

The Undesirable & the Adesirable¹

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The guise of the good thesis can be understood as an attempt to distinguish between human motivations that are intelligible as desires and those that are not. I propose, first, that we understand the *intelligibility* at stake here as the kind necessary for the experience of reactive attitudes, both negative and positive, to the behavior and motivations of an agent. Given this, I argue that the thesis must be understood as proposing substantive content restrictions on how human agents perceive objects of their desires; it cannot be a purely formal constraint. Moreover, while proponents of the guise of the good thesis who posit substantive content restrictions on human desire are right to do so, they are mistaken to claim that we always desire the *apparently good*. Instead, I propose a different limit: the naturally attractive. This alternative to the guise of the good thesis nonetheless captures the compelling idea that human desires are intelligent, quasi-perceptual responses to the world.

I. Introduction

Persistent throughout philosophical history is the claim that we necessarily desire and intend in light of apparent goodness. I will here refer to this as *the guise of the good* thesis. Not only is some version of the claim recognizable in the thought of figures such as Socrates, Aristotle, Spinoza, Aquinas, Hobbes, Kant, and Sartre, it has recently re-emerged in contemporary philosophy, defended in some form by, among others, David Gauthier, Dennis Stampe, Warren Quinn, Barbara Herman, Christine Korsgaard, T.M. Scanlon, and Joseph Raz.²

A glance at these lists and one may be struck by the ubiquity of the claim across philosophical outlooks that are otherwise vastly divergent. This might suggest that the

¹ I am grateful to Susan Wolf, Samuel Reis-Dennis, Thomas E. Hill Jr., John Lawless, Ryan Preston-Roeder, Benjamin Bagley, Ram Neta and Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, for discussion of this essay and surrounding issues. I have also benefited from comments from a reviewer at *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and from discussion at The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Rice University, The College of William and Mary, Miami University of Ohio, and The University of Chicago.

² David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Dennis Stampe, “The Authority of Desire,” *The Philosophical Review* 96 (1987), 335–81. Warren Quinn, “Putting Rationality in Its Place,” in Warren Quinn (ed.), *Morality and Action*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Barbara Herman, “Making Room for Character” in *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, Stephen Engstrom & Jennifer Whiting (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Joseph Raz, “The Guise of the Good,” in *Desire, Practical Reason, and the Good*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), Sergio Tenenbaum (ed.)

thesis is undeniable—indeed, Donald Davidson once wrote that it has “an air of self-evidence.”³ But there are others who are just as certain of its falsity. Michael Stocker, for example, reports that the seeming pervasiveness of the claim that we only desire the apparent good “affords [him] no pleasure, since that view. . . is clearly and simply false.”⁴ The rest of us may find ourselves wavering somewhere in between, perhaps sensing that there is something compelling about the thesis, while also having some inkling that it seems altogether too neat.

Many of those who endorse the thesis do so because it serves as a premise in certain attractive theoretical projects.⁵ And it is often understood as putting certain conceptual limits on how to understand phenomena such as *akrasia*. In short, there are different reasons and motivations, other than apparent self-evidence, for accepting the thesis. And, of course, there are alternative ways of interpreting it. Here I will focus on one interpretation, neo-Aristotelian in outlook, which emphasizes the particular way in which we must understand human desire and action as distinct from other kinds of movements—e.g. of non-rational animals, plants, and natural events such as the crashing of waves. Part of what is unsatisfying about a straightforward denial of the thesis is the nagging sense that cases in which there is *nothing* apparently good in what a human being purports to desire strike us as being *unintelligible* in some way. Such attractions and the movements they give rise to seem to involve not human desire and action, but inclination, compulsion, or mechanism, instead. To understand something as an action performed by a human agent—defenders of the thesis contend—we must not see the agent as simply subject to forces, in the way that we see other natural events.⁶ Defenders of the thesis account for this

³ Donald Davidson, “How is Weakness of Will Possible?” in *Essays on Actions and Events*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 27.

⁴ Michael Stocker, “Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 76:12, (1979) 738–53, 739. Gary Watson, Peter Railton and David Velleman, either explicitly argue against the thesis, or have developed views about the nature of human motivation that entail its denial. Gary Watson, “Free Agency,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 72, 8 (1975), 205–20. Peter Railton, “On the Hypothetical and Non-Hypothetical in Reasoning about Belief and Action,” in G. Cullity and B. Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53–79. David Velleman, “The Guise of the Good,” *Noûs* 26, 1, (1992) 3–26.

⁵ Raz writes, and Sergio Tenenbaum concurs, that the guise of the good thesis is, “. . . the keystone, keeping in place and bridging the theory of value, the theory of normativity and rationality, and the understanding of an intentional action” (2010, 134). It has also been used to show the rationally obligatory nature of *moral* demands. And one might be attracted to the thesis’ potential role in establishing what some call the “unity of the normative.” For example, if desires “aim” at goodness in the same sense that beliefs “aim” at truth, then perhaps we will be able to reach some general normative principles that govern both beliefs and desires, and epistemology and ethics can be brought together under a broad “meta-normative” project. For a recent paper that relies on the parallelism of desire and belief as evidence for the truth of the guise of the good thesis, see Karl Schafer, “Perception and the Rational Force of Desire.” *Journal of Philosophy* 110, (5) (2013): 258–81. I take the phrase “the unity of the normative” from a paper by T.M. Scanlon, who expresses his hope that “the normative domain [consists] simply of truths about reasons, including reasons for actions and reasons for belief and other attitudes” (443). “The Unity of the Normative,” *Philosophical Studies* 154 (3) (2011): 443–450.

