Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Aiming at the good

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This paper shows how we can plausibly extend the guise of the good thesis in a way that avoids intellectualist challenge, allows animals to be included, and is consistent with the possibility of performing action under the cognition of their badness. The paper also presents some independent arguments for the plausibility of this interpretation of the thesis. To this aim, a teleological conception of practical attitudes as well as a cognitivist account of arational desires is offered.

Keywords: the guise of the good; desire; intention; practical attitudes; formal object; good; cognitivism; representation; function; teleological

1. Introduction

According to the doctrine of the guise of the good, intentions and actions aim at the good.[1] The expression that 'intentions (or actions) *aim* at the good' is metaphorical, though. Philosophers who defend the doctrine that intentions aim at the good usually understand it as saying that the objects of intentions are taken to be good by their agents. In other words, whenever one intends to perform an action (or performs an action), there is an evaluative belief accompanying the intention that the object of the intention (e.g., the action) has some value. The proponents of such a view include Anscombe (1957), Raz (2010, 1997[1999]), Davidson ([1970]1980) and Williams (1979). However, this understanding of the doctrine not only makes it impossible to desire the bad (e.g., Velleman 1992; Stocker 1979; 2004), it also rests on an over-intellectualized account of action (Velleman 1992; Saemi 2014a). This paper has two main goals. First, it presents a new interpretation of the guise of the good thesis which, while being faithful to the main idea of the thesis, blocks the classical objections to it. Second, it provides independent arguments for this way of understanding the thesis. While the arguments may not conclusively establish the thesis, they show why the thesis seems plausible.

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2.   The formal object interpretation

I am going to argue that intentions aim at the good in the sense that *the formal object* of an intention is the good. To clarify, let us first take a look at a similar thesis about beliefs.

Beliefs, and perceptions, aim at truth in the sense that they present their content as being true or accurate. However, this should not mislead us into thinking that the concepts 'true' or 'accurate' are necessarily part of the content of those representational states, or that individuals capable of having beliefs or perceptual states must therefore have the concepts of truth or accuracy. In other words, in saying that perceptual or representational states purport to represent the world veridically or accurately, we should not read 'true' or 'accurate' predicatively, as though they enter into the content and predicate being true or accurate of the subject. According to Frege, while the predicate 'is true' 'is asserted when anything at all is asserted' (Frege 1897), 'nothing is added to the thought by my ascribing to it the property of truth' (Frege 1956). On this Fregean picture, truth is not in the content of the thought, rather it is in the form of the judgment (or, the 'force' of the judgment in Frege's terminology), in the sense that truth is constitutive of the notion of the thought without entering into the content of any particular thought.

This can be explained by adopting a teleological account of representational states. That is, representational states such as perceptual states and beliefs have *the function of* representing the world accurately.[2] Accurate beliefs and perceptions are successful, relative to the function of the state. Animals capable of perceiving the world do not need to have the concept of accuracy to have perception. Rather, their perceptual states function to have accurate representations of the world. In a similar vein, Shah and Velleman (2005) espouse that view that it is constitutive of belief that it is subject to the norm of correctness which says a belief is correct iff it is true. Non-veridical beliefs are incorrect on this account.

We should understand the thesis that practical states and, by extension, actions aim at the good in a similar way. That is, a practical state or attitude – the state or attitude of an individual, human or animal, intending, trying, or performing an action – the content of which includes a representation of the action in question, represents its content as good. As in the case of belief and truth, the concept 'good' does not need to be in the content of the attitude; rather it is in the form of the attitude. As in the cases of beliefs and perceptions, this can be explained by adopting a teleological account of practical attitudes and action. That is, practical attitudes have the function of bringing about the good. A practical attitude that brings about the good is successful, relative to the function of the attitude. On the other hand, a practical attitude that fails to bring about the good is a failure, relative to its function. In this sense, practical attitudes, and by extension, actions, aim at the good, even if the individual who acts lacks the concept of good. This understanding of the thesis is immune to the classic objection to the guise of the good thesis according to which the thesis

makes it impossible to act with the cognition that the object of intention is bad. Because the new interpretation is consistent with intending to perform an action without *taking* the object of intention to be good or valuable in any sense.[3]

The formal point of an attitude is different from its direction of fit. There are different ways to understand the notion of the direction of fit. Let us understand the notion in a non-Anscombian way that Velleman (1992) presents. On Velleman's understanding of the notion, an attitude has a *cognitive* direction of fit when it is regarded as true, and a *practical* direction of fit when it is regarded as to be brought about, or to be made true. On this understanding, believing that p, hypothesizing that p, and fantasizing that p all have the cognitive direction of fit because they all involve regarding p as true. While hypothesizing that p involves regarding p as hypothetically true, believing that p involves regarding p as 'really true' (as Velleman puts it).

The doctrine that beliefs function to represent the world veridically implies, among other things, two things: First, a belief is a *representation* with a cognitive direction of fit. Second, belief is a representation which has a specific function, namely, to represent the world in a certain way (i.e., to represent the world veridically). The second point amounts to saying that the formal point of a belief is truth. Beliefs relate to their formal object via a representation that has a cognitive direction of fit. In the same vein, the doctrine that intentions function to bring about the good implies, among other things, two things: First, intention has a practical direction of fit. To intend to do φ is to regard φ'ing as to be brought about. Second, intention is a practical state which has a specific function, namely, to bring about the good (i.e., its formal object is the good). On the present account, practical attitudes relate to their formal object via the relation of making-it-true (or bringing-about).[4]

The view that the good is the formal object of practical inquiry is not new. For instance, Lawrence (1995) holds the following thesis: [5]

> (T1) The central, or defining, question of practical reason is 'what should I do?' Its formal answer I take to be: 'do what is best', or 'act well'. To put this another way. The formal and final object of practical reasoning is the practicable good: it is this that makes practical reasoning what it is, and reveals what its point is. (Lawrence 1995, 130)

My interpretation of the doctrine of the guise of the good, however, is broader than (T1), and underlies it. While (T1) concerns only our practical inquiry, the thesis I defend concerns all actions, including human and animal actions. Moreover, (T1) is true precisely because practical states function to bring about the good in the same way that the object of theoretical reasoning is truth precisely because beliefs function to represent veridically. Hence, one of my main goals in this paper is to defend an extension of the guise of the good thesis in a way that avoids the intellectualist challenge, allows animals to be included, and explains the truth of (T1). As noted, my extension is also consistent with the possibility of performing a bad action under the cognition that the goal of the action is not good in any sense.

