agent*. The 'guise' of the good is a matter of how the agent herself sees her action. It is not enough for me to desire something which is in fact good (e.g. using eye drops) while paying no regard to and not being guided by its being good (e.g. good for my eyes). And it is consistent with GG to desire, i.e. see something good in what is in no way actually good. While authors differ on what exact cognitive state is required of the agent (see section 3), they all agree that an action or a desire makes sense to me only if I regard it in a positive light.

4. GG offers a claim about the essence of desire, volition, and intentional action. Whether seeing as good is a necessary condition of desire (volition, action) or for instance identical to desire, seeing as good is supposed to reveal the *nature* of desire

(volition, action). So for instance to think that desire is identical to, but also more fundamental than, seeing as good, is to trivialize GG. The essence claim can be understood as a conceptual necessity (as it has traditionally been understood), as a synthetic a priori necessity, as a metaphysical a posteriori necessity (like it is necessary that water has the composition H_2O), or even as a non-universal claim of generic essence (like 'birds lay eggs', see section 4). In any case GG is held to be more than a contingent generalization about human beings like 'most humans act under the guise of the good'.

GG's recurring appeal, from Plato (*Protagoras* 358b7–c1, 358c6–d2) and Aristotle (*De Anima*, III.10 [433a28–29]) up to the contemporary debate, is due to a number of reasons. First, as illustrated in the eye drops tale, it seems that a distinctive way of making sense of what we and others do is by showing human action as something that *by and large* makes *some* sense *to the agent herself*. We explain intentional action by showing the agent's *reasons* for her action: the considerations, as seen by her, *for which* or in response to which she does what she does. As Anscombe put it, the agent must be able to provide a particular kind of answer to a 'why?' question, an answer giving his reason for acting (Anscombe 1963: 9). And it seems like an immediate step from here to the claim that the agent's reasons must be seen as good reasons by her. How else could *her* reasons appear to her? (But see below 4.2 for doubts on this). And if mutual understanding depends on making sense of each other by providing reasons-explanations, then GG may also act as a principle of charity (Schueler 2003: 131): no matter how far out your behaviour may appear, I can relate to you if I suppose that you see at least something good in what you do, even if I don't share your conception of what is good.

Second, GG seems to have relevant implications for meta-ethics and normative ethics, even if no particular view can be said to directly follow from it. Here I mention three. (1) The contemporary debate in meta-ethics often revolves around two views. Cognitivism claims that moral judgment expresses cognitive or truth-apt states such as beliefs. Non-cognitivism claims that moral judgment expresses non-truth-apt states such as desires. These views are commonly held to be mutually exclusive, because of an assumed opposition between the nature of belief and the nature of desire (Smith 1994). But if GG is correct, then desires

constitutively include an evaluative content: that the object of desire is good or worth pursuing. This opens up room for overcoming the belief vs. desire opposition and arguing that desires constitutively are or involve a truth-apt, cognitive, sort of attitude: a belief that the object of desire is good (see e.g. Gregory forthcoming). So, even if it is true that moral judgments express desires, a cognitivist view of moral judgment would still be in place. The non-cognitivist on the other hand will want to interpret the evaluative content of desire in non-cognitive terms. Authors discussing GG generally recognize the non-cognitivist alternative (Raz 2010: 113, Setiya 2007: 93; though see also Velleman 1992: 5). (2) If desires are states of seeing something as good, then desires are crucial to the epistemology of value. While there might be other and more reliable forms of access to values, still to desire something would be to have an experience of some putative value. Any such experience might well turn out to be illusory, of course, such as when we desire worthless objects. But it would be difficult to maintain that desires, while intrinsically suited to present us with values, systematically lead us into error. The epistemological significance of GG was certainly stressed by Plato and has been recently reaffirmed (e.g. Oddie 2005). (3) As regards normative ethics, in Aristotle's ethics the fact that we always seek what seems good to us is the point of departure for the theoretical search of what is the good we ought to seek as human beings. In a Kantian context, GG may be used as a necessary premise in an argument intended to show how, simply in virtue of being rational agents (seeing our own ends as good), we are committed to treating each other as ends and never only as means (see e.g. Korsgaard 2009).