⁶ As defenders of the thesis Matthew Boyle and Douglas Lavin write, “The most general idea of an action is the idea of a movement or change which in some sense comes ‘from the subject,’ rather than merely being the result of forces acting on the subject ‘from without.’ But this distinction between *self*-movement or *self*-change, on the one hand, and movement or change whose cause is external, on the other, must be drawn against the background of an idea of form which brings with it a standard of goodness” (175). “Goodness and Desire,” in S. Tenenbaum (ed.), *Desire, Practical Reason, and the Good*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

difference by maintaining that the mental states that are intelligible as desires, and which give rise to full-fledged human action, are sophisticated enough to be sensitive to considerations about the desirability or undesirability of their objects, understood in a normative sense. Desires are responsive, flexible and perceptive; unlike blind and brute pushes and pulls, they—like emotions—bear the marks of rationality, and bring into a satisfying explanation of an agent’s action her own take on what she is doing.⁷

Defenders also emphasize that this conclusion, meant to capture something important about human desire and action, need not assume or support naïve sanguinity about the messiness and darkness of our motivations, as this view about action is paired with a view of the mind that allows for clearly plausible explanations of akratic and “perverse” attraction and action—the kinds of cases that Stocker gives to counter the thesis. Indeed, it has been argued that the thesis is an abstract, purely formal constraint on what human action and desire must be.⁸ Thus, such a defender contends, any purported counterexample in which it seems, initially, as though an agent does something under the guise of badness, or under no evaluative guise at all, is ill-placed as the mounting of an objection. This kind of objection fails to see, and so successfully object to, what is really at issue in the thesis. Moreover, this purely formal status can partly explain why the thesis is so ubiquitous, seemingly able to attach itself to any set of views about value or morality.

However, I will argue that given at least one promising understanding of what it is for a desire or an action to be intelligible or not, the claim that the thesis is a purely formal constraint on human desire conflicts with the claim that the guise of the good thesis is necessary to retain a distinction between intelligible and unintelligible desires and actions. If the thesis is meant to mark this distinction, it cannot also be a purely formal thesis. And importantly, once the thesis is read as placing substantive content restrictions on how human agents perceive the objects of their desires, the question of whether or not human desires are under the guise of the good re-opens.

With that question re-opened, I offer a conciliatory alternative to the thesis. I will argue that we should deny it, while nonetheless maintaining much of what was attractive about it in the first place. In particular, we should retain much that comes along with thinking that desires are necessarily, in some sense, for the desirable. But we must be careful how we handle this slogan. Some denials of the thesis reject the idea that desires are for the desirable, and that an extra representation of the object as desirable to the agent hangs as an otiose, theoretical posit, unnecessary for a satisfying explanation of action. In contrast, I will argue that defenders of the thesis are right to claim that desires

⁷ For work in moral psychology that uses this idea of evaluative perception as quasi-perceptual, thoughtful and responsive, see for example Iris Murdoch’s *The Sovereignty of Good*, (London: Routledge, 1970) and “Vision and Choice in Morality,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement*, 30: 32-58; Martha Nussbaum “Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Moral attention and the moral task of literature”, *Journal of Philosophy* 2 (10): 516-29 (1985) and “The discernment of perception,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* ed. J. Clearly. Washington, DC: University Press of America (1985); Lawrence Blum, “Moral Perception and Particularity,” *Ethics* 101, no. 4 (1991); Margaret Olivia Little, “Seeing and Caring: The Role of Affect in Feminist Moral Epistemology,” in *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁸ Boyle and Lavin write “. . .to investigate the content of our concept good would require a different kind of reflection from the one in which we have been engaged: we have merely been investigating the form of this concept, and the kind of role it must play in our practical thought.” (43). For further discussion on reading the thesis as formal see Candace Vogler’s “Good and Bad in Human Action,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 87:57-68 (2013).

are for the desirable, and that we should posit whatever extra representation is needed to accommodate this. But crucially, we must distinguish between two senses of *desirable*. One may be synonymous with the *good* or the *apparently good*, but the other simply refers to those things that human beings are *able* to desire, because naturally attractive to us.

One might think this second category—the “naturally attractive”—is so thin as to be empty. But in drawing this distinction, I borrow from Aristotle’s observation that there are limits to what things human beings find naturally attractive, or in his words, “naturally pleasant.”⁹ Simultaneously, I urge that we resist the thought, encouraged by G.E. Moore and reinforced time and time again by others within this debate and without it, that there are only two senses of “desirable” available to us: one that is “normative” and refers to the good, and another that is purely descriptive, naming *anything* that we happen to find actual human beings striving for.¹⁰ This is a false dichotomy. There are constraints on what human beings find naturally attractive and desire is an intelligent, sensitive response to the world and its attractions, just as defenders of the guise of the good thesis contend. But those constraints are not set at the limits of apparent goodness, and so the receptivity of desire need not be understood as necessarily seeking out, or as responsive to, what appears good to the agent. The desirable, in this sense, includes much of what we know is *attractive* to human beings and yet—without substantive *value-theoretical* commitments about the relationship between the merely attractive and the good that have not been argued for—we have little reason to think of as either good or apparently good. Likewise, the *undesirable* is not identical to what I will here call the *adesirable*: those things that cannot be the objects of human desire because, regardless of whether they are apparently good or not, they are not in any way attractive to us.

II. The Argument From Intelligibility

Michael Stocker’s rejection of the guise of the good thesis lies largely in his ability to provide realistic descriptions of people who seem not to be acting under the guise of the good, alongside a hope that philosophers become more open to richer, more accurate descriptions of human psychology. In a foul or desperate mood, for example, a person might want to destroy something of particular worth to himself or others, directing his action toward whatever strikes him as being a *bad* thing to do. But recently, it has been argued that the guise of the good thesis cannot be rejected on the grounds that Stocker uses, as it is a purely formal thesis about the nature of human action and in itself makes no claims about the possible *content* of the attitude of desire. According to this interpretation of the thesis, human action has a teleological structure which necessarily makes use of concepts of goodness, or worthwhileness, in setting its end; it also entails a kind of self-determination, similar to the idea captured by Kant’s thought that we have the power to set any end whatsoever. The kind of counterexample that Stocker proposes is irrelevant to the plausibility of the thesis. Should a person want to do something that is in fact destructive, terrible, or cruel, he is either mistaken about its qualities or he must,

⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1148a15.

¹⁰ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 67. Some neo-Aristotelians may also be sympathetic to this attempt to resist this sharp distinction between the realms of the purely descriptive and the purely normative or evaluative, as Bernard Williams and Iris Murdoch (among others) have done.

after all, see what good there may be in his cruelty, such as the exercise of his powers or an expression of his dominance over others.

