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No Sympathy for the Devil: The Guise of the Good Defended

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NO SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL: THE GUISE OF THE GOOD DEFENDED

by

Katie Wright

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ABSTRACT

NO SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL: THE GUISE OF THE GOOD DEFENDED

by

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2020
Under the Supervision of Professor Nataliya Palatnik

At the intersection of action theory and value theory is a provocative thesis: *the Guise of the Good*. The Guise of the Good (GG) states that whenever an agent acts intentionally, she sees some good in her action. Thus, according to GG, positive evaluation is essential to the *nature* of intentional action. Kieran Setiya (2010), however, argues that it is possible to act intentionally without believing that there is any reason to count in favor of one's action: if intentional action is action for a reason, says Setiya, then the Guise of the Good is false. But I argue that Setiya's account is insufficiently sensitive to the relationship that agents bear to their own *prospective actions*. I argue that this relationship is *inherently* normative and that, consequently, the Guise of the Good is true.

To every teacher who saw a future for me,

when I myself could not—

thank you

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1. Introduction

The Guise of the Good is a thesis about the relationship between evaluation, motivation, and intentional action. It states that whenever an agent acts intentionally, she sees some good in her action. If I act intentionally in, say, preparing a meal for myself, then I necessarily see some good in preparing a meal for myself; I cannot act intentionally in ways that I regard as utterly bad. But the idea is not that I must see something morally good in preparing the meal.¹ Nor is it that I must have an absolutely positive evaluation of the activity (I might secretly prefer to dine out, even as I am cooking). The idea is just that I, acting intentionally, see *some* good in what I am doing. And, crucially, that good is my very impetus for action: it is the consideration in virtue of which I decide to perform *that* action instead of another one, or why I decide to act at all.

Yet even in these broad strokes, the thesis will perhaps strike some as implausible. For it is easy enough to reflect on one's own life and to recall some intentional actions and to conclude that they were downright bad. Was there really any good in having that last beer, for example? The next day's headache seems to offer an emphatic "No." Indeed, it seems hard to deny that we are often tempted to pursue ends that we know, in some sense, we should not. Still we help ourselves to a last beer, to a bit of forbidden gossip, to a movie with a friend as our work piles up behind us. I think that these "weakness of will" cases are interesting.² I also think that the Guise of the Good—henceforth GG—can accommodate them. But that will come later.

¹ Other varieties of apparent goodness might include, for example: convenience, aesthetic pleasantness, efficiency, peacefulness, reliability, &c. And moral goodness, too, is an option—it just isn't the only one. One can, then, endorse the Guise of the Good without committing oneself to any kind of motivational internalism. The theses are consistent, of course, but neither *entails* the other. Setiya (2010) and Tenenbaum (2013) also note this point.

² If you also think that they are interesting, then see Michael Stocker (1979).

First, I want to address what I take to be the most serious challenge to GG, which comes from Kieran Setiya's 2010 "Sympathy for the Devil."³ The troubling thing about Setiya's account is that it does not merely cast GG into doubt by way of putative counterexamples, but instead undermines the very grounds for accepting GG in the first place. So while the GG-defender can easily interpret and reinterpret problem cases like those above in her own favor, no such strategy is available against the Setiya argument. I think, however, that the Setiya argument suffers from a significant oversight. I think, more specifically, that his account is insensitive to the unique relationship that agents bear to *prospective actions*. And I think that, when we are careful in considering this relationship, we will find that the Guise of the Good is redeemed.

The rest of the paper will proceed as follows. In Section 2 below, I will sketch Setiya's argument and offer reasons to take seriously the threat that it poses to GG. In Section 3, I will offer a positive argument to fill in the aforementioned gap in Setiya's account; I will argue that, given the nature of rational deliberation, the relationship that agents bear to their own prospective actions is inherently normative. In Section 4, I will employ the argument from Section 3 to defend GG from Setiya's objection. Finally, in Section 5, I will conclude by highlighting some good-making features of the view on offer: more specifically, the features that help it to avoid the most persistent complaints waged against GG.

