

For the definitive version of this paper, see:

Gregory, A. 2013. "The Guise of Reasons" in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50:1  
pp.63-72

<http://apq.press.illinois.edu/50/1/gregory.html>

## **The Guise of Reasons**

Alex Gregory

*Abstract:* In this paper it is argued that we should amend the traditional understanding of the view known as the guise of the good. The guise of the good is traditionally understood as the view that we only want to act in ways that we believe to be good in some way. But it is argued that a more plausible view is that we only want to act in ways that we believe we have normative reason to act in. This change – from formulating the view in terms of goodness to formulating it in terms of reasons – is significant because the revised view avoids various old and new counterexamples to the traditional view, because the revised view is better motivated than the traditional view, and because the revised view is better placed to explain certain features of desire than the traditional view. The paper finishes by showing that the conclusions reached are compatible with theories such as the buck passing account of value.

In this paper it is argued that we should amend the traditional understanding of the view known as the guise of the good. The guise of the good is traditionally understood as the view that we only want to act in ways that we believe to be good in some way. It will be

argued that a more plausible view is that we only want to act in ways that we believe we have normative reason to act in. This change – from formulating the view in terms of goodness to formulating it in terms of reasons – is significant because the revised view avoids various old and new counterexamples to the traditional view, because the revised view is better motivated than the traditional view, and because the revised view is better placed to explain certain features of desire than the traditional view.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 1 describes the two candidate views in greater detail. Section 2 argues for the guise of reasons over the guise of the good by appeal to five examples. Section 3 provides two more theoretical arguments for the guise of reasons. Finally, in section 4, it is shown that the conclusions drawn are compatible with views that draw some kind of equivalence between facts about reasons and facts about values, such as the buck passing account of value.

### (1) The Views

The broad view we are examining says something along the following lines:

*The Guise of the Normative:* Some aspects of agency are constrained by our beliefs about normativity.<sup>i</sup>

But the differences between different formulations of this view may affect its plausibility. Here we shall adjudicate between the following two more determinate possibilities:

*The Guise of the Good:* We only desire to act in ways that we believe to be good in some way.

*The Guise of Reasons*: We only desire to act in ways that we believe we have normative reason to act in.

Anscombe (1963: 75), Aquinas (ST I-II.1.1, DV 24.2), and Davidson (2001: 22-3) all characterise the guise of the normative as the guise of the good. Raz endorses both the guise of the good and the guise of reasons (1999: 22-3, 2010: 111). Setiya (2007: 16) comes close to characterising the guise of the normative as the guise of reasons, though he understands it as a view about intentional actions rather than as a view about desires.<sup>ii</sup> Velleman argues against the guise of the good, but does seem to suggest that he nonetheless endorses something like the guise of reasons (1992: 20-21). So both of the above views are tacitly present in the literature, but the distinction between them has not received much attention, presumably in large part because it may seem unlikely that the distinction between them matters. We shall see that this is not true.

Before we get to that, we should briefly note how these views are similar. They are similar in that they both treat the guise of the normative as a constraint on desire. We shall assume that desires are just any state with motivating potential, and accordingly “desire” and “want” will be used interchangeably in this paper. For this same reason, we shall think of desires as always being desires to act. This idea has some intuitive plausibility, and is anyway entailed by the standard way of characterising the direction of fit of desire in terms of motivational dispositions (see, for example, Smith 1994, chapter 4).

It is true that some treat the guise of the normative as a constraint on intentions or actions rather than on desires (e.g. Raz 1999: 23, 2010: 111, Setiya 2007: 16, Sussman

2009: 614). But it is more plausible to treat the guise of the normative as a constraint on desire. To the extent that our intentions or actions are constrained by our beliefs about the normative, it seems that this is *because* they are explained by prior desires which are themselves so constrained (cf. Davidson 1999: 23-3, Velleman 1992: 3). Otherwise we might end up with the strange view that our desires are not constrained by our beliefs about the normative but our intentions or actions are. On this view, we have some desires which are constitutionally incapable of moving us to act, which is implausible. So these views are right to treat the guise of the normative as a view about desire.