Lawrence correctly notes that any defense of the doctrine of the guise of the good presupposes

> *the objectivity of Good* [in the sense that] one cannot call just anything good or bad, worth pursuing or not, and make sense, ... and what is the good that the agent should achieve, or the bad he should avoid, is determined by the facts of human nature and the world we live in, and the situation in which the individual is placed. (Lawrence 1995, 131)

Accordingly, I also assume that there is an objective conception of the good for the bearers of life-forms. However, I am neutral with respect to different conceptions of goodness for a living being.

Let me explain what I mean by 'the good' when I say practical states aim at the good. By the good I mean *the best, on the whole*. For instance, consider an animal that is tired and on the point of starvation. Resting and hunting prey are both good for the animal. However, assuming that it needs food more than rest, the good, i.e., the best on the whole, for the animal is to catch the prey. An animal with no defect in its practical faculty attempts to catch the prey. It attempts to use its resources to hunt the prey. The action of the animal would be defective if it fails to bring about the best, which is to catch the prey. However, I am not going to argue for this. The central arguments of the paper are consistent with the claim that practical states aim at some good.

3.   Practical states versus desires

According to the main thesis of the paper, practical attitudes (including intending, trying, and performing an intentional action) aim at the good. I also argue that desires also aim at some good, but not in the same way that practical states do. Let me first explain about the distinction between the notion of a practical state, and that of a desire in the way that I use the term. The term 'desire' can be used to refer to different things. It can be used to refer to a practical state or a pro-attitude in general.[6] However, I will use the term in a much narrower sense. A desire, in the way I use the term, is similar to what Kant calls 'sensible desire'. It is felt by the individual and is, in its central cases, a passive state (the central cases of desire are cases of what I will later call 'arational desires'). The paradigm cases of desire are sexual desires, and desires for food. There are several intuitions that taken together would incline us to distinguish the notion of a desire from the notion a practical state:

(a) *Desire is a passive state* – Practical states are revisable in light of evidence, but desires are not necessarily. Desires, in central cases (e.g., sexual desires), are resilient to counter evidence. Desire is passive in the following two respects:

  (i) Perceptual illusions cannot be corrected by the true belief that the perception is not veridical. In the same sense, you may not be able to change your desire by reasoning that the object of the desire is not good. As a result, perception and basic desires do not generate Moore's paradox. That is, there is no failure of rationality in

cases where I perceive P while I believe that P is false. Similarly, I would be rational to have a desire for a pizza, even if I believe that the pizza is no good. However, it seems that intending to have a pizza while believing that it is not good to have a pizza involves a failure of rationality.

(ii) Desire is resilient to judgments of impossibility. As a result, while practical states are subject to the norms of consistency, desires, at least in central cases, are not. Given that you know you can only have pizza or sandwich, you cannot rationally intend to have pizza and sandwich. However, given that knowledge, you can still desire to have pizza and sandwich. To give another example we can have a desire to kiss somebody and a desire not to have any physical contact with that person. To have contradictory desires is not irrational. However, the same is not true about practical states. You cannot rationally intend/try to avoid any physical contact with a person and to kiss that person at the same time. It is not possible (or at least not rational) to have contradictory practical states. Similar to desires, perceptions are not subject to norms of consistency either. We can have inconsistent perceptions (Crane 1988). Given that perception and some desires are passive and unrevisable, we cannot necessarily hold an individual rationally responsible for having conflicting desires and perceptions.[7]

(b) *Desire is a static state* – It is not rationally possible for one to be in a practical state and do nothing, or undertakes no commitment, to realize the goal of the state. A practical state is not a static state. To be in a practical state involves execution, or an attempt for the execution, or at least a commitment to the execution.[8] However, it seems rational for one to desire something and yet do nothing toward getting what one desires.

(c) *Desire is connected to pleasure* – While practical states bear no special relation to pleasure, desire is closely connected to pleasure.[9] In central cases of desire, satisfaction of a sound desire is pleasing. The satisfaction of a desire, though, can turn out to be displeasing even in a central case of desire. However, a case where the satisfaction of a desire is not pleasing involves some kind of mistake. For example, a cherry looks tasteful to me, and I desire to eat it. But the satisfaction of this desire turns out to be displeasing. For the cherry does not taste as I thought it would. Here my desire for the cherry was mistaken, and the desire was defective (as I will explain later, my desire was not accurate). On the other hand, while one can take pleasure in performing an action, a successful action is not necessarily pleasing. Performing a displeasing action does not need to involve any mistake. I can sacrifice myself for a moral reason, or I can perform a displeasing action from duty. The fact that the performance of my action is displeasing does not necessarily indicate the action is a mistake.[10]

The passive and static nature of a desire, as indicated by (a) and (b), points toward its having a cognitive direction of fit. Similarly, Kant holds that a characteristic feature of sensible desire is that it is the product of the capacity to receive through being affected by an existing object outside of it (e.g., Kant [1781/1787]1998, A51/B75) and this underlies its passivity. Note that a state does not need to be passive to have a cognitive direction of fit. Beliefs are not passive in the sense indicated by (a).[11] However, passivity of perception is taken by some as reasons for the view that perceptions are non-conconceptual representation produced by a sub-personal system (Bermúdez 1995; Crane 1988). In a similar vein, it would be hard to account for passivity of desires if they were practical states. The thesis that that practical states function to bring about the good naturally implies that practical states are not passive or static. On this thesis, while one failure for a practical state is to have an object which is not good, another failure for a practical state is to fail to make its object true. The latter failure underlies that fact that it is not rational to form a practical state when the agent knows that he/she cannot bring about its object (as well as the fact that the practical states are subject to some norms of consistency). The former failure explains why the agent undergoes some failure of rationality if he/she intends to do something when he/she knows the object of his/her intention is not good. The thesis also implies that the agent needs to have some commitment to execute his/her intention.