2. Setiya's Objection

Before we get started on the argument itself, we could do with a bit of background. Note that Setiya accepts, as a general criterion for intentional action, a consideration posited by Elizabeth Anscombe in 1957. Namely:

³ Hence, of course, my own title.

What distinguishes actions which are intentional from those which are not? The answer that I shall suggest is that they are the actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application; the sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting (1957, p. 9)

But there are a few ways to answer Anscombe's question. For example, we might give a sort of *causal* reason along these lines:

"Why is Maggie getting up from her chair?"

"Because she activated the muscles in her arms, legs, and abdomen."

I think it is pretty clear that this is not the kind of answer that Anscombe had in mind. At the very least, it fails to cast Maggie's action as intentional. For all we know, given this response, Maggie might've been animated by some mysterious force totally external to her. A causal reason is not a practical reason at all. What we need, instead, are the kinds of considerations that Setiya calls *explanatory* reasons, which might look something like this:

"Why is Maggie getting up from her chair?"

"She's stepping out to investigate the weather, since she wanted to take a walk later on."

An explanatory reason is the reason on which the agent actually acts.⁴ It is the reason, in other words, by which the agent herself feels *motivated* to act. And Setiya claims that such a reason is sufficient to answer the Anscombian question. In order to characterize one's action as intentional, one need only explain what one is doing and why one is doing it:

A is doing Φ on the ground that p ; that is his reason for doing it (Setiya 2010, p. 88).

⁴ Note that some philosophers—e.g. Dancy (2000)—call this kind of consideration a *motivating* reason. The terms 'explanatory reason' and 'motivating reason' are sometimes used interchangeably. But Maria Alvarez (2009) makes a very good case for distinguishing them. And perhaps worth noting is that Setiya's own 'explanatory reasons' would likely count as motivating reasons on an Alvarez-style classification.

So now let us suppose that Setiya is right. Let us suppose that intentional action is just action for a reason. The question remains: in what sense does the agent's having an explanatory answer to the 'Why?' question entail that she acted under GG?

To see the problem, note first that we often act for reasons that fail to present our actions as good. We do not always, in other words, act for good *normative* reasons: for reasons that justify or count in favor of our actions, either morally or prudentially.⁵ I can do evil things for evil reasons, and I can do foolish things for foolish reasons, too. And still I can sit, happily explaining to you what I have done and why I have done it. For as long as I am acting for reasons, I am acting intentionally—no matter how evil or how foolish my reasons might be. The problem, then, is that the agent's doing Φ because p does not, in any sense, entail p being a good normative reason to do Φ . So it is logically possible for the agent to have beliefs about what she is doing and why she is doing it without having any beliefs at all about whether her explanatory reason also constitutes a *normative* reason for action.

Take, for example, the following dialogue:

“Why are you running outside in your underwear?”

“Because the house is on fire!”

“What about your family? Won't they be trapped by the flames? In a circumstance like this, the fact that the house is on fire is a reason to rush upstairs and rescue them, not to look after your own safety while they burn!”

“You're right. I can't justify my action: the danger is not a [normative] reason for me to flee; but it is the reason for which I am doing so” (Setiya 2010, p. 90).

Presumably, the agent did not give much thought to the normativity of his reason when he decided to flee; he did not even take the time to properly dress himself, much less to reflect on

⁵ From Section 3 onward, I will use the term 'normative' to refer to any evaluative consideration, including so-called con-reasons: reasons that count *against* a particular course of action.

the nature of reasons before acting. Still, once he *is* prompted to reflect, he realizes that he has made a mistake. He realizes, in other words, that his explanatory reason fails to justify his action. But the problem for GG is not just a problem about justification; it is a problem about the agent's *beliefs*. For GG claims that whenever an agent acts intentionally, she sees some good in her action. It claims, moreover, that the good she sees is what actually compels her to act in the first place: the reason on which she acts must constitute a respect in which that action seems good to her. So if GG is true, then agents always act for at least apparently normative reasons. Setiya calls this principle the “the guise of the good for reasons” (2010, p. 88):

If A is doing Φ on the ground that p , she *believes* that the fact that p is a [normative] reason for her to do Φ .