In summary, the guise of the good and the guise of reasons are alike in that they treat the guise of the normative as a constraint on desire, and this is for the best. But the focus of this paper is on how these views are different. The guise of the good says that our desires are constrained by our beliefs about what is *good*. It is safest to interpret this view as saying that we can only desire to act in ways that we believe are good in *any* way – predicatively, attributively, instrumentally, finally, or however else. Perhaps that is too permissive, but since we will reject the view for independent reasons – indeed, partly for being too restrictive – we need not worry about what the appropriately restricted view ought to say.

In contrast, the guise of reasons says that our desires are constrained by our beliefs about what *we have normative reason to do*. A normative reason is a fact that counts in favour of some course of action. Again, we will take this view to say that we can only desire to act in ways that we believe we have *any* normative reason to act in – whether the reason is instrumental, final, moral, non-moral, strong, weak, or whatever else.

In short, the guise of the good and the guise of reasons both state constraints on desire, but one claims that our desires are constrained by our beliefs about the good, whereas the other claims that our desires are constrained by our beliefs about reasons. We shall now examine five counterexamples to the guise of the good, and see why they are not counterexamples to the guise of reasons.

## (2) Counterexamples

The first two counterexamples to the guise of the good we shall address together:

(i) “Suppose that I promise my children that I will tie my right shoelaces before my left shoelaces on alternate days of the week if they will do their homework without fuss. One can imagine arguing that though I ought to tie my right shoelaces before my left shoelaces today, since I did the opposite yesterday, my doing so has no value of any form.”

(Dancy 2000: 168)

(ii) “The management proposes to close the colliery. The miners vote on whether to accept the proposal and the redundancy pay that goes with it or to oppose it. You talk to one of the miners: ‘You are voting to stay put.’ ‘Sure,’ he says. ‘So you must have some hope [of keeping the mine open].’ ‘No hope. Just principles.’”

(Raz 2010: 112-113)

It seems that Dancy might desire to tie his shoelaces in a way that he does not believe good, and that Raz’s miner might desire to vote in a way that he does not believe good. These are not the standard sorts of counterexample to the guise of the good, to be sure.

It is tempting to think that counterexamples to the guise of the good, like those we examine below, will appeal to either the bad or the bland. But these two examples show that this is false. In these examples, we have agents who are committed to doing the right thing. The problem for the guise of the good is that these agents believe that the right thing to do is not a good thing to do. This is a familiar feature of various deontological views. According to the guise of the good, anyone committed to such a view could not always desire to do their duty. But this looks hopelessly implausible. Regardless of whether such views are true, they are at least views which people can hold and be motivated by.

Such cases are clearly no counterexample to the guise of reasons. It is very plausible that one can only desire to do what one thinks is right if one also thinks that one has reason to do what is right. So the guise of reasons has the resources to explain why one can desire to do one's duty, even if one thinks that doing one's duty is in no way good.

The second counterexample to the guise of the good will be more familiar:

(iii) "Consider the figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, who responds to his defeat with the cry, 'Evil be thou my Good.' Satan is here resolving to desire and pursue evil, and hence-as he himself puts it-to regard evil as good. But he cannot reasonably be interpreted as adopting new estimates of what's valuable-that is, as resolving to cease judging evil to be evil and to start judging it to be good. If Satan ever loses sight of the evil in what he now desires, if he ever comes to think of what he desires as really good, he will no longer be at all satanic; he'll be just another well-intentioned fool. The ruler of Hell doesn't desire what he wrongly thinks is worthy of approval; he desires what he rightly thinks isn't."

(Velleman 1992:18)

Satan desires to do things that he believes are bad. There are two responses that defenders of the guise of the good might offer in the face of this counterexample to their view.

First, they might claim that things can be good in a number of different ways, and so claim that even if Satan sees no moral good in what he desires to do, he must still see some other good in it (Alvarez 2009: 218-9, Anscombe 1963: 75). Perhaps he sees value in demonstrating his liberty, in being a rebel, or something similar. We will call this kind of move *The Expansion Strategy*. The expansion strategy defends the guise of the good by expanding our conception of the kinds of good that people might see in what they desire.

It is far from clear that the expansion strategy can render the guise of the good compatible with a plausible interpretation of Satan's beliefs and desires. We are being offered a view according to which Satan wants to act in ways that he believes are morally bad but good in some other way. So the overall picture being presented here is that Satan is in the very common position of believing that certain values conflict – being moral, and being free – and believes that the latter kind of value outweighs the former. But this seems to understate the divergence between us good folk and Satan. After all, we might agree that liberty is good, and that there can sometimes be something worthwhile in rebellion, and so on. Is the only remaining difference between us and him the respective weights we assign to these kinds of goodness? This seems implausible.