However, given another central motivation for the thesis, it is doubtful whether this purely formal interpretation of the thesis is plausible. This motivation is best illustrated by taking into consideration one of the standard arguments that has been given in favour of the guise of the good thesis: the thought that if there is in fact *nothing* that an agent finds good about doing or desiring something, then whatever her motivation toward it is, it is not a desire, and whatever her body might end up doing lacks the hallmarks of full-fledged action. Anscombe memorably illustrates this point by providing examples of people whom we cannot fully understand as agents:

It will be instructive to anyone who thinks [that there are no necessary conditions on the objects of desire] to approach someone and say: 'I want a saucer of mud' or 'I want a twig of mountain ash'. He is likely to be asked what for; to which let him reply that he does not want it for anything, he just wants it. . ."¹¹

She then suggests that as long as we are taking this man seriously, there are two ways for us to go on. One is to determine what it is that this man takes to be good, or desirable, about having a saucer of mud, or twig of mountain ash. Perhaps he wants to pretend to be a witch, or perhaps he'd like to make a shabby-chic centerpiece for the dining room. But if we can find no such "desirability condition," we will have to defer to our second option and conclude that this man is, as Anscombe puts it, "a babbling loon."¹² A similar discussion involves a different seeming action, or set of actions: ". . .if someone hunted out all the green books in his house and spread them out carefully on the roof, and gave [the answer 'No particular reason'] to the question "Why?" his words would be unintelligible unless as joking and mystification."¹³

One central lesson we may draw from Anscombe's discussion is that our desires are not simply brute and blind.¹⁴ Rather, they are receptive or sensitive to considerations for or against desiring things and so, like the emotions, are in some sense thoughtful or cognitively-laden. And in particular, Anscombe suggests, they are sensitive to considerations about the *goodness* of what is wanted or intended. When a person's desire seems utterly

¹¹ Anscombe, *Intention*, 70. It is a good question whether Anscombe actually endorses the guise of the good thesis in *Intention*, as (I'll mention below) she also states that some intentional actions, such as doodling, can be done "for no reason", and so, we can safely assume, for no reason that consists in some apparent good (25). This example should also put pressure on those who want to understand Anscombe as endorsing the guise of the good thesis *and* as interpreting it as about the relationship between intentions and reasons. For my purposes, it is enough that her examples are often cited as motivation in favour of the thesis. *Intention*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹² *Intention*, 70.

¹³ *Intention*, 26-27.

¹⁴ For example, in the *Republic*, Socrates is typically read as claiming that at least some set of our appetitive desires are not under the guise of the good, and these desires are typically translated as "bare cravings," "blind desires," or "drives." This is classically read as Plato's denial of the guise of the good thesis, and as a rejection of Socratic intellectualism. A defender of the guise of the good thesis could acknowledge that our thirst is for drink, and not "good drink", but deny that these appetites are characteristically *human* appetites (as they do not involve the exercise of characteristically human capacities of, e.g. thought or rationality). Alternatively, one might re-interpret Plato's comments, as Jessica Moss has done. Moss, "Against Bare Urges and Good-Independent Desires: Appetites in Republic IV" (*forthcoming*).

indifferent to such considerations—when the man who wants a saucer of mud simultaneously sees *nothing* good about having it, he “just wants it”—we encounter a certain kind of difficulty in understanding him. We may get the sense that to think of the man as having a *desire* isn’t right, perhaps concluding instead that he is experiencing a brute urge. A person suffering from OCD, for example, who washes her hands seven times before leaving home, need not see this as something *good* to do—nor would we think of her motivations as desires.¹⁵

Notice that this argument in favour of the thesis relies on a rough, intuitive sense of a distinction between those motivations that are “intelligible” as desires and those that are not. And it is a familiar thought that in order to restore intelligibility to a movement in order to see it as a human action, we must understand the performance of that action in light of its ability to be rationally assessed. Intelligibility, on this interpretation of it, is thus best understood as approximate rationality. Take, for example, McDowell’s description of this sort of intelligibility, contrasting the kind of explanation we give of certain of our attitudes with the explanations we give of other natural phenomena:

[The] concepts of the propositional attitudes have their proper home in explanations of a special sort: explanations in which things are made intelligible by being revealed to be, or to approximate to being, as they rationally ought to be. This is to be contrasted with a style of explanation in which one makes things intelligible by representing their coming into being as a particular instance of how things generally tend to happen.¹⁶

But though we might understand that there is a distinction between attitudes and movements that become intelligible through approximate rationality and those that do not, it can be difficult to have a firm grip on what the difference between intelligibility and unintelligibility really amounts to. There are, after all, different ways in which something can be more or less intelligible. Moreover, it is a difficult and substantive question what it is for an attitude or action to be as it rationally ought to be. Are we beholden to arriving at an answer before we begin to explore an attitude’s intelligibility?

¹⁵ One could motivate a similar argument by assuming a more Kantian approach to the mind. For example, one might start with the basic thought that desires are in some sense necessary for action, but that in order to understand an agent as acting *freely*, or (to avoid the connotations of that terminology) without being *compelled* by her desires, she must also have the capacity to act only on those desires that are also for something that she reflectively endorses or takes to be *good* in some sense. Should a person fail to “act” under such a guise, this “action” is best understood as a kind of compulsion or determination by her desires or inclinations. For Andrews Reath, Christine Korsgaard and Alan Gewirth, the guise of the good thesis is one step along the way to showing that moral demands are rationally overriding, as acting against them involves acting against commitments one already endorses (simply in virtue of being a rational agent). This is one way to understand how Kant argued for such a conclusion, but Thomas E. Hill Jr. argues that while Kant certainly endorses the claim that one must act under the guise of some personal good, it is an open question whether the stronger version of the claim defended by Reath and Korsgaard (that the object must be taken to be in a sense, objectively good) is also defended by Kant, and he cautions against that interpretation. There is a way to apply the arguments I will give here to a neo-Kantian defense of the guise of the good thesis, but I will not do so explicitly. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Humanity”, *Kant-Studien* 77 (1-4), 1986. Reath, “Did Kant Hold that Rational Volition is *Sub Ratione Boni*?” in Robert Johnson and Mark Timmons, eds. *Reason, Value and Respect: Kantian Themes from the Philosophy of Thomas E. Hill, Jr.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For Hill’s response to Reath, see “Legislating the Moral Law and Taking One’s Choices to be Good,” *Philosophical Books*, 49:2, 97-106, 2008.