But if it is possible for the agent to believe that she is doing Φ on the ground that p without holding any beliefs at all about p 's normative status, then this principle turns out to be false. So if Setiya is right, then it is possible to act for a reason—and thus to act intentionally—without believing that one's reason also constitutes a normative reason for action. Worse, one can act for a reason without believing that there is *any* normative reason to justify one's action or *any* respect in which that action is a good thing to do.

Note, however, that Setiya's argument applies only to agents who have already acted or are still acting. Given that his account is framed in terms of explanatory reasons, it leaves untouched the relationship that agents bear to *prospective* actions. I cannot, after all, explain why I am doing something that I haven't yet decided to do. So we have a distinct perspective of agency yet unaccounted for, and this problem is not trivial. For if intentional action is action for a reason, then the forward-looking perspective of agency is crucial in the following sense: in order for the agent to act *for* a reason, the agent must surely enjoy some special relationship to

that reason prior to acting. I cannot act *for* a reason that occurs to me after I have already decided to act. To say otherwise would be to willfully misunderstand the meaning of phrases like ‘on the ground that,’ ‘for the reason that,’ ‘in light of the fact,’ and ‘because.’

What I aim to show in the next section is that the truth or falsity of GG hinges upon this forward-looking perspective of agency and no other. For while Setiya’s account looks very plausible when we are considering cases in which the agent does not deliberate—I take it that the housefire example is such a case—it begins to look less plausible when we attend to cases in which she does. In fact, I will argue that agents are *always* constrained by the nature of rational deliberation in the forward-looking perspective of agency. And if I am correct, then any successful objection to GG must take as its target the relationship that agents bear to prospective actions. But this, I hope to show, is an untenable line of argument.

3. Prospective Actions: The Positive Argument

First, I want to offer up the positive argument for the reader’s inspection. Next, I will argue for its specific premises.

- (1) If A is doing Φ on the ground that p , then, if A had deliberated before acting, she would have counted p as relevant to her deliberation about whether to do Φ .
- (2) Necessarily, for any deliberating agent A, a reason counts as relevant to her deliberation about whether to do Φ iff that reason counts as normative, relative to Φ .
- (3) If A is doing Φ on the ground that p , then, if A had deliberated before acting, she would have counted p as normative, relative to Φ .

Part of the reason that the argument is posed counterfactually is that it is possible to act intentionally without engaging in an explicit deliberation beforehand.⁶ I can decide to lean over my desk and to turn on the lamp without contemplating at length whether this is the best course

⁶ I am extremely grateful to Kieran Setiya for pointing out to me the advantages of presenting the view as a counterfactual argument when I expressed this concern to him in conversation.

of action for me to pursue. Indeed, the decision occurs almost instantaneously: I notice that my eyes are beginning to feel strained, I glance up from my book to see that the sun is descending upon the horizon, and I decide to give myself some extra light. The whole decision-event might occur over the span of a single second, but it nevertheless results in a full-blooded intentional action. I am acting for a reason, and so I am equipped to answer the Anscombian ‘Why?’ question. “I am turning on my desk lamp because the sun is setting, and my eyes are beginning to feel strained in the dark,” I declare, “That is my reason for doing it!”

But some prospective actions do call on us to engage in explicit deliberation. And if the agent is especially neurotic, then many, *many* prospective actions will warrant explicit deliberation. Should I take a nap before writing the next page, for example, or should I push on and rest afterwards? Should I go for the job with the shorter commute or the one with the higher wage? Should I express my anger to the one who wronged me, or should I simply forgive and forget? We can deliberate about all sorts of things: I might even deliberate about whether to turn on my desk lamp. Suppose, for instance, that I suffer from an irrational paranoia: I am afraid of spiders, and I suspect that there could be a spider residing on the other side of the lampshade. In that circumstance, I would be more inclined to think carefully about the best course of action for me to pursue. The point here is just that it is possible for me to deliberate about *any* prospective intentional action, whether or not I do so in fact.

