

Desires without Guises: Why We Need Not Value What We Want

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1. Introduction

Few would deny that our desires and our evaluations are closely linked. Normally, we desire to achieve or promote the things that we value. Beyond that, it is often the case that our desires lead us to evaluate things one way or another, and that our evaluations, in turn, give rise to novel desires. Suppose, for instance, that you are looking for a new car and desire one with an especially large boot. This will surely have an impact on how you evaluate the alternatives you have. Or suppose you evaluate a movie very positively. This might produce a desire in you to see it again. It thus seems plausible that desires and evaluations do interact in a significant and thoroughgoing way. This much is, we take it, uncontroversial. However, one could advance a much more ambitious thesis about the extent and nature of this patent interaction. One could claim, in particular, that the link between desires and positive evaluations is a matter of conceptual or metaphysical necessity because desires *just are*, or at least, *necessarily involve*, evaluations of their object as good – one can desire something only *sub specie boni*, that is, *under the guise of the good*, as Scholastic philosophers used to put it.¹ We shall call this view *evaluativism about desire*.

¹ See Massin (this volume) for a similar characterisation. Evaluativists typically do not distinguish between the conceptual and the metaphysical claim, and neither shall we in what follows. The metaphysical claim that attitudes of desiring are identical to, or at least necessarily involve, attitudes of positive evaluation need not have any conceptual implications, but we shall assume that the claim that the concept DESIRE is identical to, or necessarily involves, the concept POSITIVE EVALUATION has the metaphysical implication that attitudes of desiring are identical to, or at least necessarily involve, attitudes of positive evaluation. Thus, we assume that the metaphysical claim is weaker than the conceptual one, and this is why we shall mainly focus on the former one in the following discussion (though, without making any precise distinction). Let us clarify somewhat how

Evaluativism is a popular view in contemporary theorizing about desire, and versions of it have been endorsed by a number of philosophers.² Our aim in this paper is to argue that evaluativism about desire overstates and mischaracterises the connection between desires and evaluations. We will begin the next section (section 2) by laying some preliminary groundwork that will be useful for the discussion to come. Section 3 will concentrate on the typical motivation for evaluativism: a well-known worry about the role desires are supposed to play in the explanation of intentional action. We will then discuss in sections 4 and 5 the two main varieties of evaluativism, and demonstrate why neither of them can establish a plausible account of desire. Finally, in section 6, we will argue that one can handle the worry discussed in section 3 without appealing to any kind of evaluativism, and that the basic idea behind evaluativism is therefore not even well-motivated in the first place.

we understand the key evaluativist idea, if it is construed as a claim about a metaphysically necessary link between desires and evaluations – for talk of ‘necessary involvement’ is a bit too vague even for our purposes. We shall assume that the claim that desires involve evaluations as a matter of metaphysical necessity implies that token desires ontologically depend on token evaluations. There are various different relations of ontological dependence (for helpful overviews, see Correia 2008; Koslicki 2013; Lowe 2013; and Tahko & Lowe 2015), but we shall assume that the evaluativist thesis implies, at a minimum, a relation of ontological dependence of a relatively weaker sort, namely what is sometimes called *rigid existential dependence*:

(ME) Necessarily, for any agent *a*, any proposition *p*, any time *t*, if, at *t*, *a* desires that *p*, then, at *t*, *a* evaluates *p* positively (as good).

(ME) rules out that an agent can have some token desire that *p* at some specific time, while not evaluating *p* positively (whatever that amounts to) at that time. (ME) is relatively weak, because it is silent about whether desires *essentially* depend on corresponding positive evaluations, whether positive evaluations are part of the essence of corresponding desires. Note, however, that (ME) is stronger than some sort of *generic* dependence claim according to which, roughly, any token desire necessitates some evaluation or other in general, but none in particular. Finally, we shall assume that the core evaluativist claim is not simply a claim about the *ontogeny* of token desires to the effect, roughly, that any token desire that *p* is formed or acquired on the basis of a token positive evaluation of *p*, although the desire that *p* can persist without the positive evaluation of *p*. (ME) defines a *permanent* rigid existential dependence, and not merely a *past* one; thus, it commits the evaluativist to something stronger than a merely ontogenic claim (see esp. Correia 2008: 1016 on this).