Third, besides its hermeneutical and (meta-)ethical attractions GG seems to deliver further theoretical benefits. For instance, Kieran Setiya (2007: 35-36), while not a GG advocate, suggests that GG promises to add a missing element to a simple belief-desire model of acting for a reason (known as the Humean view of motivation, Smith 1987). The desire to give my eyes some rest and the belief that using eye drops will serve this desire need to be supplemented by my seeing a good reason to rest my eyes, if they are to explain my behaviour as a case of acting for a reason.

A different advantage, forcefully advocated e.g. in Tenenbaum 2007, is that GG allows us to explain the continuity between theoretical and practical reason. If desires essentially aim at

the good, then they are essentially subject to evaluative standards, and thus as much within the reach of Reason as theoretical attitudes like belief. The difference would only lie in their respective "formal ends": "the end one must ascribe to an agent insofar as he or she is engaged in that activity" (Tenenbaum 2007: 6). As the true is the formal end of belief, so is the good the formal end of desire and intention. In turn, theoretical and practical inquiry would be distinguished not by the employment of different cognitive faculties (Reason and Passion, say), but by their objects of study: the true and the good.

Joseph Raz has thus summed up the various advantages of GG: it is "the keystone keeping in place and bridging the theory of value, the theory of normativity and rationality, and the understanding of intentional action" (Raz 2010: 134).

3. The Constituents of GG

Above I have outlined GG's main features. Beyond these, each author advances a more detailed account, and particularly the recent debate has brought out important differences. First, we might ask: *what* must be seen under the guise of the good? What is GG's target? Natural candidates are the objects of desire, intention, and intentional action. For Anscombe both intentional action and desires (or better 'wants') seem to fall under GG. Acting for a reason is for her the key to distinguishing intentional from non-intentional action. And if the key to acting for a reason is the ability to answer the 'why?' question, then intentional action is action under the guise of the good. But so is wanting something: the question 'what do you want?' is ultimately "a form of our question 'Why?'" (Anscombe 1963: 63), and an answer will provide a "desirability-characterisation" of the thing wanted (ibid.: 72), i.e. will place it under the guise of some good (ibid.: 75. See Alvarez 2009). Similarly Tenenbaum takes GG to apply both to desires and intentions (and so derivatively to action): desires are appearances of the good, while intentions are practical conclusions, 'all-out' judgments of what one ought to do (Tenenbaum 2007: 12-3). Desires are prima facie attitudes, and as such they stand to intentions like appearances (perceptual or otherwise) stand to beliefs (ibid.: 38-9; 147). For Tenenbaum GG governs the whole of our practical reason.

But other advocates take a more restricted focus. Davidson concentrated on intentional action. While arguing (inter alia, against Anscombe) that the agent's reasons for action can be causes, he accepted that "from the agent's point of view there was, when he acted, something to be said for the action" (Davidson 1963: 691). And he seemed to understand intentions as final, unconditional evaluative judgments (1970, 1978). For Raz intention is the primary focus of GG: "intentions must include a belief that there is something attractive about the action, that it has some value" (Raz 2010: 118), and to the extent that intentional action include intention, then "intentional actions are actions taken in, and because of, a belief that there is some good in them" (ibid.: 112). By contrast, Jennifer Hawkins (2008) only defends an evaluative conception of desires as states in which the object of desire seems good to the subject, leaving intentional action aside.

Second, what sort of state or attitude is this *seeing* something under the guise of the good? And what is the exact relation between this state and the target phenomenon (desire, intention, etc.)? Some philosophers think this is a case of *believing* that the relevant object of desire is good, or that it has features that make it good, or that there is some good reason for acting in a certain way (Raz 2010, Gregory forthcoming). This does not mean that the agent must be aware of it or consciously entertaining such a thought at any particular time. But there have to be sufficient grounds to attribute such a belief to the agent. As Raz says: "It is not in their mind, but it is part of the explanation of what they do" (2010: 115). Moreover, for Raz the evaluative belief is a constitutive component of an intention, in the same way as the emotion of fear includes the belief that something is dangerous (ibid.: 117). But the evaluative belief could exist without the emotion or the intention. Other philosophers instead *identify* the GG target, e.g. desire, with an evaluative or normative belief (see Gregory forthcoming).