Given that desires are not practical states, the way a desire aims at goodness may be different from the way a practical state does. While the content of a practical state does not need to have any representation of the good, to desire something, I will argue, is to represent it as pleasing, and to represent something as pleasing is to represent it as good non-conceptually. Hence, a non-conceptual representation of goodness enters into the content of a desire. The view that desire functions to veridically represent its object as having some good explains why desires behave in ways indicated by (a)–(c).

Objecting to the doctrine that practical states, or desires, aim at the good, Railton (1997) says that the doctrine 'implies, among other things, that individuals incapable of representing an end or a course of conduct as good – non-human animals, or (perhaps) human infants – would also be incapable of agency, properly so called'. Railton's point is problematic, though. To illustrate, we should make a distinction, on the one hand, between a formal and material object of an attitude, and on the other hand, between a conceptual and non-conceptual object of the attitude.

Accordingly, the thesis that practical states, or desires, aim at the good can be understood in three different ways. On one understanding the good is the *formal object* of the attitude. On this understanding the concept 'good' does not need to be in the content of the attitude. For instance, truth is the formal object of the belief. It does not need to come into the content. Hence, the doctrine that beliefs aim at truth does not require infants to have the concept 'true'. It just says that

the cognitive or perceptual state suffers some failure if it does not produce an accurate representation, precisely because it did not fulfill its functions. The same is true of practical states on this understanding. Another way to understand the doctrine that practical states or desires aim at the good is to think that goodness is *the material object* of the attitude in the sense that some representation of goodness is part of the content of a practical state or a desire. However, here there are two options: Either, the content of the state includes a *non-conceptual* representation of goodness (i.e., the good is the *non-conceptual-material* object of the attitude), or a conceptual representation of goodness (i.e., the good is the *conceptual-material* object of the attitude). For example, a cat can perceptually represent a bowl of white milk without having the concepts 'milk' or 'white'. However, there is a non-conceptual representation of milk or whiteness in its perceptual attitude.[12]

Railton seems to understand the doctrine that practical states or desires aim at the good as saying that the good is the conceptual-material object of the attitude. However, there are two other options that he ignores. The good can be the formal object of the attitude. Or, it can be the non-conceptual-material object of the attitude. On either of these understandings his point is just wrong, i.e., the doctrine that practical states or desires aim at the good does not require infants and non-human animals to have the concept 'good'. The view I defend is this. While the good is the formal object of a practical attitude, when we get to desires, goodness is the non-conceptual-material object of the attitude.

4. Teleological account

The argument I am going to defend for the view that practical states function to bring about the good can be summarized as follows. In this section I am going to discuss premises 1–3, and in the next section I will argue for premise 4.

(1) Practical states should not be accidental, they need to be rationalized; they are open to the 'why' question.
(2) Therefore, practical states have a formal point (*telos*) that closes the 'why' question, i.e., it provides an appropriate answer to the 'why' question.
(3) The *telos* is either to bring about the good, or to achieve the goal set by arational desires.
(4) Arational desires function to represent their objects as good accurately.
(5) Therefore, practical states function to bring about the good.

Anscombe famously argued that an action is intentional when the agent is in a position to give an answer to the 'why' question when 'why' has a special sense. I think Anscombe is on the right track and answerability of actions to the 'why' question is an indication that we have an intentional action. But we can ask why intentional actions have to be answerable to the 'why' question? To answer this question, it is illuminating to consider the same phenomenon in the belief case.

It seems that beliefs are also answerable to the 'why' question, when 'why' has a special sense. We can make a distinction between two kinds of the 'why' question with respect to a belief. The first one is a question about why individuals believe what they do. The question does not specifically regard beliefs as the product of the rational faculty and thus does not ask about the rationality of beliefs. It takes the belief, i.e., the explanandum, as given and looks for an explanation. For example, if a belief pill induces certain beliefs, those beliefs can be explained in this sense by appealing to the belief pill.

On the other hand, when one asks why you believe P, or at least continue believing P, one can be concerned about the reason you take yourself to have for believing P. In other words, the other 'why' question is usually about the reasons one takes to justify one's beliefs. We seek the consideration in light of which a person holds a belief and keeps it. The reason that beliefs are answerable to this specific kind of 'why' question is that beliefs should not be accidental. There is something rationally problematic in saying that I just happen to have this belief, and keep having it regardless of it being true or false. As Burge (2003) put it, the individual has a *commitment* to the belief's being true. The individual does not have a hypothetical or suppositional orientation to the belief. This is why the individual is subject to the 'why' question. He undergoes a representational failure if the belief is not true. Even if the belief turns out to be true, there is something wrong with the person if there is no good answer to the 'why' question. Given the function of the rational faculty, a rational person, to get 'rational credit', undertakes to show his/her rationality by answering the 'why' question.

This can be explained by a teleological account of beliefs (i.e., the view that a belief functions to represent the truth).[13] Beliefs are the product of the rational faculty, and the rational faculty seeks to get things right. Hence, a non-defective rational faculty cannot retain a belief resulting from a mere accident; the belief, to be retained rationally, has to have some a good route to truth (that rational beliefs should have a systematic relation to the truth does not exclude the possibility of having a false justified belief).

It is worth noting that to hold a belief rationally, one does not need to be able to state the content of one's justification for the belief. Hence, we need to distinguish between warrant and justification in the narrow sense. While justification for a belief in the narrow sense must be accessible to the individual, warrant does not need to be. We can use 'justification' in the broad sense to include both warrant and justification in the narrow sense.[14] Accordingly, in some cases one might not have access to the warrant for one's beliefs, and, thus, not be in a position to give the right answer to the 'why' question. But this does not undermine the fact that one's belief must be answerable to the 'why' question. Even when one is not in a position to state the answer to the 'why' question, one's belief should not be accidental and needs some warrant, indicating a relation between the belief and truth. For example, being asked about why he/she believes that this leaf is green, a child might not be able to state the content of the

justification for his/her perceptual belief, namely, that the leaf looks green to him/her. Perhaps, he/she has not yet learned the distinction between appearance and reality. But this does not undermine that the 'why' question has an application, and the belief should be answerable to the 'why' question.