² Proponents of evaluativism include: Anscombe (1963); Davidson (1980a, 1980c – on one reading, at least); de Sousa (1974); Stampe (1987); Scanlon (1998); Raz (1999, 2010); Wallace (1999); Helm (2001); Johnston (2001); Chang (2004); Oddie (2005, this volume); Tenenbaum (2007, this volume); Hawkins (2008); Schapiro (2009); and Schafer (2013). Evaluativism is sometimes developed as a claim about intentions instead of desires (see, e.g., Raz 2010), but here we will put aside this complication. Another related view, *deonticism about desire*, is that desiring that *p* entails its seeming to one that *p* ought to be the case or at least that there are normative reasons in favour of *p*'s being the case; see, e.g., Gregory (2013, this volume); Lauria (this volume); and Massin (this volume). Some of those who prefer to talk of reasons hold that values are somehow reducible to reasons, and this move makes evaluativism and deonticism basically equivalent (this is most clear in Scanlon 1998, but compare also Schapiro 2009 and Schafer 2013). However, depending on precisely how it is fleshed out, deonticism about desire can potentially differ from evaluativism in crucial respects; therefore, we shall ignore in what follows any form of deonticism that is clearly distinct from it, although some of the criticisms we present would equally apply to some versions of deonticism. Some of those who prefer to talk of reasons hold that values are somehow reducible to reasons, and this move makes evaluativism and deonticism basically equivalent (this is most clear in Scanlon 1998, but compare also Schapiro 2009 and Schafer 2013).

2. Desire: Some Preliminaries

“Desire” is sometimes used by philosophers as a generic term for many different conative states (or “pro-attitudes”, as they are also called), referring to as diverse mental phenomena as wishes, hopes, intentions, appetites, preferences, urges, cravings, longings.³ Of course, such imprecision can be observed in everyday discourse as well. It is clear that desires, properly so called, should be carefully distinguished from these other conative attitudes, but we are not interested in taking on this very general task here.⁴ Instead, we shall simply assume that the intuitive distinction between desires and the other conative states is not too obscure.

It is a platitude that desires are intentional mental states – a desire is always directed at something, it is always a desire *for* something. So one basic question about the nature of desire is what *sort* of things a desire can be directed at. Most philosophers agree that desires are propositional attitudes; they think that having a desire is a matter of having some specific mental attitude with a propositional content that represents or expresses some state of affairs.⁵ To be sure, in many contexts, desire reports with transitive verbs or *to*-infinitive phrases (“I want a nice cold beer” or “I want to drink a nice cold beer”) sound more natural than the corresponding construction with an explicit *that*-clause (“I want that I drink a nice cold beer”). Still, we shall assume that the former two forms are elliptical for the latter. So when you want a nice cold beer, what your desire is really directed at is not a nice cold beer *per se*, but rather the state of affairs that you drink a nice cold beer.⁶ Note that the assumption that desires are propositional attitudes does not imply anything substantial about what it is for a person to have such an attitude. It is not

³ This usage is mainly due to Davidson (1980a). Compare also Davidson (1980c); and Schueler (1995: ch. 1).

⁴ Though, later on in this section and in section 6, we shall hint at some of the respects in which desires differ from wishes and urges.

⁵ Exceptions do exist, though; see e.g. Ben-Yami (1997); Thagard (2006). See Sinhababu (forthcoming) for a defence of propositionalism about attitudes in general.

⁶ Graham Oddie (this volume) explicitly rejects this and argues that the primary objects of desires are properties: when you want a nice cold beer, your desire is not directed at some state of affairs, but rather at the property of drinking a nice cold beer. Now, if this is supposed to be a genuine alternative, a desire with that property as its object must be distinct from the desire directed at the state of affairs that you drink a nice cold beer. It is difficult to see how this could be, however. As Oddie himself seems to acknowledge, it makes little sense to say that you desire the property of drinking a nice cold beer *per se*; what you desire is *having* that property, or equivalently, the *state of affairs* that you have (or instantiate) that property. But if this is correct, then what Oddie calls “the property view” simply collapses into the picture we have proposed above.

our purpose here to give a fully developed answer to that latter question, but the following discussion will roughly indicate the kind of answer we favour.