The usual alternative to doxastic states are *appearances* of the good, usually though not necessarily modelled on perceptual states. Some claim that desires and appearances of the good are one and the same state (Oddie 2005, Tenenbaum 2007), thus endorsing also the converse of GG: All that is desired is perceived to be good, and all that is perceived to be good is desired. For others, evaluative or normative appearances are only a necessary component of desire. E.g. for T.M. Scanlon "having what is generally called a desire involves

having a tendency to see something as a reason…however, this is not all that desire involves" (1998: 39).

Appearances may be preferred to beliefs in order for GG to account for akrasia or weakness of will. If intentional action requires seeing the action as good in some respect, how could we ever intentionally do something we do not believe to be good *in any respect*, e.g. smoking despite the judgment that smoking is bad through and through (including the pleasure or relief we may get)? If 'seeing as good' requires a full-fledged evaluative belief or judgment, then it seems that any action we perform against our evaluative belief or judgment will not be intentional. Note that a belief that there is at least *something* good about the action will not do: we can certainly imagine cases of intentional action where the agent rejects the suggestion that she believes the action worth doing in some respect (e.g. for the pleasure she gets). But if 'seeing as good' requires minimally that the action *appear* good to us, then GG can account for such cases. Especially if the perceptual model is closely followed, appearances are or at least can be resistant to 'cognitive penetration' by belief: in the Müller-Lyer optical illusion one line will still look longer despite knowing they are of equal length. Likewise desires *qua* appearances of value can be resistant to correction by evaluative belief, and thus may persist, leading us to act against our better judgment. The resulting action will be irrational by our own lights, but still count as intentional insofar as it expresses an evaluative perspective—even one we may ourselves recognize as distorted (things get more complicated for those GG theorists who take intentions as including not only an evaluative belief, but a full-blown judgment about what we ought to do: how can then we ever intend to act against our better judgment? See the classic Davidson 1970, and Baker 2015).

Whether or not we favour appearance over belief, on GG value (in some of the forms recounted above) still seems to be the object of some representation by the subject, or she won't be able to have desires. But at least some animals and human infants seem capable of desire, though lacking the means to conceptualize value. For some philosophers this is not a problem: they focus on intentions rather than desire (e.g. Raz) or they may claim that human adult desire is a sufficiently interesting target for GG. But others have tried to find a solution. Tenenbaum denies that evaluative representation is as such required for evaluative

appearance, and thus for desire: "'good' is not part of the content of the attitude" (2008: 136). In the 2007 book he proposes instead that, regardless of her conceptual capacities, a subject who manifests the right sort of transitions from prima facie to all-out attitudes can be said to conceive something as good, and thus to desire to do whatever she ends up doing (Tenenbaum 2007: 248. See also Tappolet 2009). In his 2008 article he pursues rather the idea that desire stands to the good like belief stands to the true. In order to believe that it is raining outside, I do not need a further belief that it is true that it is raining outside. But it would be paradoxical for me to claim: 'I believe it is raining but it is false that it is raining'. Likewise it would be paradoxical to claim: 'I desire to use eye drops but there is nothing good about using eye drops'. On a different approach, partly drawing on developmental psychology, Hawkins argues that we can ascribe to infants "evaluative impressions", i.e. experiences where a certain response (e.g. grabbing an object) *feels like* making sense to them (2008: 260). In any event, clearly further work can be done in order to both clarify and defend the claim that the agent must regard her action or desire as good.