So let us suppose that I do not deliberate before turning on my lamp. I act for a reason—that is, for the reason that my eyes are beginning to feel strained in the dark—but I do not weigh that reason against any other considerations before I decide to act on it. Yet premise (1) above states that I would have counted that reason as at least *relevant* to my deliberation, had I deliberated before acting.

But what does that mean, exactly—to be relevant to deliberation? It means just this: a consideration is relevant to the agent’s deliberation just in case that consideration counts in favor of (or against) a prospective course of action. To be relevant to deliberation is to be the kind of consideration that bears directly on what the agent might choose to do. If I am deliberating about whether to turn on my desk lamp, for example, then the fact that my eyes are beginning to feel strained in the dark is relevant to my deliberation. The current temperature in Nome, Alaska, by contrast, is not. If Maggie is deliberating about whether to take a walk this afternoon, then facts about the local weather are relevant to her deliberation; facts about, say, the best public schools in her district clearly aren’t.

Premise (1) states that if I am turning on my lamp because my eyes are feeling strained in the dark, then I *would have* counted the strain on my eyes as relevant to my deliberation, *had* I deliberated before acting. And it is difficult to see how premise (1) could be false. The strain on my eyes is the reason on which I am in fact acting, so that consideration is already established as being of central importance to my decision to act. If we are supposing falsely that I also deliberated before acting, then surely the reason on which I am in fact acting would have been relevant to that deliberation. How could I have failed to recognize its relevance? Given that I am rational and that I am not suffering any serious confusions about the candidate reasons for action, it isn’t clear how I *could* fail in this way. For suppose that I deliberate about whether to do Φ , weighing reasons q , r , and s . Curiously, though, I act on reason p , which I haven’t weighed against any of the other three reasons. In fact, worse than that: I do not even see it as a relevant consideration. The problem is that reasons q , r , and s bear on my doing Φ , given that they are the reasons I weigh in deliberation about whether to do Φ . And reason p bears on my doing Φ , given that it is the reason for which I in fact do Φ . So if I am rational, and if I fully understand reasons

p , q , r , and s , then I must recognize that reason p is relevant to my deliberation. For it bears on my doing Φ in exactly the same way that reasons q , r , and s do.

We will leave premise (1) here; I hope that the idea strikes the reader as fairly intuitive. The more interesting premise is probably premise (2): necessarily, for any deliberating agent A , a reason counts as relevant to her deliberation about whether to do Φ iff that reason counts as normative, relative to Φ . And yet given the definition of ‘relevant to deliberation’ offered above, it should not come as a surprise that only normative reasons hit the mark. But there is more that we can say in defense of the claim.

First, note that when I am deliberating about whether to pursue some prospective course of action, I am engaged in a kind of evaluative intellectual activity. I am thinking about my reasons, about my options in light of my reasons, and I am weighing my reasons against each other. I might deliberate over a wide variety of concerns: moral concerns, concerns about possible outcomes for me, concerns about possible outcomes for other people, concerns about the short run, concerns about the long run, and so on. Whatever kinds of concerns I am accounting for in deliberation, the point is that I am weighing those concerns against each other. I am considering the extent to which each of those concerns speaks in favor of or against a prospective course of action, and I am preparing to act accordingly.

So even given just this rough characterization of what it means to deliberate, it is hard to see the sense in which non-normative reasons could be relevant to that activity (at least, from the agent’s point of view). If deliberation *just is* the activity of evaluating one’s options, then the considerations in light of which one deliberates must be evaluative. So I cannot evaluate my options in light of explanatory reasons. The role of explanatory reasons is to explain an action that has already commenced; they apply to a different perspective of agency altogether. Granting

even that explanatory reasons appeal to the agent's motivation, I cannot evaluate my options in this way, either. For it may well be true that all of my candidate reasons motivate me to some degree. But the reason that *ultimately* motivates me to act is the reason I cite in response to the question 'Why?,' so it cannot achieve this status until I have elected to act on it—*post-deliberation*.⁷ The motivational force of my reasons cannot be determined before deliberation, in other words, for it is the process of deliberation itself that *yields* my motivating reason.