A second way to try and render this example compatible with the guise of the good is to say that whilst Satan does indeed desire what he judges to be bad, we can make sense of him only because he so perfectly inverts the guise of the good (Raz 1999: 32-34, 2010, Sussman 2009). Satan's desires are not random, but instead guided perfectly, if perversely, by his beliefs about value. So we might claim that the example of Satan really supports, rather than undermines, the underlying thought behind the guise of the good. For Satan's desires are indeed guided by his value judgements, even if in a perverse manner. In short, one might claim that the example of Satan does require that we qualify the guise of the good in a certain way, but leaves the core of the view untouched. We will call this kind of move *The Inversion Strategy*. The inversion strategy defends by the guise of the good by qualifying it to allow for value inversion.

But though the inversion strategy allows us to maintain some of the core features of the guise of the good, it forces us to dispense with others. Part of the appeal of the guise of the good is that it allows us to draw a parallel between belief and desire. It allows us to say that just as beliefs aim at the truth, desires aim at the good (see, e.g. Velleman 1992). But we cannot maintain this parallel if we pursue the inversion strategy. For the inversion strategy says that we can perversely desire something just because it is bad. But it is very clear that one cannot perversely believe something just because it is false. So the inversion strategy undermines one key motivation for endorsing the guise of the good.

The defender of the inversion strategy might try to insist that this parallel was bound to fail anyway. But this seems unlikely. One reason why it is appealing to hold that beliefs



aim at the truth is that we seem powerless to alter them for any other reason (Shah 2003). Regardless of how much money anyone offers you to believe that grass is blue, you can't believe it.<sup>iii</sup> If this is a good motivation for thinking that beliefs aim at the truth, it seems that there is a parallel motivation for thinking that desires aim at the normative. For again, no matter how much money someone offers you to want to eat a saucer of mud, you can't form the desire.<sup>iv</sup> Just as you'll only come to believe that grass is blue if that claim seems true, so too will you only want to eat a saucer of mud if you think that there's at least something going for that course of action.

In short, the guise of the normative is best understood as stating a constraint on desire that parallels a constraint on belief. And for this reason, the inversion strategy is unappealing. It follows that we cannot render the guise of the good consistent with the example of Satan in a satisfactory manner.

But the guise of reasons can accommodate Satan much more easily. It seems plausible that Satan desires to act in ways that he believes he has reason to act in. For it is true – and this is what the expansion strategy has correct – that he has a *rationale* for his desires, and to this extent it is true that he believes that there is some reason to act as he desires to act. But we can say this and agree that he is pursuing badness. Not that he is merely prioritising one kind of goodness over another, but that he is prioritising the bad, in general, over the good, in general. And in saying this we also capture what was appealing about the inversion strategy. Satan believes he has reason to promote the bad. That is the sense in which his approach to value is inverted.

We now turn to a fourth counterexample to the guise of the good:

(iv) Jeff has had an upsetting argument with his partner, and afterwards in a mood of guilt and frustration, he strongly desires to destroy the difficult project that he has spent much of his recent life working on.

After his upsetting argument, Jeff seems to desire something that he thinks just makes things worse. Stocker appeals to a similar thought when he writes that:

“Just as there are desires and appetites directed at harming others, there are desires and appetites directed at harming oneself. In certain moods, such as the self-directed modes of disgust, hatred, guilt, shame, I may seek to humble, abase, or harm myself.”

(Stocker 1979: 748, see also Velleman 1992: 17-18)

It seems that we sometimes desire things that we judge to be bad for ourselves and good for nothing. Clearly, this would be a problem for the guise of the good. Again, defenders of the view might try to accommodate the example by pursuing the expansion strategy or the inversion strategy.

But the expansion strategy seems even less plausible here than it did above. It seems forced to insist that Jeff must see something good about destroying this project of his. Even if we broaden our conception of what it is to judge something good, it's just not clear what value we could even name that he might be pursuing. If he thinks that this act is bad for him, and has no real effect on others, why on earth would he still think it good?<sup>v</sup>

The inversion strategy is here neither more nor less plausible than it is in the case of Satan. It is true that Jeff appears to be guided by his judgements about value, though in a perfectly inverted way. But again, we might worry that allowing this undermines the appealing parallel between belief and desire that we hoped the guise of the normative would support.