A third question concerns the good. Under the guise of *what*, exactly, do we act? While 'the good' can be taken to stand for more specific evaluative attributes, it has been argued that the concept of a normative reason, or of a consideration counting in favour of an action or a desire, does a better job here. In particular, for Alex Gregory (2013) a 'guise of reasons' view has two advantages: it pre-empts certain counterexamples to GG (people who seem not to aim for any specifiable good, but surely act on what they take to be good reasons) and explains the connection between desire and action ('the good' has nothing special to do with action, but 'reason for action' obviously does). Raz (2010), on the other hand, argues that since reasons, in general, depend on value, so also should reasons *as believed by the agent* ultimately refer to value. What authors do agree on is that the good or the good reason need not be seen by the agent as all things considered or conclusively valid, and that its content can be determined by an agent's own conception of the good, with no special restrictions.

But one issue might be raised in this connection. GG does not seem compatible with subjectivist views which reduce value to what an agent desires (Tenenbaum 2007) or which ground normative reasons for an agent in what that agent desires (Raz 2002: 27). This is

because on GG the very notion of desire only makes sense in the light of (perceived) values or reasons. However, what should GG say of an agent whose guise of the good consists simply in the suitability between certain actions and her desires? On the one hand, she seems to be acting on *some* conception of the good, no matter if theoretically indefensible. On the other hand, though, her answers to Anscombe's 'why?' will be a series of 'because I want it', thus (if Anscombe is right) ultimately defying her own status as somebody who acts for reasons. The question here for GG then is whether there are principled limits to the range of admissible 'guises of the good'. Why is it fine (for explanatory purposes) that I see my enemy's destruction as good, but not that I see the mere satisfaction of my desires as good?

Having offered a sense of how authors may differ on *what* is seen as good, what it is to *see as good*, and what is *the good* thus seen, let's now consider two sorts of objection to GG.

4. Objections to GG

Objections to GG have generally included either of the following strategies: (1) counterexamples meant to illustrate how some agents may desire or act intentionally though *not* under the guise of the good; (2) general arguments showing that GG may not be the best explanation of phenomena like intentional action and desire.

4.1 The Attractions of Other Guises

We have mentioned above the case of putative agents (animals, infants) who seem to act under no evaluative guise at all. The same might happen to adult humans, when acting impulsively, automatically, or under certain forms of psychological compulsion (see Stocker 1979 and Tenenbaum 2007, chs. 6-8 for a comprehensive gallery of examples). But one character that keeps haunting GG is the so-called perverse agent: someone who, like Milton's Satan, desires and acts only under the guise of the bad. He appears to do what he takes to be bad (evil, self-destructive, or even worthless), not because of any weakness of will, but precisely *because* it is bad. And his actions seem to be fully intentional. The case of

perversity is a useful tool to explore both the resources GG already has and new directions of inquiry.

One line of reply consists in *including* perverse agents among the rest of us, by redescribing their motivation. There is *something* these agents after all regard as good: in Anscombe's treatment of Satan, what he is after is not evil per se, but "intact liberty in the unsubmissiveness of [his] will" (1963: 75). Also, if we are quite liberal with what counts as 'appearing as good' (see above), even Satan might be attributed a positive evaluation of whatever nasty feat he is up to, despite his declared disgust for all that is good. Finally, if we adopt a guise of the reasons view, it would be hard to deny that Satan believes evil to be a good reason for action (Gregory 2013).

But the inclusion strategy might seem to leave out something important. For David Velleman, a Satan acting under some specifiable good would still be "a lover of the good and the desirable—a rather sappy Satan" (1992: 19). And while merely believing in normative reasons doesn't make Satan sappy, it does make him still interested in his conduct being justified, albeit by contrarian standards. But such agents seem to act for "reasons which they acknowledge not to justify the actions" (Raz 2002: 32).

Another line of reply can be termed *exclusion*. Raz argues that perversity is *not* a case of acting for reasons, but is still intelligible as a degenerate case. Satan's *apparent* reasons are created by a deliberate inversion of values, and this is something we can understand (ibid.: 34). His behaviour is explained not by reasons, but by the non-rational allure that contrariness exercises on him. This is perhaps one place which justifies Raz's view of GG as a thesis about intentions but not about desires: it would be hard to deny that such allure is partly a matter of what Satan comes to desire.