Normative reasons, by contrast, are not bound to any one perspective of agency. But there is one by which they are favored. Consider this nice passage from R. Jay Wallace:

The perspective within which normative reasons have their place is characteristically prospective, first-personal, and deliberative. It is the point of view from which I weigh the considerations for and against the various courses of action that are open to me, with the aim not of explaining something that has already occurred, but of resolving for myself the question of what is to be done and acting accordingly (2003, p. 432).

Of course, it is possible to reflect on the normativity of one's own reasons for action while one is in the middle of acting or, indeed, long afterwards. But the kind of activity in which we engage during retrospective reflection is importantly different from the one in which we engage during deliberation. For one thing, we are not—or, at least, we need not be—as intimately tied to our own agential powers when we are reflecting as we are when we are deliberating: during reflection, we adopt an almost third-personal perspective towards ourselves.⁸ For I can reflect on my own reasons for action in virtually the same way that I reflect on the reasons of other agents. But I cannot, on the behalf of other agents, *decide to act*.

⁷ The term 'motivating reason' is sometimes used to refer *not* to the reason on which the agent actually acts, but instead to any reason that the agent counts—perhaps mistakenly—as a normative reason for her action. In that sense, then, motivating reasons would count as relevant to deliberation, but only *because* the agent regards them as normative reasons for action. From the deliberative perspective of the agent, motivating reasons are normative, which means that premise (2) holds.

⁸ Wallace (2003) makes a similar point.

Further, our epistemic position regarding prospective actions is quite different from our epistemic position regarding actions that we have already pursued. Part of deliberation is just guesswork; we are not omniscient, after all. We do not typically know how things will turn out before we act, and we sometimes surprise even ourselves upon acting. The vengeance that appeared to us *so sweet* in deliberation turns ugly in realization, for example, or the little white lie intended to spare a friend's feelings leaves us wrestling with unanticipated guilt. In such cases as these, we often look back on our reasons for action and wonder whether they really did justify or count in favor of the thing that we did. But we have more information now than what we had then—namely, we do know how our action turned out—and so we are reflecting on our reasons in a new light.

In deliberation, however, we are not trying to determine whether an existent course of action was in fact justified. Instead, we are trying to determine which prospective course of action *would* be justified in light of our reasons and the information we have available. So while we can inquire about both explanatory and normative reasons for an action that has already commenced, in deliberation we are bound just to the latter. We ask ourselves, “What should I do?” and only normative reasons are equipped to answer this question. There is simply no place for explanatory reasons here: I cannot decide what I *should* do by explaining what I in fact did.

Supposing, then, that premises (1) and (2) are both true, the conclusion follows:

If A is doing Φ on the ground that p , then, if A had deliberated before acting, she would have counted p as normative, relative to Φ .

Before closing the section, though, I want to flag what I take to be some important features of the argument. Note that the argument is presented in such a way as to ensure the possibility that agents make mistakes. It is possible, in other words, to act for a reason that is not

justifying of one's action. For the truth of premise (2) does not entail that any consideration over which an agent deliberates *really does count* as a good normative reason for action. In fact, I think that premise (2) holds true as a fact about rational deliberation whether or not anyone ever, in the fullness of time, deliberates over good normative reasons for action. The important takeaway is that deliberation is itself an inherently normative activity. Thus, any reason that we regard as a candidate for deliberation is also a reason that we regard as normative. And if this is right, then the Guise of the Good may yet be redeemed.