It is again far from clear that this example can be rendered consistent with the guise of the good. But the guise of reasons is not impugned by the example. It is plausible to suppose that if Jeff genuinely desires to destroy his project, that must be because he believes that he has a reason to do so: because he thinks this is the appropriate action in these circumstances (or at least, this is what he thinks whilst he has the desire). In desiring this he believes that he has reason to make things worse.

It is worth comparing this case with the first two. One natural way of understanding Jeff's desire to harm himself is to think of him as believing that it is somehow fitting, even if bad, that his project should be destroyed. In that respect, Jeff's attitude is just like the deontologist who believes that some action is right but bad.

In this respect, Jeff's attitude also seems like the attitude of Watson's squash player who wants to hit their victorious opponent with the racquet (Watson 1982: 100-101). Watson persuasively suggests that they might want to do this without thinking that it would be good for their opponent to suffer. But again, it is tempting to think that the squash player believes (however briefly) that their opponent *deserves* to be hit in the face, and a natural interpretation of this is that they believe that they have reason to harm their

opponent. Here too, it seems that this is a counterexample to the guise of the good but not the guise of reasons.

Let us move on to consider a final counterexample to the guise of the good:

(v) “Sitting in the bath, Johnny, and it does not matter whether he is a child or an adult acting like a child, says, ‘I am a fish’ and beats the water with his open palm (presumably pretending to flap it with his tail). ‘Why did you do that, Johnny?’ ‘That’s what fish do.’”

(Raz 2010: 113)

Johnny desires to act in a way that he thinks is in no way good. More generally, there seem to be playful, whimsical or just plain silly desires. Velleman has the same worry for the guise of the good when he writes: “a mood of playfulness is, in part, a disposition to form desires for things conceived as having no particular value” (1992: 17).

We might again try to respond to the example by employing the expansion strategy, and claim that Johnny sees something good about being playful, silly, spontaneous, or similar (Raz 2010: 115, see also Raz 1999: 30). But we don’t independently think that people assign value to these things, and asserting that they do simply to salvage the guise of the good is ad hoc and threatens to trivialise the view. If we are happy to ascribe value judgements to people solely on the basis of what they desire, then the guise of the good loses its explanatory force. For in this trivialised form, we are unable to make sound judgements about what people believe to be good without first examining their desires. On this trivialised version of the view, the sense in which our

value judgements constrain our desires is like the sense in which a slave constrains his master: only the things the slave does are those the master ordered. If this is the right way to hold the guise of the good, it is not as interesting as it first seemed.

The inversion strategy is here even more hopeless than the expansion strategy. Johnny doesn't act in light of his value judgements at all: he aims for something he thinks of as neither good nor bad. Might we say that he is guided by the neutral? This seems ad hoc, and to whatever extent the value inversion strategy threatened to undermine the appeal of the view, this new strategy is even worse.

But yet again, though Johnny poses a problem for the guise of the good, it is far less clear that he poses a problem for the guise of reasons. For we might well think that Johnny does think that he has *some* reason to play as a fish. No doubt we must be careful not to think of the reason involved as particularly strong. Indeed, if you asked Johnny why he wants to play as a fish, he might even say that he's doing it "for no real reason at all". But we need not take this assertion at face value. One implication of Grice's maxim of quantity is that asserting that one has a reason to do something conversationally implies that the reason is at least somewhat important. Conversely, it follows that if one believes that one has only an extremely weak reason to do something, it would be misleading to assert that one has that reason (Schroeder 2007a: 92-6). So perhaps it is true but conversationally inappropriate for Johnny to say that he has a reason to play as a fish.<sup>vi</sup>

This point is relevant when assessing some other supposed counterexamples to the guise of the normative, examples which may be thought to also undermine the guise of

reasons. Here I have in mind Watson's case of the mother who wants to drown her bawling baby in the bath (1982: 100-101), and Setiya's example of the person who flees from their burning house leaving their family behind (2010: 90).<sup>vii</sup> In both of these cases it is clear that the agent will not confess to believing that they have any reason to perform the action that they want to perform. But all the same, it seems plausible to think that they do believe this. For clearly, drowning the baby would stop the annoying crying, and fleeing the house may save one's life. It would sound strange for these agents to say that they believe they have these reasons only because these reasons are insignificant compared to the reasons they have to act differently (cf. Schroeder 2007a: 95-6, where he persuasively suggests that it is true but inappropriate to assert that you have a reason to eat your car).