¹⁶ McDowell, “Functionalism and anomalous monism” in *Mind, Value, and Reality*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 328.

I propose that in order to both arrive at a more concrete sense of what intelligibility amounts to and to see why the distinction between the intelligible and unintelligible is important when it comes to attitudes such as desire, it is worth considering what *role* this kind of intelligibility plays in our ethical assessments of and responses to one another more generally. As Anscombe elaborates on this point, the claim is not about an inability to use language to describe what is happening when a man “just wants” to line his roof with green books. Our bafflement occurs at a different level. When we encounter this kind of unintelligibility, we are not “excluding a form of words from the language; we are saying ‘we cannot understand such a man.’”¹⁷ Moreover, we should notice that encountering this kind of obscurity in another person’s mind and actions brings with it a shift in our reactions toward him. Rather than criticizing or correcting or in other ways assessing him, at an ethical level, for his purported “desire”, we may find ourselves *withdrawing* such reactions entirely. As P.F. Strawson puts the point in his discussion of the participant stance, “Seeing an agent [as one whose picture of the world is an insane delusion; or as one whose behaviour, or a part of whose behaviour is unintelligible to us]. . . tends to inhibit ordinary interpersonal attitudes in general.”¹⁸ Where we might criticize a person’s desire to do something cruel or imprudent, or praise someone’s desire to do something kind—using standards that are *relevant* to assessing one’s desires, but not constitutive of them—we withdraw either sort of reaction when his motivations or attitudes are *unintelligible*. Rather than criticize or correct him, we are instead inclined to manage him, treat him, study him, or simply keep our distance. He’s not *strange* in the same way that a person who does something unusual, but nonetheless intelligible, can be strange.¹⁹ Rather, we take what Strawson calls *the objective stance* toward him—at least in regards to this aspect of his psychology. The emotional reactions that we experience from this stance, if any, will include “non-reactive” ones such as pity, fear, and even forms of annoyance, but not indignation, resentment, or certain forms of love, admiration, or attachment. Simply put, we do not see him as a fellow human agent. And if we cannot restore a certain level of this kind of intelligibility to his mind and behaviour, we will not ask the further question of whether he is *justified* in doing what he is doing, or whether he is appropriately subject to other sorts of thick ethical evaluations. Such reactions and evaluations have as a basic background supposition the intelligibility of the object of our assessment. Intelligibility of this sort, then, is not a “normative” category in the sense that it supplies agents with reasons to desire or act in certain ways; but it is “normative” in (1) the sense that it is important, if not indispensable, for our ethical reactions to one another in light of our motivations and actions, and (2) that what it is sensitive to (at least according to the guise of the good thesis) are considerations that are *themselves* evaluative.

This is the crucial point. If we are interested in using the guise of the good thesis to track intelligibility of this sort, it becomes difficult to see how it could remain a purely formal one. Notice that it doesn’t help our puzzlement, for example, to learn that

¹⁷ *Intention*, 27.

¹⁸ Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, (London: Methuen & Co., 2008), 16-17.

¹⁹ For example, some artists are strange in the sense that they are unusual—the man responsible for Austin’s “Cathedral of Junk” is strange in this sense. But we understand *what he is doing and why*, and there is no need to take up the objective stance toward him in light of what he is doing. Other artists are less intelligible, and so are strange in both senses; others might play with this distinction.

Anscombe's man perceives or construes the having of saucers of mud or the having of twigs of mountain ash as *intrinsically* good. Nor does it help to know that he wants it because it would be instrumentally good, but for an end that we find unintelligible as the object of desire: imagine, for example, that he construes the twig of mountain ash as necessary for the final good end of leaning it against the side of his house. This only pushes the problem back a level, as we would simply need to know: Well, what is good about doing *that*? He might as well "just want it." Thus, a "successful" desirability condition does not just involve the agent viewing the desired object or action as good in *any* sense: it must reference some aspect of the object or action that a human agent could plausibly take to be good. As Talbot Brewer puts this point in his own defense of the guise of the good thesis, "[The idea that actions are expressive of one's conception of the good] carries the interesting implication that when we attempt to bring agency into view, we must assume a partial community of shared or at least mutually intelligible values."²⁰

I want to emphasize the significance of this observation for the discussion here. If it is also to make sense of the intelligibility of human desire and action the guise of the good thesis cannot be understood as a purely formal claim about their structure. The values that guide an agent's actions, even if they are deeply and profoundly mistaken, must nonetheless themselves be intelligible to us as plausible values.²¹ And even profoundly mistaken but nonetheless intelligible plausible values cannot, in general, be conjured *ex nihilo* from an agent's "empty, giddy will."²²

So far, I have argued that the guise of the good thesis is interested in demarcating the line between intelligible desires and actions, and motivations and behavior not intelligible as desires and actions. Given this, I've argued that there must be content restrictions on what kind of goodness one can desire and act under the guise of. However, one might object that at least some of the cases of mere behavior seem to fail to be full-blown actions not because they lack a plausible desirability condition, but because they are compulsive, in the sense involves the agent losing control of herself in the face of an irresistible desire.²³ The person suffering from OCD, who washes her hands compulsively, seems to not be performing an action because her behavior is out of her control, not because there is nothing apparently good about excessively washing one's hands.

I think, however, that it is a strength of the guise of the good thesis as a necessary condition on action that it emphasizes responsiveness to the world over control. Think, for example, of a person who carefully and meticulously engages in an action (thus demonstrating a kind of executive control), and who can stop doing what he is doing should he feel like it (thus demonstrating an ability to control how much and when he does this action). But again, imagine he doesn't seem to see anything even remotely desirable in what he is doing and we will still find him puzzling. For example, think back to Anscombe's second example. Imagine a man carefully and deliberately finding all of the green books in his house in order to put them on the roof. Should it turn out that he

²⁰ Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

²¹ This is why, as Anscombe suggests, we find the desires of a genocidal Nazi officer intelligible. We do not think that genocide is even plausibly good, but we do think that it is plausible that a human being *would think it something good*, mistakenly.

²² Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection" in *The Sovereignty of Good*, (London: Routledge, 1970), 36. My thinking about this issue has, in many ways, been influenced by Murdoch.

²³ Thank you to an anonymous reviewer at *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* for raising this worry.

“just wants to do this”, we will still not understand him, even if his actions are carefully deliberate (under his control) and even if he is able to cease the action should he choose to do so. If we try to achieve an assessment of him is in light of this desire that he has, we may find ourselves unable to do so, unlike the way in which he becomes immediately open for (broadly) ethical assessment if we find out that he wants to do this to ward off a certain species of woodpecker, or as a piece of conceptual art, or to prove a philosophical point.

Moreover, even though the guise of the good thesis is not to be read as a sufficient condition for action, we might also reflect on the significance, or insignificance of control to action by considering cases in which a person does seem to lack control, but seems strongly guided by an appearance of goodness. Think of an artist who experiences her remarkable artistic creation as something completely compulsive, for example. She cannot stop to rest, or sleep, or eat. She must *get it out*. This kind of behaviour does seem paradigmatically more like human action—worth praising and crediting to the artist, and treating as revelatory of her artistic vision—than even the most controlled, careful and deliberate placing of all of one’s green books on one’s roof just for the sake of doing so.²⁴

III. An Illuminating Objection To The Thesis

Keeping the importance of this kind of intelligibility in mind, we are in a better position to see why a common denial of it should strike us as dissatisfying. This particular denial emerges from an allegiance to an alternative theory of human desire and action. Perhaps *the* standard alternative is one that I briefly alluded to above and is typically labeled Humean. According to the Humean, there exist two basic mental states with two different functions: one representational (Humean “beliefs”) and the other motivational (Humean “desires”). Humean “desires” are necessary for the performance of an action, and although they may have certain formal constraints (such as a direction of fit, and that they take as their objects states of affairs), they need not specify that what is to be brought about has qualities that the agent sees as *good*. Indeed, such states *lack* representational content, and so would *a fortiori* lack that particular representational content. While Humean “beliefs” might contain this content, they are motivationally inert and need to be paired with a desire in order for an agent to perform an action.

In their defense of the guise of the good thesis, Matthew Boyle and Douglas Lavin emphasize that there is a large methodological difference between their approach—rooted in Aristotle—and the Humean one. Like McDowell, they encourage us to notice the distinctiveness of the kind of explanation we need to give of human attitudes such as desire. In particular, they argue that an explanation of human action needs more than reference to a psychological state understood as the efficient cause of certain movements. The guise of the good thesis, for Boyle and Lavin, recognizes the need for an irreducible teleological explanation of action that takes into account what the agent represents as good or worth pursuing. This is a kind of explanation, they point out, that the Humean is unwilling to countenance.

²⁴ My observations here are not novel: For a recent discussion of aesthetic responsibility and the (un)importance of control, see Nomy Arpaly’s *Merit, Meaning, and Human Bondage: An Essay on Free Will*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Susan Wolf, “Responsibility, Moral and Otherwise.” *Inquiry* 58:2. See also Bernard Williams’ discussion of practical necessities, and Wolf’s earlier work on responsibility.

Though I am sympathetic to the concerns that Boyle and Lavin raise, my objection to the Humean thesis rests on different grounds. According to the Humean, no representational guise is needed for a person's desire to be intelligible as such. *A fortiori*, there are no content constraints on the objects of intelligible desire. To illustrate, take a discussion from Michael Smith's original defense of the theory. There, he suggests that knowing of a man who has a "yen" to drink a can of paint that he has always had this yen is enough to lend him a "partial justification" for drinking the paint. For Smith, this "partial justification" lies in the agent's having a *motivating reason* that, unlike a *normative reason*, explains the action in terms of the agent's possession of a motivational state, rather than justifying the action according to some independent requirement.²⁵

When considering this example in abstraction, we may find appealing the thought that this episode of paint drinking really is no different from other actions, given that it seems to share with them a certain formal, instrumental structure. An agent had a "pro-attitude" toward *x* and did whatever it was necessary to have or bring *x* about. But it is difficult to find this a satisfying response to the particular challenge I have raised here. If we do not find a person's drinking of a can of paint intelligible, learning that he has always had this "yen" to do so doesn't provide us with any illumination when he finally takes a gulp. Likewise, that a person has a motivational disposition to eat clumps of hair or scratch herself until she bleeds doesn't help us to see her behavior as resulting from intelligible desires.²⁶ The "partial justification" that she has to satisfy these urges, whatever it amounts to, is not one that is relevant to addressing the concern about intelligibility. In other words, the notion of "desire" used in such views is so thin that we are left without a way of distinguishing—of all our motivationally potent mental states—which are expressions of the sort of human agency that can merit our interpersonal attitudes and our ethical assessments, and which can do nothing of the sort. If we want to retain this thinner notion of desire, we can, of course, do so. But should we become interested in the kind of desire that defenders of the guise of the good thesis typically take themselves to be interested in, we will have to supplement our psychological theories with the desires that defenders of the thesis are trying to account for—in which case the thesis re-emerges as a potential analysis of this important subset of our

²⁵ Michael Smith, "The Humean Theory of Motivation", *Mind* 96 381: 36-61 (1987). To be fair, it is hard to interpret this as being a *rejection* of the thesis, as the discussion of motivating and justifying reasons seems tangential. Thank you for a reviewer from *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* for pointing this out. For a more recent discussion of the Humean theory, see Neil Sinhababu, "The Humean Theory of Motivation Reformulated and Defended", *Philosophical Review* 118(4): 465-500.