4. The Guise of the Good Defended

So how exactly does the argument of Section 3 apply to GG? Recall Setiya's objection: Setiya claims that it is possible for the agent to hold beliefs about what she is doing and why she is doing it without holding any beliefs at all about the normativity of her own reasons for action. Thus, says Setiya, it is possible to act for a reason (and so to act intentionally) without seeing any good at all in what one does. We noted, however, that his argument applies only to agents who have already acted or are still acting, saying nothing whatever about the relationship that agents bear to prospective actions. Setiya is addressing Anscombe's question: "Why are you doing that?" But in deliberation we ask a different question: "What *should* I do?"

In Section 3, however, we established that it is possible to act for a reason without deliberating beforehand. Crucially, though, we also saw that any reason on which the agent in fact acts must count, in her eyes, as *relevant* to deliberation (when deliberation occurs). And given that only normative reasons are relevant to deliberation, the agent would have counted her own reason as normative, had she dedicated any thought to the matter before acting. We have yet only to establish *why* this is the case and what it means for GG.

An attractive answer suggests itself: in the forward-looking perspective of agency, the agent must—if implicitly—regard the reason on which she decides to act as a normative reason for action. Setiya may be right, in other words, to say that it is possible to act intentionally without holding any *explicit* beliefs about one's own reason for action. But what the counterfactual argument shows is something more impressive: that the very same agent would *necessarily* hold beliefs about the normativity of her reason in the case where she did deliberate before acting. And it seems wrong to say that it is the activity of deliberation itself that forces the agent to spontaneously form these beliefs (rather than to simply bring them into focus). Obviously, she will form *some* new beliefs in the course of deliberating, but deliberation is not a prerequisite for the formation of at least one basic belief: namely, that a candidate reason *bears*, in some sense, on her prospective course of action.

It is of course true that deliberation has the power to change the agent's view in any number of ways. A reason that she may have found compelling prior to deliberation is liable to lose its force, when weighed against other reasons. Indeed, the deliberating agent may elect to pursue a different course of action altogether. But it is surely false that the same reason on which the actual agent acts would be endowed with a *fundamentally different kind* of suggestive power by simple deliberation, in the counterfactual case. The path of least resistance runs the other way: part of acting for a reason, of accepting some consideration *as* a reason, involves the formation of some at least implicit evaluative beliefs. The connection between reason and action is otherwise left hopelessly opaque.

Take Setiya's housefire dialogue. In an 'all things considered' sort of way, there can be no doubt that the agent's reason for fleeing fails to justify his action. Indeed, the agent himself realizes as much upon later reflection. But let us suppose that the agent had deliberated before

acting: in that case, when he is deliberating about what to do, the threat of mortal danger is clearly a consideration that counts *in favor* of his fleeing rather than against it. The problem is not that the agent's reason fails to exert normative force, but that it fails to exert *enough*: there are stronger reasons to count against his preferred course of action than there are ones to count in its favor. And perhaps the agent would have realized this, had he deliberated before acting. But, as we saw in Section 3, it is not even *possible* to deliberate over non-normative considerations. Unless the agent already held some implicit normative beliefs about his reason for flight, then, it is dubious whether or how deliberation would be possible for him. Of course, we would be hard-pressed to deny that deliberation *is* possible for him. So the most natural explanation is, I think, that the agent did see some good in fleeing—that he implicitly counted the threat to his own life as a normative reason to flee—and that some version of the Guise of the Good for reasons must after all be true.

The most tenable version is one informed by the counterfactual argument. It therefore concedes that agents need not hold any *explicit* beliefs about the normativity of their reasons for action. Still, it maintains that all agents must hold *at least* some implicit normative beliefs about the reasons on which they act; otherwise, the truth of the counterfactual's conclusion comes out looking like a rather remarkable coincidence. Worth remembering, too, is that the counterfactual argument ensures the possibility that agents make mistakes (i.e. that we can and do sometimes act for reasons that fail to justify our actions). And so, on this account, GG applies to *any* agent who acts for *any* reason, whether or not that reason is decisively justifying. We are thus equipped to accommodate akratic agents, sadists, and thrill-seekers. Indeed, we are equipped to accommodate quite evil and quite interesting people of every conceivable stripe. Contrary to Velleman's famous charge, then, the agent portrayed by GG isn't necessarily "a square" (1992,

p. 3).⁹ For as long as the agent takes just one *pro tanto* reason to count in favor of her action, either implicitly or explicitly, she is acting under GG.