In this section, we have examined five main counterexamples to the guise of the good. We saw that they succeeded in this task, but that they failed to undermine the guise of reasons. There might yet be other examples which do undermine the guise of reasons. We cannot rule this out in advance, and to this extent, the defence of the guise of reasons here is inconclusive. Still, many of the best known counterexamples to the view seem to fail, and this provides some grounds for optimism. In the next section, we examine two further arguments for the guise of reasons over the guise of the good.

### **(3) Reasons and Goodness**

The guise of the good and the guise of reasons differ because one employs the concept of goodness, whereas the other employs the concept of a reason. The contrast between the concept of goodness and the concept of a reason is a contrast between an evaluative concept and a deontic one. Of course, reasons are not deontic in the sense that they

*demand* that certain things be done, but they do at least *suggest* that certain things be done, and on plausible assumptions, they are interdefined with the paradigmatically deontic concepts like ought (e.g. Broome 2004).

Given that the concept of a reason is a deontic concept, it is clear that one central thing we should have in mind when we think about reasons is that they pass judgement on our actions (cf. Dancy 2000a: 170-1).<sup>viii</sup> If I believe that I have a reason, I must believe that I have that reason *for* something: for performing some particular action. It is in light of this fact that people have been tempted to make further claims about reasons: that they are tightly interconnected with motivating reasons (e.g. Dancy 2000b, Williams 1981: 102, 106, 1995: 38-9), that one can only have a reason to do what one can do (e.g. Streumer 2007), and that reasons are necessarily agent-relative (e.g. Rønnow-Rasmussen 2009: 230-231).

Things are different for goodness. I might believe that something is good without yet thinking about actions at all. And even when we restrict our attention to the goodness of actions rather than goodness more generally, it is far from obvious that there is a close connection between the goodness of actions and motivating reasons, that there is a close connection between an action being good and being able to do it, or that the goodness of an action could be agent-relative, let alone that it must be (cf. Schroeder 2007b).

All of these facts together point to the conclusion that reasons are action guiding in a way that goodness is not. This shows that the guise of reasons is better motivated than the guise of the good. It is more plausible to think that our desires are constrained by our beliefs about properties which are action guiding than by properties which are not.

This not only shows that the guise of reasons is better motivated than the guise of the good, but also shows that the guise of reasons can explain a feature of desire that the guise of the good cannot. Consider the distinction between desires and wishes. Though wishes seem to have something in common with desire, they are nonetheless two distinct kinds of mental state. For whereas we can wish to do just anything, we can only desire to do things that we believe we can possibly do. David Velleman has argued that the guise of the good fails to have the resources to make this distinction (1992: 12-17). For the guise of the good says that desires aim at what is good, and there is no reason to think that good things must be possible things. Perhaps defenders of the guise of the good can claim that their view only states one constraint on desire, and can allow that there are other constraints as well. But even if they can say this, it would clearly be an advantage for the guise of reasons if it can do more and show why there is this further constraint.

It is highly plausible that you can only have a reason to do something if you are able to do it (again, see Streumer 2007). Call this the reason-implies-can principle. If the reason-implies-can principle is true, we can see why desires might be distinguished from wishes. For if we can only desire to do what we believe we have reason to do, and – assuming that we accept the reason-implies-can principle – we can only believe that we have reason to do what we believe we can do, it is bound to follow that we can only desire to do what we believe we can do. So if the guise of reasons is true, we make the distinction between desires and wishes for just the same reason as we distinguish between what we have reason to do, and what we would have reason to do if we were able.



In summary, the guise of reasons is able to explain why we distinguish desires and wishes. And it is also more generally plausible to think that desires would aim at action guiding properties like reasons than less action guiding properties like goodness. These two advantages of the view, in combination with the examples in section (2), should convince us that if either of the guise of reasons or the guise of the good is true, it will be the guise of reasons.