A similar but importantly distinct strategy can be called *marginalization*. Rather than appeal to the slightly mysterious notion of "non-reasons" (ibid.: 34), an advocate of GG might recalibrate GG itself. Instead of being an all-or-nothing view, whereby failing to see x as good condemns x as non-intentional (however intelligible it may be to us), there could be a range of *degrees* of intentionality. Raz himself, when tackling the issue of expressive actions, that is, actions done *out of* some emotion (anger, fear, etc.) but not *in order to* express our

emotion, speaks of "diminished intentionality" (Raz 2010: 125). Unlike deliberate, calculated actions, we did not decide to smash the dishes for a reason (Hursthouse 1991). Yet, we have a story to tell about these actions: a story referring to facts which *could* have been our reasons for acting. Smashing the dishes *could* have been chosen as an appropriate way for us to express rage, and this counterfactual is part of what makes that action expressive of an emotion rather than just an irresistible compulsion (Raz 2002). The action, though not actually seen as good, still fell or could have easily fallen under our evaluative radar. This gives it a certain degree of intentionality (rather than just potential intentionality). Perhaps actions admittedly done 'for no particular reason' (Anscombe 1963: 25-26) belong to this region of the intentionality spectrum as well.

Likewise, one could say that perversity is a marginal, even *unhealthy* case of acting for a reason, lying neither at the centre of rational agency (vs. inclusion), nor immediately outside of it (vs. exclusion). David Sussman (2009) interprets perversity as a case of acting for reasons which undermines one's agency. In rejecting the idea of justification the perverse cut themselves off from the sort of social interaction which feeds and sustains the capacity to act. (But couldn't there be a thriving community of perverse agents? See Setiya 2010: 99-100.)

One way to reformulate GG then is to say that rational agency requires a *disposition* to be guided by the guise of the good—to care, in general, about one's action being justified (Velleman 1992: 21). This allows for cases where justification may not always or not yet be within our purview (as in expressive action and infants' behaviour), and for episodes where it may even be explicitly rejected (as in perverse action) (see Wedgwood 2008).

Alternatively GG could be presented as a claim of 'generic essence': a non-universal generalization about the essence of action and desire. That some (even many) bird exemplars fail to lay eggs does not falsify the statement that birds lay eggs. Likewise, that some humans sometimes do not act under the guise of the good would not falsify GG (Setiya 2010: 101-105, Stampe 1987: 336). One problem with this version of GG might be that GG's target population ('rational agents') is fundamentally abstract, and as such there is nothing like a rational agent's 'natural conditions' (its genetics, physiology, environment etc.). Such conditions are typically required in order to make sense of exceptions to the generalization:

a certain seagull's genes explain why she doesn't lay eggs, but can one likewise say that in Satan's case the natural conditions for rational agency have failed him?

Faced with such difficulties, GG could renounce its conceptual or metaphysical ambitions and claim that "the tendency to act and desire for reasons we regard as good is a natural-historical necessity of human life" (Setiya 2010: 104). This would be an interesting claim, but no more significant than analogous statements about the human tendency to have a partner, build shelters, or produce inscriptions. It is not clear how GG in this form could make good on the theoretical and normative promises described in section 2 above.

4.2 Better Explanations

Objections based on counterexamples stand as a warning that something is wrong either with a given formulation of GG, or with GG as a whole. In the latter case, one needs to back up one's examples with an alternative story about intentional action and desire and thus be in a position to indicate just where GG has gone wrong. In other words, one must show that GG is not the best explanation of action and desire, and suggest a better one (Raz 2002: 33, 41; Setiya 2010: 83).

Regarding the nature of desire, for instance, Velleman (1992) argued that a proper understanding of desire does not require GG as such. While desiring x *does* involve treating it as good, this should not be seen as an implicit attempt to get evaluative matters right, in the way that belief is instead an attempt to get the facts right. Whatever continuity there is between belief and desire (as stressed e.g. by Tenenbaum), it does not lie simply in their being similar attitudes towards different objects (the true and the good). Velleman proposes instead that desire must simply aim at its own satisfaction, at its content being made true by the world, without a view to whether such satisfaction is a good thing (1992: 15-16, Shah & Velleman 2005: 497. See Schroeder 2009 for different conceptions of desire).