Anscombe's observation that intentional actions need rationalization is usually taken to be about human action, but I think that we should extend her point in two ways. First, we should extend Anscombe's point from actions to all practical states, and second, we should extend her point about human actions to all (voluntary) animal and human action.[15] Animals are not able to state the content of their justification for their actions. But that does not show that their voluntary actions do not need to be warranted. For example, we can ask why this dog eats this food, and the 'rationalizing' answer is that it is hungry.

Why are practical states open to Anscombe's 'why' question? A similar story can, and should, be told about the case of actions and intentions. As in the case of belief, the 'why' question that Anscombe is interested in is not aimed at just any kind of explanation. A mere neurological explanation, if possible, is not the right kind of answer to Anscombe's 'why' question. The answer to this 'why' question should be considerations that rationalize action. Rationalization is a special kind of explanation that explains the explanandum by appealing to considerations that purport to justify it. The present account provides an adequate answer to the question that why it is an essential feature of action that it needs this sort of explanation. As in the case of belief, practical states need to be rationalized because the agent's stance toward his/her practical states involves a kind of *commitment.* As in the case of belief, there is something rationally problematic in adopting an intention that one takes there to be no reason for. Accordingly, assuming that the teleological account of beliefs is a plausible explanation for the sensitivity of beliefs to justification, we can accept a similar account according to which that actions essentially need rationalization is best explained by the fact that actions and intentions are teleological notions. Intentions cannot be accidental. An intention that we just happen to have, as a result of a drug or act of God, is not a sound intention. On the present view, this is because intentions have a formal point in the sense that they serve a function.

Granting that intentions are teleological and goal-directed, we need to know what their formal point or *telos* is. It seems intuitively plausible to think that the best candidates for the *telos* of practical states are either to bring about good (i.e., to bring about what ought to be brought about) or to satisfy the goals set by desires (i.e., to bring about what the agent wants to bring about). While these two options do not logically exhaust all the possibilities, they seem to be the most plausible ones.[16] I believe that the *telos* of practical states is to bring about the good. An intention that floats free of the good is defective. But why? To argue, I need first discuss the alternative, i.e., the option of desire satisfaction being the *telos* of practical states. To discuss, however, I need first make a distinction between *rational* and *arational* desires.

5. Rational and arational desires

My distinction between rational and arational desires is similar to Nagel's distinction between *motivated* and *unmotivated* desires. Motivated desires are desires 'arrived at by decision and after deliberation' (Nagel 1978, 29), whereas unmotivated desires come over us or 'simply assail us'. While I am sympathetic to Nagel's point, I think, *contra* Nagel, that the distinction between rational and arational desires should not be made based on the origin or genesis of the desire (or based on the processes by which we come to have a desire).[17] As far as we are concerned with rationalization, it does not matter how we come to have a desire. Rather, we should distinguish two sorts of desire based on their *susceptibility to reason*. Reasons have force on the individual capable of reasoning. We should be immediately moved to adjust our belief when we realize there are reasons against it. In the same way, we should understand rational desires as desires that can be immediately affected by reasoning and deliberation. One would be immediately moved to adjust one's rational desires when presented with reasons to do so. One has *rational control* on one's rational desires. However, arational desires are not susceptible to reasons in the sense that one does not have rational power over them. In this respect, rational desires are like *beliefs* while arational desires are like *perceptions*. Even when we are presented with reasons that our perception is not veridical, we cannot help having that perception. The desire for food is an example of arational desire. Even when we should not eat for some medical reasons, we cannot help feeling a desire for certain food.

Since one has rational power over one's rational desires, it seems plausible to think that when a rational desire does not have some kind of rational support, it cannot be rationally retained. In other words, faced with a 'why' question, a rational desire needs some kind of rational support; otherwise, it is hard to see why one should keep that desire. Thus, an instrumental explanation in terms of rational desires alone cannot rationalize actions. For rational desires need themselves to be rationalized. One way to rationalize a rational desire is to provide reasons to show that the object of the desire is good. But then the action motivated by a rational desire is justified by showing that the object that the action is to be brought about is good.[18] Another way to rationalize a rational desire is to ground it in an arational desire. But how can arational desires rationalize action?

I argue that desires are states that function to have an accurate non-conceptual representation of the value of the object of desire.[19] As opposed to practical states where good does not need to be part of the content of the state, I believe that a non-conceptual representation of goodness is part of the content of desires. Arational desires resemble perceptual states in two respects. First, as noted before, at least in the central cases, neither can be directly affected by beliefs and reasons. Second, neither perceptual beliefs nor desires are the result of conscious deliberation by the individual. Rather, while being attributed to the whole individual, they are generated at a sub-personal level by the individual's

perceptual or desire faculty. I am going to argue that desires resemble perceptual states in three other respects as well: They both have representational content. That is, they are capable of being accurate or inaccurate. Moreover, they both have non-conceptual contents. If so, there would be another respect in which perception and desires are alike, i.e., perception and desire both provide *prima facie* defeasible justification for beliefs and actions, respectively (see Stampe 1987 for the same point).

6. Two arguments for cognitivism about desire

6.1. First argument

Animals' behaviors are goal directed. The goal is set by animals' arational desires. However, the animal has many desires (e.g., to catch the prey, to remain immobile, etc), some of them can be in tension. The practical faculty of the animal should be able to negotiate them and find a way to satisfy all of its desires, when possible, or to satisfy more important ones, when not possible. To do this, different desires need to be compared and prioritized based on their importance and the circumstance. For example, Rescorla (2009) argues that we can explain the behavior of a dog by citing probabilistic reasoning over cognitive maps. He assumes that the dog prefers catching the prey to not catching it, and that it prefers remaining immobile to wasting resources in failed pursuit of its prey. To be able to explain the dog's behavior by using cognitive maps, he models the dog's desires by assuming that the dog's practical system assigns different values to the dog's different actions. One conclusion we can draw from Rescorla' model is that the content of dog's desire, on this model, is compositional. It can assign the same value to different actions, and different values to the same action. Moreover, the practical faculty assigns values at a subpersonal level, and thus the dog does not need to have the concept value (Bermúdez 1995). The animal, through the experience of desire, has an implicit knowledge of what is marked as valuable. The animal can also indirectly change the values assigned to different goals through the experience of pain and pleasure.