#### (4) Equivalence Theories

With the arguments for the guise of reasons in place, there is an objection to consider. One might think that the difference between the guise of the good and the guise of reasons has been exaggerated.

Some people believe that the value of an action determines the reasons we have to perform it (e.g. Raz 2010: 125-129). Other people believe the buck passing account of value and claim that the reasons we have to perform an action determine its value (e.g. Scanlon 1998: 95-100). Either way, there is an equivalence between facts about values and facts about reasons. Call any view with this implication an *Equivalence Theory*. If some equivalence theory were correct, we might think that the guise of the good and the guise of reasons must stand or fall together. One might think that if an agent believes that an action is good, then they must believe that they have reason to perform it, and vice versa.

Of course, equivalence theories are controversial. If all equivalence theories are false, there is clearly no problem for the distinction between the guise of the good and the

guise of reasons. But it would be outside the scope of this paper to argue against all such theories, and so it would be better if there were something more concessive to say to those who want to maintain an equivalence theory.

One point worth making is that an equivalence theory may be implausible if it states an *exact* equivalence between the value of actions and the reasons we have to perform them. This is so for various reasons, but most relevantly because it seems as though value is likely to correlate with agent-neutral reasons rather than agent-relative reasons (cf. Schroeder 2007b). So it seems as though the most plausible statement of equivalence theories will allow that we can have agent-relative reasons to perform actions that are bad overall, such as saving one's partner at the expense of several strangers. It follows that even if some equivalence theory is true, the guise of the good and the guise of reasons may have different implications in cases where the agent believes that the reasons they have to act in various ways are agent-relative rather than agent-neutral. This seems highly likely for the examples above. For example, it seems entirely possible that Satan believes that the reasons he has to promote the bad are his and his alone. So perhaps those who hold equivalence theories have the resources to permit the distinction between the guise of the good and the guise of reasons, and the resources to agree with the arguments we have examined.

But there is a more decisive reason to think that equivalence theories are no objection to the arguments in this paper. Equivalence theories are theories about the relationship between two properties: between the property of being good and the property of being a reason. But the guise of the good and the guise of reasons make no claims about such properties. They instead only make claims about our beliefs about such properties. So

all that defenders of equivalence theories need to say is that these theories only diverge in cases where agents have false beliefs. In so far as equivalence theories are plausible, this seems plausible. For example, defenders of equivalence theories seem highly likely to believe that Dancy has false beliefs if he believes that he ought to tie his right shoelaces before his left even though it is not good to do so.

Raz fails to notice this point when addressing the dispute between the guise of reasons and the guise of the good. He writes that “the question under consideration is whether reasons for action are that the actions have some value. If they are then [if agents act for what they believe to be reasons, then] barring conceptual ignorance or mistakes, actions [...] are performed in the belief that the action has some value” (2010: 125, see also Setiya 2010: 85). But when discussing these views we certainly should not be excluding cases of conceptual ignorance or mistakes. Such cases are perfectly relevant to evaluating these views, since they each make claims about how all of our beliefs constrain our desires, not just about how our correct beliefs do so.

There is one minor concession left to make. If one held an equivalence theory as a theory about our *concepts* of goodness and reasons rather than the properties, *and* one also thought that it is impossible to hold beliefs which are conceptually confused (or at least, that doing so is impossible in this case), then one should indeed to think that the guise of the good and the guise of reasons are indistinct. So it is true that there is some limitation on just who can accept the arguments that have been offered in favour of the guise of reasons. But views of this kind are very bold, since they involve not only asserting an equivalence theory, but also asserting that no-one has ever denied that

equivalence theory. Perhaps it is no great loss if a position this extreme is incompatible with the arguments that have been pressed.

### **Conclusion**

This paper distinguished two formulations of the guise of the normative: the guise of the good, and the guise of reasons. It was argued that this distinction is significant because many of the counterexamples to the guise of the good are not counterexamples to the guise of reasons, and because the guise of the good is less theoretically attractive than the guise of reasons. Insofar as we should hold either the guise of the good or the guise of reasons, we should hold the guise of reasons.