When I help myself to a last beer, for example, I might do so in full awareness of the pain I will suffer tomorrow. I might realize that I have work to do in the morning, that I am breaking from my diet, and that my money might be better spent elsewhere. But as long as I am acting intentionally, I am acting for a reason. Perhaps I want to convey to my coworkers that I am laid-back outside of the office. Or perhaps I act for a much less sophisticated reason: I am simply enjoying my beer! The bright flavor of the hops and the pleasant buzz that they produce in my head seem to count in favor of my having another, tomorrow's headache notwithstanding. From the forward-looking perspective, then, I am pursuing *some* good. Or, at least, I am pursuing something that *I* believe is good. And this is all that really matters. For as long as *I* believe that there is some good in my action, I am acting under GG.

So the agent's failure to reach a decisively justifying reason by deliberation does not pose any threat to the thesis. After all, on this view, GG does not require of agents that they deliberate at all. But any reason that counts as a candidate for deliberation is a reason that counts as normative (as speaking in favor of or against a prospective course of action). There is, then, only one remaining line of objection to the thesis: that it is possible for agents to act for reasons that they believe count *against* their prospective actions. But this is not even intelligible, much less representative of rational agency in the abstract. If I understand that reason *p* speaks directly against my doing Φ , then it would constitute something deeper than a mere deliberative failure

⁹ "The agent portrayed in much philosophy of action is, let's face it, a square. He does nothing intentionally unless he regards it or its consequences as desirable. The reason is that he acts intentionally only when he acts out of a desire for some anticipated outcome; and in desiring that outcome, he must regard it as having some value" (Velleman 1992, p. 3).

for me to do Φ in light of that reason. I think, therefore, that GG-deniers had better find a cleaner objection to the thesis than this one. I also think that such an objection will be very hard to come by.

5. Conclusion

“*Bonum est multiplex,*” says Anscombe: “good is multiform” (1957, p. 75). It appears in many guises, and we can act under them all. It matters not whether we correctly conceive of our actions under those guises; what matters is *that* we conceive of them in that way in the first place. And we do, all of us, conceive of them in that way, if the arguments above are sound. Not as a matter of contingency, as even critics of the thesis might grant, but because we are rational agents, therefore bound by the nature of rational agency. And I have argued, here, that it is within that nature to act under the Guise of the Good.

An attractive feature of this account is, I think, that it avoids many of the familiar worries about GG. First, the account is equipped to accommodate cases of akrasia.¹⁰ Indeed, the account is equipped to accommodate a wide variety of ill-advised behaviors. Even if I act against my better judgment in one sense—that is, in the sense of having ‘all things considered’ reasons to count against my action—I need take *only one* pro tanto reason to count, however weakly, in favor of my action in order to act under GG. It is, therefore, possible for me to act irrationally under GG to the extent that I act for weak normative reasons. And it is possible even for me to realize that my reasons are weak. All that is forbidden, by this account, is the possibility of my acting for *no ostensibly normative reason at all*. Second, the account is not overintellectualized: it does not require of agents that they possess any particular concepts of the good such that less

¹⁰ Again, see Velleman (1992) and Stocker (1979) for arguments to the contrary.

sophisticated agents (e.g. children) might be excluded from it.¹¹ It does not ask too much of agents, in other words: merely that they act for a reason. Yet none of this means that the thesis is forever invulnerable to objections. It means only that we have reason to think that the idea holds water after all. I hope, in sum, to have at least offered an account on which the grounds for accepting the thesis are redeemed against Setiya's rather potent objection. Indeed, I hope to have offered an account on which the grounds for accepting the thesis become attractive in their own right.

¹¹ This charge is sometimes levied against Raz (2010) and Boyle and Lavin (2010). See, for example, Amir Saemi (2014), who targets Raz in particular (though Saemi himself ultimately defends an alternative account of GG).

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