However, we should note that the argument so far merely shows that the values the practical faculty of the dog assigns to actions serve to rank among desires. The argument has not yet provided a reason to think that that these rankings measure something out in the world. For example, one might think that desires can be prioritized based on their strength. But I am going to argue that a non-defective practical faculty compares and prioritizes different desires based on their objective importance in the life of the animal under a given circumstance. In other words, animal's practical faculty is defective if the weights did not correspond to what is good for the animal.

Think about artificial life. There is a substantial question about when we are in a position to apply life predicates to an artifact. The ability to maintain itself seems to be necessary to have any kind of artificial life. Some think that the ability to adapt, i.e., the ability to improve competence at dealing with the goals

of the artifact based on experience, is also necessary to have an artificial life (Maes 1997). I have no stance on this. But one thing, I think, is clear. An artifact that cannot attempt to sustain itself in a range of different circumstances is hardly to be called alive. Attribution of life to an artifact is not possible unless it values its self-maintenance.

However, when we have an organism which is an instance of a kind of living being, the situation is different. It seems that an instance of a kind of living being can have all sorts of desires. An organism which cannot sustain itself is still a living organism. It is a defective instance of its kind, though (see Thompson 2004). In general, a bearer of a life form that cannot engage in the activities that a normal bearer of the life form engages in is a defective instance of its species. A bearer of a life form has certain basic needs and those needs are essential to the kind of creature it is. If the values assigned by the practical system to different courses of action of the organism do not align with basic needs and activities of a non-defective instance of the type of living beings the organism in question is an instance of, then this marks a defect in the practical system of the organism.

However, one might think that from the fact desire for bad things are defective we cannot infer that desires should be understood as representing their objects as valuable. For example, my heart is defective if it does not pump blood. But it does not represent pumping blood. However, if we assume objectivism about value, contrary to the case of heart, desire has a correctness condition i.e., the rankings among desires are correct when it corresponds to truths about values. In other words, when desiring is correct, there is match between desire and facts about value. This match needs to be explained. Moreover, as we saw in Section 3, desires are passive and static states, and as a result, it is hard to view them as practical states. The view that desires function to veridically represent their objects as good can explain the correctness condition, the match, the compositionality of desires, and the fact that they are passive and static.[20] The animal's system, in desiring to do some action, succeeds when it values an action that is in fact a proper end for the animal, and fails when the animal desires something that is bad for it. Though it is sometimes misleading to specify the content of perception using the 'it looks' locution, we can think that when an animal, say a cat, visually represent the white milk, it looks to the cat that the milk is white. In the same way, we can say that in desiring drinking the milk, drinking the milk looks good to the cat.[21]

6.2.   Second argument

Suppose that I have an arational desire to drink water. Suppose also that I know that for some medical reasons drinking water is not good for me. Here we have a case of conflicting goals, one set by a desire, the other by my cognition. It seems that the rational thing to do here is not to drink water. The belief should undermine the justificatory force of the desire. But why? Why is it not rational to drink water if the reason generated by my desire has a completely different

nature from the reason generated by my cognition? For beliefs and desires to be compared and to compete, they need to purport to cognize the same sort of things in a similar way. Arational desires generate reasons because they indicate that their objects are valuable. Otherwise, it would be hard to explain how reasons generated by desire and cognition can be compared and decided upon.

One might say that a judgment that the object of certain desire is not good gives rise to a contrary desire that can compete with the original desire. However, my point is not about how the motivational force of a desire can be overridden. Rather, the point is that, assuming objectivity of value, it is hard to understand how a cognition that the object of a desire is not valuable can diminish the rational force of the desire if the desire does not purport to cognize some value of its object. Once again, the case under discussion is very similar to the case of illusion. I have a perception that the wall is blue. But I have very good reasons to believe that the wall is not blue. My judgment on the whole should be that the wall is not blue. Although my perception gives me reason for the truth of the proposition that the wall is blue, this reason is undermined by other considerations. The comparison between my perception and my other considerations is possible precisely because they both purport to say the same thing about the wall, namely, that it is true that the wall is blue.

In the case of arational desire, I think the best way to account for the fact that my desire to drink water loses its justificatory force when I know that drinking water is not good is that my desire also purports to say that drinking water is good. However, one might think that we can explain the justificatory force of a desire without appealing to the view that desires cognize some good. Rather the justificatory force of a desire is explained by the fact that satisfying a desire is valuable. On this view, under the circumstance described by the example, we should not drink water because the value that resides in satisfaction of the desire is not important enough to make drinking water rational. However, this explanation is not satisfying. For it does not adequately explain why desire always has justificatory force for actions. We should bear in mind that the mere fact that performing certain action is valuable because it satisfies some desire does not show that performing that action is rational. For the mere goodness of an action is not sufficient for rationality of the action in the same way that the mere truth is not sufficient for rationality of a belief. Rationality of action requires some cognition of goodness, or at least being in a position to cognize the value. In other words, the fact that a satisfaction of a desire is good can make an action rational only if one knows this fact. However, it seems that desires can provide *prima facie* defeasible justification even when one does not know that the satisfaction of a desire is good. Desire justifies the actions of small children and animals without their knowing that the satisfaction of a desire is good. Moreover, it seems that even when one is not aware of one's desires, absence of defeaters, desire provides some justification for one's action.[22]

6.3. A Kantian–Aristotelian view

If we adopt a Kantian-Aristotelian understanding of pleasure, we would be in a better place to explicate the view that desires represent their objects as good non-conceptually. To begin, we should not identify pleasure as a mere sensation. For different things with different kinds of sensations are pleasurable. In other words, pleasure can be *multiply realized* through different sensations. I think on a Kantian-Aristotelian view of pleasure, what is in common between different pleasant things is the normative property of *to-be-pursuedness*. Kant understands pleasure as follows:

> The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, for sustaining it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure; in contrast to which displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them). (Kant, [1790]2000, 220)

On Kant's view, pleasure is self-sustaining in the sense that when an animal have a pleasurable experience, everything equal, pleasure calls the animal to continue having the experience. One way to account for this phenomenon is to take pleasure to be a normative notion. According to Kant, 'everything that pleases, just because it pleases, is agreeable' (Kant, [1790]2000, 206). While agreeableness seems to be a normative notion, Kant does not identify it with goodness. For, according to Kant, only rational beings with conceptual capacities can represent something as good. On Kant's view the agreeable should be subsumed under the concept of the good when it accords with the formal presuppositions of the will (Engstrom 2009, 70–76). Setting aside Kant's peculiar notion of goodness, we can think of pleasurable experience as non-conceptually representing goodness and this is Aristotle's view: 'when something is pleasant or painful, {the soul} pursues or avoids it, as it were asserting or denying it; and to feel pleasure or pain is to be active with the perceptive mean toward the good or bad as such' (*De Anima*: 431a8). Moss (2012, 31) notes that there is almost a rough consensus among Aristotle's commentators that the passage should be taken as saying that feeling pleasure in something amounts to perceiving that thing to be good.

Given this Kantian-Aristotelian view of pleasure, we can say that for desires to represent their objects as good non-conceptually is for them to represent their objects as pleasing. Aristotle also understood desires, on some interpretations, in the same way: 'avoidance and desire as actual are the same thing, and that which can desire and that which can avoid are not different either from each other or from that which can perceive' (*De Anima*: 431a12). On this understanding of desire, in having a pleasurable experience of something the animal is thereby desiring it. Moreover, desiring something, say a pizza, by an individual amounts to pizza's looking pleasurable to the individual.

If this conception of arational desire is right, arational desire provides an immediate, defeasible, *prima facie* justification for action in the same way that

perception provides an immediate defeasible *prima facie* justification for beliefs. A desire may fail to justify an action. For example, the individual might find out that there is nothing good in what he/she wants, in which case, while he/she cannot help having the desire, he/she should not act on that desire. An argument to the effect that, since certain desire is defective, desires in general cannot justify actions resembles the skeptical argument from illusion. This argument, however, is not good because perception, to provide justification for beliefs, does not need to be accurate in each single case.

7.   Objections

A worry about the current view about desire is that the fact that my perception is non-veridical does not show that that perception is defective. For instance, though a straight stick may look bent in the water, my perceptual state is not defective. A straight stick in water is supposed to look like that to a creature with my visual system. Similarly, in the case of desire, a desire for a bad thing may not show that my desire is defective. However, we should make a distinction between a norm governing a faculty's outcome and a norm governing a faculty's process. Based on the outcome norm, a non-veridical perception is defective because it fails to fulfill its function. However, if the failure of perceptual function is the result of a mere accident, there is a sense in which the practical faculty of the individual is not defective. We can derive a process norm from the previous norm which says the perceptual faculty of the individual must act as well as possible, relative to its function, given the circumstance and the agent's capacities. The intuition that the objection relies on can be explained by the fact that, given the process norm, the perceptual faculty when it perceives the stick as bent is not at fault. Making a distinction between outcome and process norms, we can tell a similar story about the case of desire. On the process norm, the practical faculty of an individual may not be at fault when the individual desires a bad thing.

A related objection to my view about desire is this: One might argue that from the fact that desire guides action and that a living thing whose arational desires lead away from the good is defective it does not follow that a given desire is defective when its object is not good. It might nonetheless be the manifestation of a faculty of arational desire whose operation is conducive to the good; and it might even help achieve the good in the particular case.[23] In order to reply to this worry, in so far as it is a different worry from the previous one, let us first take a look at a parallel situation in the case of perception. One might say that from the fact that perception grounds beliefs and that a perceptual faculty whose perception leads away from the truth is defective it does not follow that a given perception is defective when it is not veridical. It might nonetheless be the manifestation of a perceptual faculty whose operation is conducive to the truth; and it might even help achieve the truth in the particular case. Suppose one has a false perception which, due to a false belief, leads to a true belief. For example, one mistakenly perceives a white wall as red. However, since one has a false

belief about the lighting condition, one comes to believe that the wall is white. The argument claims that this false perception is not defective in this particular case. For it is the product of a perceptual faculty whose operation is conductive to the truth, and it helps achieve the truth in this particular case.

The objection should be resisted, though. The case described is just a Gettier case where although the perception provides justification and leads to truth in a particular case, it does not ground the belief in the right way. That a false perception can generate true beliefs in abnormal condition does not show that the perception is sound. A sound perception has to be able to generate true beliefs in the normal condition. I think the same response can be given to the desire case. True, desires whose objects are not good can help the living thing achieve the good in abnormal conditions. But this does not show that the desire is not defective. The desire is defective because it cannot help the living thing achieve the good in normal conditions. I think that this point is generally valid about all functional entities. All malfunctioning entities in abnormal circumstances may achieve better results. But this does not show that they are not malfunctioning. The judgment about whether or not an item functions well should be made based on its functioning in its normal condition.

One may object to the thesis that practical states function to bring about the good on the grounds that the thesis is not true of what Hursthouse calls 'arational actions'. Hursthouse (1991) provides several examples of actions that are just expressions of emotions. Here are some examples: to express one's anger, one slams a door, or to express one's shame one covers one's face. Hursthouse argues that in such cases, one does not believe that, say, slamming the door is good. Nor does one do it in order to gain some good. In this sense, they are not rational actions; they are not done for reasons. They just express one's emotions.

However, arational actions are not counterexamples to the main thesis. The reason is simple. Everything being equal, it is good to express one's emotions. The action is good, everything being equal, and in performing an action that expresses one's emotion, one is bringing about something good for oneself. To slam a door might mitigate one's anger. The agent does not need to know this. Nor does he/she need to be able to give this justification for his/her action. It is not the case that the agent knows slamming the door has some good effects and he/she seeks to realize it by his/her action. However slamming a door, everything being equal, is good for him/her, whether or not he/she knows it. This shows that the arational action of slamming the door has the function of bringing about the good. Moreover, arational actions are not isolated from rational considerations. They do not float free from the good. For example, in a case where one judges that slamming the door is not good, everything considered (for, say, one's baby is asleep), one would not slam the door (on pain of being irrational). This is evidence that arational actions are subject to the same kind of norms that other actions are, that is, they are defective when they do not bring about the good.