²⁶ Kieran Setiya offers an alternative, "causal-psychological" condition on action that denies the guise of the good thesis, but seems to run into the same problem as the Humean theory. Interpreting the guise of the good thesis in terms of "normative reasons", he argues that we do not need to act under the guise of a "normative" reason, but only an *explanatory* one. In response to a case of Thomas Nagel's (of a person trying to put a coin into a pencil sharpener in order to get a drink from a nearby vending machine) Setiya suggests that learning that this person has been *conditioned* to have this motivational disposition *does* make his behaviour intelligible to us as an action, as we now have an explanation for his behaviour (65-67). He then suggests that such cases are "rare", but not impossible. But regardless of the ubiquity of this kind of case, his assessment of it repeats the unsatisfying point that makes the guise of the good thesis, in contrast, compelling. I agree with Setiya that we should not think that these cases are "impossible", but nonetheless, we face difficulty in seeing this behaviour as an exercise of human agency. The motivational disposition in this case, even when we are aware it has been brought about by conditioning or training, fails to do the work. It may even deepen our sense that this person is operating mechanistically. Setiya, *Reasons Without Rationalism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

motivational attitudes and behaviour.²⁷ In short, the Humean theory of motivation, in simply *denying* the guise of the good thesis in favour of its view of human agency, *erases* the distinction that the guise of the good thesis is trying to capture.

Perhaps there is a way to mark this distinction that is consistent with the basic Humean framework, but there is a dilemma that defenders of the guise of the good thesis should press on attempts at doing so. There are, after all, Humean views that rely on further formal constraints to account for full blown human action. For example, we might try to distinguish these bizarre cases of motivation from intelligible cases of desire by relying on coherence between an agent's desires or a kind of second-order endorsement. And Humeans sometimes claim that agents whose psychologies satisfy particular Humean-friendly standards of rationality, including full non-normative information, will turn out to *lack* these sorts of bizarre motivational states.²⁸ But the challenge is this: either these added constraints, or these background assumptions about rationality, will include something that amounts to an endorsement of the guise of the good thesis, or they will not do the trick. For example, learning that the paint-drinker's "yen" is one that he also identifies with, or desires to be effective in his actions, renders him even more baffling, not less so.²⁹ If paint-drinking (or wanting a saucer of mud or twig of mountain ash) is not the right sort of object of a desire in this sense (so a defender of the guise of the good thesis will point out) it is not because it

²⁷ As an illustration of this dialectic, consider James Lenman's criticism of Anscombe's discussion. Lenman grants that there is something unintelligible about a man who wants a saucer of mud, but argues that this only suggests the existence of a formal constraint on desire: "For bare intelligibility we don't need a desirability characteristic, just an explicit specification of propositional content" (39). As he puts the point more colorfully, "...there is some advice we might properly give to anyone who wants something very weird: *spell it out clearly in propositional form*" (38). Tenenbaum echoes this point: "...a saucer of mud is neither an action nor a state of affairs. The fact that one cannot want a saucer of mud is arguably no more surprising than the fact that one cannot believe a saucer of mud; 'saucer of mud' is simply not a proper complement to 'wants (to/that)' or 'believes (that)'" (4). But the sense of intelligibility that I am focusing on here won't be provided in these cases by merely restating their content in propositional form. We can specify the "desire" of the compulsive hand washer in this way—*I want that I wash my hands seven more times*, or of the mud-wanter—*I want that I eat the saucer of mud*, but this does not help us understand this motivation as a desire in the relevant sense. Lenman, "The Saucer of Mud, the Kudzu Vine and the Uxorious Cheetah: Against Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism in Metaethics," *European Journal of Analytic Philosophy*, 1:2; 37–50. Tenenbaum, "Guise of the Good", *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, First Edition, Hugh LaFollette (ed.), (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013).

²⁸ In his recent defense of the Humean theory against quasi-perceptual theories of desire, Derek Baker considers the importance of intelligibility: "Since agents will typically (perhaps necessarily) meet some minimal threshold of rationality, most of their choices will conform to their background beliefs about what they ought to do" (21). He also suggests that, "...since the Humean can hold that desires have a (nonrepresentational) phenomenology, they can explain any default intelligibility of our actions in terms of feelings of excitement, pleasure, and distress that the potential satisfaction and distress of our desires brings" (22). But this point suggests to me that we must still be trying to capture a different sense of intelligibility. I may know that a person with a compulsion to line her roof with green books is excited by the prospect of doing so and may be distressed if she is prevented from doing so, but this does very little (if anything) to achieve the sort of intelligibility under discussion here. Baker, "The Abductive Case for Humeanism over Quasi-Perceptual Theories of Desire," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 8, 2 (2014).

²⁹ A similar point, though about love and not desire, is made by Niko Kolodny in his criticism of Harry Frankfurt's "No Reasons" view of love. After describing a case in which he experiences an urge to help a random student in his daughter's class, and noting how unlike love such an urge is, Kolodny rejects the idea that adding a second-order desire can help the problem, writing, "The real difficulty... is that these additions do not help, so long as they are as groundless as the original desire. To suppose that I am assailed not only by an urge to help Fred, but also by an urge to be with him and by emotions that vary depending how I believe he fares, is only to make my psychological state more alarming" (144). Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003).

fails to cohere or conform with an agent's other interests or because he doesn't endorse it all the way down: it's because there is something *about* paint-drinking that cannot be fully captured by the non-normative facts about it that makes it so. It's because, as the case is stipulated (a defender of the guise of the good thesis should press) there's *nothing* that the agent sees as *plausibly good* about doing this sort of thing. Alternatively, should the background constraints on minimal rationality *exclude* such bizarre motivations from the start, we'll be right to question why this is so. The worry, then, is not that these alternative views cannot put constraints on our motivations to determine what is an "desire" of the kind we are interested in, and what is not – it is that the constraints they place are either not of the right kind or will amount to an endorsement of the very thesis that is being resisted.

At this point, one might respond to my criticisms of this rejection of the thesis by suggesting that perhaps the parties involved are talking past one another. Why think that the guise of the good thesis is placing a necessary condition on human *desire*? Why not think, rather, that it is simply demarcating two different kinds of desire—one for those things that we find it intelligible for human beings to desire, and one for things that we do not? And this hardly seems to be a substantive psychological thesis. What critics of the thesis are interested in is this more general class of all the mental states which can move us.

Here, I think it is important to keep our philosophical interests transparent. Defenders of the guise of the good thesis need not deny that mental states other than desires for what is intelligibly desirable can move us and explain our behavior in ways that pushes and pulls from outside of our mental lives do not. And we are, as Strawson points out, free to take on the objective stance toward a human being when viewing him as an object of intellectual curiosity. What defenders of the thesis were interested in is that class of mental state that moves us as rational, perceptive, agents—beings whom, I've suggested, we can in principle assess and react to from the participant stance. We can, simultaneously, have an interest in the broader class of "motivations" or psychological causes that simply move us, but we should not let that interest cloud out, or obscure, our interest in this smaller sub-class.