Regarding intentional action, Setiya argued that the apparently innocent move from 'acting for a reason' to 'acting for a reason one takes to be good' can be blocked. Imagine a father escapes a house on fire without warning or rescuing his family. It is perfectly consistent of him to say: "I can't justify my action at all, the danger is not a [good] reason for me to flee. But it is the reason for which I'm fleeing" (2010: 90). His acting for a reason only requires

that *he* be able to explain—rather than justify—his action as a response to the danger. Setiya also considers a "weaker affirmation" of GG, according to which having this very belief about oneself ('I escaped because I was in danger') is already a way for the agent to "approximate rationality", without an additional representation of one's action as supported by good reasons (ibid.: 93). But what kind of rationality would one approximate? Setiya's argument proceeds by eliminating three plausible candidates: means-end rationality, internal coherence, rationality as virtuous disposition (ibid.: 95-100).

Moreover, for Setiya not only is GG not *needed* to account for intentional action and acting for a reason; it is also *insufficient* to explain a central feature originally remarked by Anscombe (1963: 11-12): if I do F intentionally, I always know (or at least believe) that I am doing F. But how do I know that? Certainly not simply because I believe I have a good reason for doing F. I might fail to do F for that reason, and in that case having the evaluative belief won't be of any help (Setiya 2007: 41). The source of this special knowledge about our own actions must lie elsewhere. In Setiya's own view, I only need an explanatory (not evaluative) belief about why I do F. Thus whenever I do F I must know why I'm doing it, and hence *that* I'm doing it. (See Raz 2010 and Tenenbaum 2009b for a reply to Setiya's view.)

5. Alternatives to GG

When GG is qualified in order to accommodate objections such as the ones above, it may be easy to lose the contrast with rival approaches to action and desire. In this final section I will briefly sketch three alternatives, so that the contrast will appear as sharp as possible. One rival approach is the already mentioned Humean theory of motivation (Smith 1987). Intentional action, and action for a reason, are sufficiently explained by appropriate belief + desire pairs: I desire to rest my eyes, I believe shutting my notebook will help, so I intend to shut my notebook. Of course, also on GG we do have relevant pairs of belief + desire/perception of good. But on the Humean theory acting for a reason is simply a matter of such belief-desire pairs standing in the right causal relation to one's action or intention, regardless of whether those pairs represent the agent's evaluative perspective. Any

rationality displayed in action is a matter for an observer to judge, rather than for the agent to aim at.

A second approach is Setiya's. In order to act for a reason, the subject's perspective does make a difference here. But the agent is only required to know why she does what she does, without taking any normative or evaluative stance. In Setiya's view 'taking p for a reason' is a complex representational and motivational state, a 'desire-like belief' the agent must attribute to herself (Setiya 2007: 40-45). In this picture action for reasons seems no less (and possibly more) an intellectual affair than in GG.

A third approach advances an objective reading of the concept of 'guise' of the good. As in the previous proposals, the evaluative aspect need not be within the agent's perspective. But the agent needs to act in view of something which, in fact or *de re*, is connected to the good. For example, perverse action will be a matter of desiring (*qua* bad) a bad instance of what is, in fact, a good sort of thing, e.g. an immoral instance of pleasure. Action and desire are made intelligible not, as on GG, by any self-justifying perception, but by one's reasons 'catching up' (even in twisted ways) with the correct values (see Clark 2010, and MacDonald 2003).

6. Summary

The guise of the good thesis owes its recurring appeal to the promise of explaining practical aspects of our lives (desire, intention, action) as essentially aiming at rationality of some sort, and thus as putting us in a relation to value, at least as this appears to us. Critics object that GG fails to capture perfectly intelligible cases of desire and action, and that evaluation is not required by action and motivation as such. The debate proceeds by GG theorists refining the content and status of their view in order to accommodate problematic cases, while also legitimately casting doubt on the cogency of the alternative views that underlie those objections.

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