Let me note that the main thesis of the paper does not need to be understood in a consequentialist way because: (i) the agent, to act well, does not need to have

the aim of bringing about the good. An agent, expressing his/her emotions, acts well despite having no intention to bring about the good; (ii) while non-defective intentions bring about *the good*, we can have a non-consequentialist theory of what the good consists in, that is, the good does not need to be understood as the maximum good that can be brought about; (iii) if we distinguish between process and outcome norms (explained above), we are then in a position to say that, given the process norm, an intention that brings about bad results may not be a defective intention when the result is merely accidental. Similarly, an action with good outcome is not necessarily the result of a well-functioning practical faculty, if the resulted good is merely accidental.

Let me finish the paper by a final objection. While practical states function to bring about the good, I stated that no representation of the good needs to be in the content of the state. We saw, on the other hand, that practical states can be justified in terms of evaluative beliefs, or desire which contains some representation of goodness. One might ask at this point if the initial motivation for the formal object view is that it avoids Railton's objection, and if the objection can be avoided, as in the case of desire, by taking the representation of goodness to be non-conceptual, why should we resist the idea that some representation of good comes into the content of practical states?

In response to the objection, the first point to note is that on my view practical states and desires differ in the direction of fit. Desire functions to veridically represent its object as good. That is, it is a representation that is regarded as being true. A representation of goodness can come into the content of a desire precisely because it has a cognitive direction of fit. Practical states, on the other hand, do have a practical direction of fit.

Moreover, human beings can critically and reflectively think about their goals and actions. From a deliberative standpoint, the agent is concerned with the question 'what should I do?' The teleological view I proposed explains why the goal of practical reasoning is to know what the good is (and to bring it about). However, this truth should not mislead us in thinking that all human actions are the result of some cognition of goodness. There are many different sorts of considerations that can rationalize an action, many of which do not need to be recognized as good by the agent even implicitly. Here are some examples: Wider descriptions of action (Anscombe, Thompson); motives such as revenge, pity, gratitude, remorse, friendship, love, greed, curiosity, fear, despair, etc. (Anscombe); simple responses to requests (Anscombe); promise keeping (Thompson), habit, a tendency to mimic the actions of others, the fact that it is substitutionally representing some other action (Foot). Some actions are just expressions of emotions, as Hursthouse noted; some actions are performed because of their badness, according to Velleman and Stocker. It is just a mistake to assimilate all those cases to a case where an agent performs an action because the agent recognizes it as good (even implicitly). A representation of goodness of the action may be nowhere in the content of the intention to, say, keep a promise. However, if the arguments of this paper

are successful, all practical states, including the intention to keep a promise, aim at the good.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. In speaking of action I usually mean voluntary actions, including non-human animal action.
2. For a popular account for the notion of function which is associated with teleology in biology, see Larry Wright (1973).
3. Schroeder (2008) also notes that a view developed along the main line of this paper would not be even subject to the classical objections to the guise of the good thesis. Schroeder takes this as evidence that Tenenbaum's view should be understood in a different way. However, in his response to Schroeder, Tenenbaum (2008) indicates that his view should be understood as a formal object view.
4. Independently, Schafer (2013) argues for a similar thesis about intentions and desires using the same idea of the Fregean force. To compare the present account to Schafer's, I would like to note this: On Schafer's account, it is not clear what the Vellemanian direction of fit of desire and intention would be. He says:

    when we speak of a desire to A as presenting A as something that ought to be done, this is best understood as a way of characterizing the force that is common to desires and intentions: Ought: Any mental state that presents A with imperatival force to me presents A to me as something that I ought to do. (277)

    I am not sure how we should understand the 'present' relation. However, his account either has the implausible result that the directions of fit of intentions, desires, and beliefs are cognitive (if we understand 'present' relation as a 'represent' relation), or is formulated in such a way that it has no implication about the directions of fit of beliefs, intentions, and desires. Given that the direction of fit of an attitude is independent of its force, a virtue of the present account is that it determines both force and direction of fit of an attitude. On the present account, a practical state has a practical direction of fit, while desire, as we will see later, has a cognitive direction of fit.
5. Other philosophers have also defended similar views. Tenenbaum (2007) holds that the good is the formal object of 'practical reason' and 'practical inquiry'. Similarly, Rodl (2007) and Engstrom (2009) hold that the good is the formal object of 'the will'. 'Will', though, is supposed to be a narrower notion than action. De Sousa (1974) also argues that goodness is the formal object of '*want*'. However, his understanding of the formal object of the attitude is very different from mine.

6. The term 'desire' can be used to denote a practical state. However, 'desire' in the way I use the term is always a non-practical state (what I call a desire is sometimes called 'an appetite'). The term 'want' is also sometimes used to refer to a practical state. Like 'desire', 'want' is usually used in two different senses. For instance, someone can say, 'I don't *want* to do what I *want* to do; I want to do what I ought to do' (The example is from Thompson 2008). Here the first occurrence of 'want' denotes a practical attitude, while the second a non-practical state, i.e., what I call a desire. The fulfillment of a want (in the first sense) is not necessarily a source of pleasure in the way that the fulfillment of a desire is. I understand the term 'desire' to include want in the second sense. 'Want' in the first sense is a practical state that falls under the scope of the main thesis.

7. Michael Dreier (1996) argues that conflicting desires, to be rational, must be resolvable into a decision. However, we cannot hold an individual responsible for having basic felt desires (e.g., sexual desires) that are not resolvable into a decision. For the individual may have no rational control over her/his basic desires. Dreier's claim would have a chance of being true if we understand the notion of desire in a broader sense.