IV. The Shiny, The Huge, and The Charming

I have argued that we should not understand the guise of the good thesis as purely formal if we are also interested in using it to capture the distinction between intelligibility and unintelligibility. This aspiration challenges Humean denials of the thesis, in particular, but it also challenges neo-Aristotelian theses which render the guise of the good thesis purely formal. I have argued that the intelligibility of a desire or an action cannot be secured by the citation of anything the agent purports to see as good, whatsoever. The goods themselves must be intelligible to us, as plausible human values. There are, in other words, content restrictions entailed by an endorsement of the thesis.

But is it true, as Brewer suggests, that we need a set of mutually intelligible *values* to achieve intelligibility of an agent's desires? I will argue that, in fact, an understanding of natural human attraction suffices. In other words, all that we need to cite in order to make sense of an agent's desire or action is something that it is intelligible for a human being to be attracted to; and those things that are intelligibly attractive to human beings need not themselves be good or appearances of goodness. Importantly, this is not to say that the agent herself must see the object of her desire as "naturally attractive to human

beings” – why would she care about that? It is, however, to claim that there must be some quality of the thing that she is attracted to, that she represents as a quality of that thing, and that is itself a quality that is plausibly naturally attractive to human beings.³⁰

The inspiration for this claim also comes from Aristotle. In Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle observes that along with *akrasia* and *vice*, another bad state for a human being to be in is *thêriotês*, translated as the “bestial”, “beastly”, or “brutish.” Such states, he suggests intriguingly, are “less grave than vice, but more *frightening*.”³¹ Another notable feature about this category of evaluation, as Pavlos Kontos notes, is that Aristotle’s examples of beastly desires are “puzzling”, in that—even keeping in mind cultural differences between the ancient Greeks and ourselves—they “hardly have any moral relevance.”³² Indeed, they do not seem to exist along one dimension of *badness*, moral or otherwise: Aristotle includes examples of things that are terrible, such as ripping a child from a womb, but he also notes benign things such as plucking hairs and eating dirt.

We can make sense of Aristotle’s categories in the follow manner. When a person’s desires are beastly, or when she performs a beastly action, we cannot understand what she is doing. She exhibits *behavior*, but is not attracted to something that Aristotle deems “naturally pleasant”, or what I have been calling “naturally attractive” to human beings.³³ Such things are not *undesirable* (that is, bad); they are *adesirable*. Because of this, we cannot evaluate or react to her in the same ways that we can evaluate a person who desires or does something that we find intelligible to desire or do, even when that thing is bad and her actions vicious. And though the distinction between the human and the bestial is important, it should not be conflated with a distinction between the moral and the immoral, or the virtuous and the vicious. While it may be necessary for our moral and ethical evaluations of a person’s character that we first find her motivations intelligible, it may not at all reflect a person’s bad ethical character that she has unintelligible ones. We just cannot understand her. As Aristotle writes, “One sort of vice is human, and this is called simple vice; another sort is called vice with an added condition, and this is said to be bestial or diseased vice” (1149a17). Human or “simple” vice, though indeed sometimes directed toward things that are bad, is less opaque to us than bestial, or diseased “vice.”³⁴ And we react to a beastly person in a way that reflects this: we will not characterize or assess her behaviour in a morally robust way; she is not subject to the same attitudes, such as indignation or resentment, that are natural responses to (humanly)

³⁰ Thank you to a reviewer from *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* for emphasizing the importance of this clarification.

³¹ NE 1150a37, my emphasis.

³² Kontos, “Non-Virtuous Intellectual States in Aristotle’s Ethics”, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XLVII, Brad Inwood (ed.), p. 224, fn. 39.

³³ Though I am not endorsing the claim that things that are naturally attractive are also literally “pleasant.”

³⁴ John Thorpe has reached a conclusion that is very similar, I think, to the one that I have suggested here. On his reading of Aristotle, “. . . normal people have normal desires; but desires can diverge from the norm in two ways, either in their intensity, or in the *naturalness of their objects*. Sinners with normal desires function in the ethical realm of vice; those with unusually intense desires function in the realm of *akrasia*; those who desire abnormal objects function in the ethical realm of brutish vice; and finally, sinners whose desires are abnormal in both ways function in the realm of brutish *akrasia*.” (682) Thorpe makes a point to emphasize that “normal” here neither means statistically normal, nor non-vicious, as it is precisely the “sinner” who has normal, but vicious desires. Thorpe, “Aristotle on Brutishness,” *Dialogue*, 42, Fall 2003, p. 682.

vicious desire or action. Aristotle observes that we react to the beastly person with *fear*; Strawson would add other, non-reactive emotions such as revulsion, and pity.

I do not mean to present either a theory of attractiveness or a theory of value here, and because of this, one might be suspicious of my insistence on the distinction between attractiveness and goodness. But there are other ways I can nonetheless motivate the distinction, putting off positive theoretical work for now. First, consider examples of things that are plausibly naturally attractive. If we were to ask someone, “Why do you want that?” it would be intelligible if she were to answer, “Because it’s so shiny!” or “Because it’s so huge!” We do not—I am proposing—also need to think of either shininess or hugeness as themselves good, or apparently good, even to the speaker, in order to find this sort of answer immediately intelligible. Anscombe herself provides one sort of action that does seem immediately intelligible through simply citing a common thought about human beings: that sometimes we doodle, for no reason at all. Though she does not do so, we could fill this example out by suggesting that human beings find it naturally attractive to engage in loosely structured, productive movement for its own sake.

What about the category of the *adesirable*: those things that are not naturally attractive to us, at all? Above, I’ve already suggested that empty appeals to goodness do not help to make these kinds of objects and actions intelligible. One cannot “simply want” to drink cans of paint, endlessly count blades of grass, or rub one’s face along the northeast sides of buildings; such movements do not become intelligible to us, even if the agent somehow sees such activities as intrinsically worthwhile or good to do, or as ways of achieving some other, unintelligible end that she sees as intrinsically worthwhile or good to do.