**Bibliography**

- Alvarez, M. "Reasons, Desires and Intentional Actions" in Sandis, C. (Ed.) *New Essays on the Philosophy of Action*. Palgrave (2009) pp.203-219
- Anscombe, G.E.M. *Intention* (2nd Edition). Harvard (1963)
- Broome, J. "Reasons" in Wallace, J., Pettit, P., Scheffler, S. and Smith, M. (Eds) *Reason and Value: Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz*. Oxford (2004) pp.28-55
- Dancy, J. "Should we pass the buck?" *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 47 (2000a) pp.159-173.
- Dancy, J. *Practical Reality*. Oxford (2000b)
- Davidson, D. "How is Weakness of the Will Possible?" in his *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford (2001) pp.21-42
- Rønnow-Rasmussen, T. "Normative Reasons and the Agent-Neutral/Relative Dichotomy" in *Philosophia* 37 (2009) pp.227-243
- Raz, J. "Agency, Reason, and the Good" in his *Engaging Reason; On the Theory of Value and Action*. Oxford (1999) pp.22-45
- Raz, J. "On The Guise of The Good" in Tenenbaum, S. (Ed.) *Desire, Practical Reason, and the Good*. Oxford (2010) pp.111-137
- Scanlon, T. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Harvard (1998)
- Schroeder, M. *Slaves of the Passions*. Oxford (2007a)
- Schroeder, M. "Teleology, Agent-Relative Value, and 'Good'" in *Ethics* 117 (2007b) pp.265-295
- Setiya, K. *Reasons without Rationalism*. Princeton (2007)

- Setiya, K. "Sympathy for the devil" in Tenenbaum, S. (Ed.) *Desire, Practical Reason, and the Good*. Oxford (2010) pp.82-110
- Shah, N. "How Truth Governs Belief" in *The Philosophical Review* 112:4 (2003) pp. 447-482
- Smith, M. *The Moral Problem*. Blackwell (1994)
- Stocker, M. "Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology" in *The Journal of Philosophy* 76:12 (1979) pp.738-753
- Streumer, B. "Reasons and Impossibility" in *Philosophical Studies* 136 (2007) pp.351-384
- Sussman, D. "For Badness Sake" in *The Journal of Philosophy* 106:11 (2009) pp.613-628
- Velleman, D. "The Guise of the Good" in *Nous* 26 (1992) pp.3-26
- Watson, G. "Free Agency" in Watson, G. (Ed.) *Free Will*. Oxford (1982) pp.96-110
- Williams, B. "Internal and External Reasons" in his *Moral Luck*. Cambridge (1981) pp.101-113
- Williams, B. "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame" in his *Making Sense of Humanity, and Other Philosophical Papers*. Cambridge (1995) pp.35-45

---

<sup>i</sup> Here and throughout, "normative" is used as an umbrella term covering both the deontic and the evaluative, both reasons and goodness.

<sup>ii</sup> Setiya's recent work on the guise of the good (especially 2007, part 1) objects to the view on the grounds of various considerations in the theory of action. It would be outside the scope of this paper to address whether or not Setiya's objection would still apply if the guise of the good is held as a view about desires rather than intentional actions.

<sup>iii</sup> At least, not directly: you might be able to volunteer for brain surgery that has the required effect, or similar.

---

<sup>iv</sup> You might form the desire to desire to eat the mud, of course. And if someone offered you money to eat the mud, then you might be able to form the desire to eat it. But neither of these facts is relevant.

<sup>v</sup> One might wonder why the expansion strategy is still less plausible for this example than for the example of Satan above. The answer is that there is at least some plausibility to the idea that Satan is doing bad things to others for the sake of himself. But in the present case, it is clearly implausible to suppose that Jeff is doing bad things to himself for the sake of others.

<sup>vi</sup> It is true that this point about pragmatics can equally be used to defend the guise of the good. So the example is less threatening to *both* of these views than it may seem to be. But this is consistent with it also being true that the case is less threatening to the guise of reasons than it is to the guise of the good.

<sup>vii</sup> Similar remarks apply to other examples Setiya has raised (2007: 36-7). In fairness, Setiya himself acknowledges that these examples are not enough to undermine the guise of the good by themselves (2007: 38, 2010: 83)

<sup>viii</sup> If we do not think that forming an attitude is a kind of action, we should instead say that reasons pass judgements on actions and the formation of attitudes. This complication has little relevance for this paper, and is hereafter ignored.