8. One might object that you may have an intention to write your book but do nothing because you also intend to raise your child well and you can do both at a time. However, it seems that if I really intend to write a book (i.e., if it is more than to have a mere desire to write a book), I should make a plan for it. For example, I might think that I should wait until my child gets a little bit older and then start doing necessary research for the book. Of course, I may die before executing any bit of the plan. However, intuitively, it seems that intention implies a commitment to execution (thanks to Chang for the example)

9. Thanks Thompson for this point.

10. One may think that I can also have a desire to sacrifice myself for the sake of some noble goal. However, my desire to sacrifice myself for the sake of some noble goal is a desire held for some reason. I will discuss desires that are sensitive to reasons later. Depending on the case, desires of this kind are either not desires in the narrow sense, or based on some more basic desires.

11. I conjecture that the beliefs are not passive partly because that they are closely related to *acts* of judgment.

12. Peacocke (2001) thinks that the argument from infant and animal perception is the most important motivation for the claim that the content of perception is non-conceptual.

13. This is just a sketch of an argument. My goal is *not* to argue for a teleological account of beliefs. Rather, the point is that if the teleological account of beliefs is plausible, there are similar grounds to accept a teleological account of practical states.

14. Unless specifically stated, henceforth, I use 'justification' in the broad sense.

15. The truth of the matter, though, is that Anscombe holds that the 'why' question applies to animals as well. She says

    we also naturally ask: Why is the cat crouching and slinking like that? and give the answer: It's stalking that bird; see, its eye is fixed on it. We do this, though the cat can utter no thoughts, and cannot give expression to any knowledge of its own action, or to any intentions either. (Anscombe 1957, 47)

16. There are cases that the agent rationalizes his/her action without providing an account of why his/her performing the action is good, or fulfills his/her desires. For example, one can perform an action because one promised that one would (Snare 1991). Nevertheless, in such cases, it seems to be plausible to question why that 'one promised that one would' closes the 'why' question. On the present view, to have

a full explanation we need to say that fulfilling one's promises is a human good. The agent does not need to know this. His/her reason might be simply that he/she promised he/she would. But that he/she made a promise can be a legitimate reason because fulfilling promise is good. In other words, the fulfillment of a promise could not be a legitimate rationalizing consideration if it is not somehow grounded in human goods (see Anscombe 1969; Foot 2001; Thompson 2008).

17. Unfortunately, the debate over whether or not we need a desire to explain an action was centered on how one comes to have a desire (e.g., Smith 1988; Heath 1997; Wallace 1990). I suspect that the main reason for this is that many people take desires not to have representational content. For example, Wallace says,

   the *contents* of desire never provide reason or justification for other propositional attitudes; nor do they themselves appear directly susceptible of rationalizing explanation. For example, the propositional content of Wotan's desire to shop for groceries ... is 'that he (Wotan) shop for groceries' ... it is not even in the indicative mood. (Wallace 1990, 24)

   However, if the view I defend here is right, desires have representational content. Wallace himself seems to change his view in his later works (e.g., Wallace 1999)

18. We should note that this is consistent with having a buck-passing account of goodness. For example, suppose someone has an account according to which being good is explained in terms of some other, more basic normative notion, like being such that there is a reason to desire (e.g., Smith 1994). But on this account when we justify an action in terms of a rational desire, we are in fact showing that the goodness is the telos of the action. This is consistent with the possibility of understanding the *telos* of the action, i.e., the good, in other terms. My view is neutral about different conceptions of goodness. The view just says that we have a correct intention iff the intention brings about the good.

19. Stampe (1987), Oddie (2005) and Tenenbaum (2007) seem to hold a similar view about desire. However, given that Stampe and Oddie always discuss human action, and never address cases of infants or animals, we might think that their view has more affinity with a material-conceptual object view. Tenenbaum, however, addresses the case of animals and says that to desire something is 'to conceive it to be good, even if [animals] do not have as the content of any of their representations that a certain object is good' (248) Setiya finds this answer dissatisfying. For 'it is obviously puzzling: how can I conceive something as good without the corresponding representation?' (Setiya 2007). These worries do not apply to the present account. Later comments of Tenenbaum (2008), however, suggest that his view would be better understood if we interpret his view of desire as a formal object view. He says 'desire can be an attitude in which *one holds its content to be good*' (Tenenbaum 2008). On this understanding, his view is very close to Schafer's. On the other hand, Hawkins explicitly defends a non-conceptual material object view about desires (Hawkins 2009). I also argued that John Laird aimed to defend a view which is, to some extent, similar to the view that I defend in the paper (Saemi 2014b).

20. The argument presented has appeal for those who already accept some versions of value realism. However, I should note that some subjectivists (i.e., those who think the good is determined by what we desire) would also accept the view that the function of a desire is to veridically represent its object as good and attempt to explain it by their subjectivist commitments. For example, Schroeder thinks that a subjectivist view according to which the good is what a fully rational person would desire in the presence of full information would explain cognitivism about desire. He writes,

the thesis that desires represent their objects as good is something that a subjectivist can explain and without too much trouble … a subjectivist can agree with the scholastic view that desires represent their objects as good, but deny that this is what makes them desire. (128–129)

21. Schroeder (2008) notes that a cognitivist theory of desire needs to have an account of content determination. The challenge, though, is not peculiar to cognitivism about desire. Any value realist view needs to have an account of content determination for evaluative beliefs. Naturalists would be in a better position to meet the challenge. We should, however, bear in mind that content determination is a highly debated issue in philosophy of mind. A relevant and important question is what the place of normativity in the theory of content is (Greenberg 2005). I do not have space in this paper to deal with the issue. However, one initial gesture toward a solution is to take Nozick's suggestion (1989, 96–98) that emotions track value, i.e., counterfactually covary with them, seriously.

22. On my account, beliefs can rationally inform practical states, and thus can rationally guide them. One might think that an alternative way to account for rational force of beliefs over desires is to view desires as practical states like intentions (on one reading, this is Schafer's and Tenenbaum's view). However, there are two initial worries facing such an account of desire. (i) This view cannot account for passivity of desires discussed in Section 3. (ii) While desires provide reason for action, there are good grounds to deny that states such as intention can provide first-order reasons for action (e.g., Broome 2001; Bratman 1987, 23–27).

23. Thanks to Setiya for expressing the worry.

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