Now, the examples that I gave of natural human attraction are very simple, and one might think that this renders the desires based on these attractions too brute and simplistic to be possible contenders for being “under the guise of the good” in the first place. Shininess and hugeness are such crude aesthetic properties that being attracted to them is a lot like being attracted to salt, or sugar. Such examples, one might argue, are thus no real threat to the spirit of the thesis. Again, one of the neo-Aristotelian motivations behind the thesis is to maintain that characteristically human desires are intelligent and flexible in ways that suggest that they are rationally-evaluable responses to the qualities of the object one desires. One’s desires for these sorts of things—such as the brute appetites for food and drink—do not require any conceptual sophistication and do not become refined upon rational correction. But the guise of the good thesis, a defender might conclude, was never meant to be true of those very basic appetites.

But we can find examples of more intelligent, refinable desires or attractions that need not be understood as under the guise of the good. Consider the quality of being charming in conversation. Now notice what it would take to really be attuned to what is charming about a person in conversation: one would need to be perceptive to, for example, the ability to quickly bring a relevant anecdote into contact with what has been said, or a person who has an easy-going and non-embarrassed manner, etc., as opposed to somebody who gets by with flattery or mimicry, somebody who is powerful and threatening, or somebody who is simply astoundingly physically beautiful. Over time, one’s attraction to charming people can be refined—one can come to learn what it really is for someone to be genuinely charming in conversation, and one’s perception of charm becomes more developed based on this learning. This way of understanding this attraction and its capacity for refinement captures at least part of one neo-Aristotelian conception of the

rationality of our passions.³⁵ The desire in question here is still informed by an agent's deployment of concepts and involves a way of seeing the world that could be more or less accurate. Thus, we can retain the Aristotelian insight that, as Boyle and Lavin put it, what is distinctive about us and about our characteristic motivations, is that we are rational, and that ". . .to be a rational creature means just this: to live by thought, which is to say by the employment of concepts."³⁶

A defender of the guise of the good thesis will point out that a person who is attracted to charm, or shininess, or hugeness, might also be attracted to such qualities under the guise of the good. Of course, that's true. But the thesis must be stronger than this: it must be that in every instance in which one is attracted by a quality such as charm, one is *also* attracted under the guise of the good. In other words, simply being charmed is a matter of seeing some goodness in what one is charmed by.

How should we fill out this general relationship between the attractive and the apparently good? There are at least two ways to interpret this claim: either it is that everything that is naturally pleasant to human beings really is good in *some* way, or that everything that is naturally attractive is *apparently* good to those who are attracted to such things. If either of these claims is true, then the guise of the good thesis would simply result from the thesis that human desires are for the desirable (that is, the naturally attractive).

We should reject the first interpretation—that anything that is naturally attractive to human beings is good—unless we endorse a very crude understanding of value; even cruder, I think, than very crude hedonism. Very simple attractions—to shininess, to hugeness of size—can illustrate this. And even when it comes to the more sophisticated quality of being genuinely charming in conversation, it is reasonable to wonder whether there is always something good about this quality—either for the person, for others, or in itself. And we may arrive at the conclusion that sometimes charm is merely charm; acknowledging this truth need not conflict with also acknowledging mere charm's attractiveness.³⁷

Thus, I find the second interpretation of the relationship between attraction and goodness more plausible: anything that is naturally attractive to human beings is apparently good to those attracted to it. In other words, to intelligibly desire or be intelligibly attracted to anything at all is to see it as purporting to be good in some way. If the object that one is attracted to is not in fact good in some way, then one's desire is, in a sense, mistaken—in a way similar to the way in which one's perception of a visual illusion is mistaken.

But notice that some general explanation still needs to be given here, to explain why everything that is attractive to human beings is also apparently good, and so subject to

³⁵ This is not to say that enhanced rationality will enhance all such perceptions at once. As Lawrence Blum notes, "Different aspects of moral reality can draw on different sorts of sensitivities or forms of awareness. In a way it is misleading to speak of someone as 'sensitive to particulars' (or 'good at perceiving the moral character of particulars') *tout court*. Some people are better at perceiving some sorts of particulars than other sorts" (716). Blum, "Moral Perception and Particularity," *Ethics* 101, no. 4 (1991).

³⁶ Boyle and Lavin, 20.

³⁷ This example was initially inspired by Alasdair MacIntyre's comment about Machiavelli: "A great deal of effort has been expended to show that . . . Machiavelli was not a bad man. This is partly because his was clearly an attractive personality, and it is widely though incorrectly felt that somehow one cannot be both bad and attractive" (123). MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 2nd ed., (Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York, 2002). Elsewhere, I argue that we can understand the qualities of *interestingness and boringness* in a similar fashion. Vida Yao, "Boredom and the Divided Mind", *Res Philosophica* 92 (4): 937-57, 2015.

veridicality conditions that are satisfied when the object of one's desire is, in fact, good in some way. Perhaps, for example, one might endorse a view such as the one Diotima offers in the *Symposium*, according to which one's attraction to purely attractive aesthetic qualities—when properly informed and educated by reason—will lead one from attraction to one particular attractive body, to all attractive bodies, to love and desire for beauty, goodness, and then for the Good itself. Or perhaps one might offer not just a teleological view of action, but a teleological view of the entire human animal whose attractions must all be under the guise of the good (even if they are mistaken), should this animal and all of its parts be functioning properly. But notice how substantive these views are.

Of course, one could give such a theory. But, *prima facie*, there are cases in which further refinement of one's attraction is just that—a refinement of an attraction—and not a step on a journey toward the goodness that one's attraction purports to be a sign of. The veridicality constraints of a person's desire for engaging with a particular charming person may be satisfied should that person simply be, in fact, charming. So, for now, we have at least arrived at a conclusion that should guide further discussion. The guise of the good thesis, though sometimes presented as a claim about the form, and not content, of human desire, and as one that can be harmlessly attached to any number of conceptions of morality or value, is one that cannot be divorced from a substantive claim about the relationship between human attraction and goodness that has not been fully acknowledged, and may well be worth rejecting.