Our ordinary notion of desire is not just ambiguous between different sorts of conative attitudes, but also fails to discriminate between mental phenomena that are, in fact, ontologically distinct. However one separates desires from other conative attitudes, a distinction remains to be made between *standing* and *occurrent* desires.⁷ You probably desire, like most people, to live a long and healthy life, which will play a role in the explanation of several other elements of your psychology as well as some of your actions (your intention to lose weight or attempts at quitting smoking, for instance). However, presumably, this desire rarely, if ever, occupies your consciousness. Still, you do not have it only on those rare occasions when you undergo a conscious experience of desiring to live a long and healthy life, but also when your conscious attention is drawn elsewhere. Indeed, you have it even when you temporarily lose consciousness, when you are dreamlessly sleeping, for instance – you do not cease to desire to live a healthy life, just because you fell asleep watching television, and then acquire this desire once again when you wake up.

The desire to live a long and healthy life, which we can attribute to many people and suppose them to have it incessantly over very long periods of time, is a standing desire. Now contrast this with the following case. You are walking home from work, and you see a woman with her two daughters on the street. They remind you of your nieces who live in a different country, and you suddenly feel a strong desire to be with them. As you continue walking, you start to think about visiting them during the upcoming Christmas, trying to figure out how long the flight would take. The desire to be with your nieces that you felt (and which led you to think about the flight) is an occurrent desire, a phenomenally conscious mental episode. It is of course very plausible to think that you have a standing desire to be with your nieces as well (which would also explain, at least in this particular case, why the sight of the children led you to have the relevant occurrent desire), but this is importantly

⁷ For discussions of this, see e.g. Goldman (1970: 86-8); Mele (2003: 30-3); Strandberg (2012); Schroeder (2014: sect. 2.4); Alvarez (this volume). Note, however, the way these authors use “occurrent” and “standing” diverges from ours; our understanding of the distinction parallels the way Tim Crane (2001: 102-8, 2013) distinguishes between dispositional beliefs and occurrent, conscious thoughts.

distinct from the occurrent desire you have just had.⁸ If you have the standing desire to be with your nieces, you probably had it well before you saw the children, and you continue to have it even as you are making travel plans. Your occurrent desire, by contrast, came into existence right after you saw the children, and ceased to exist once your attention is directed away from your nieces and you started thinking about the duration of the flight.

Standing desires and occurrent desires belong to fundamentally different ontological categories.⁹ Your occurrent desire to be with your nieces is something that *happens* – it is an *occurrence*, a mental *event* that takes up a certain (typically short) amount of time. By contrast, your standing desire to live a long and healthy life neither happens nor occurs; rather, it is a mental state of yours which consists in your instantiating a certain mental property (however complex). You may of course be in this state over a very long period of time, which means that standing desires can *persist* through time (as they typically do). Unlike occurrent desires, however, they do not *unfold* over time.¹⁰

An occurrent desire is, as already indicated, a phenomenally conscious episode of desiring; there is something it is like having this sort of experience.¹¹ Standing desires, by contrast, are not phenomenally conscious phenomena. Of course, it is possible for you to be conscious *of* your standing desire that *p* (or to be conscious *that* you desire that *p*), in the sense of consciously ‘monitoring’ your standing desire that *p*, but although this does not require an occurrent desire that *p*, it does require

⁸ Note, however, that you can have an occurrent desire that *p* at *t*, even if you did not have a standing desire that *p* at any point before *t* or have it at *t*. Suppose, for instance, you have a strong aversion to wearing perfume; you disliked all the perfumes you have tried up until now, and you would not even consider buying one. Then, one day, you smell a perfume on colleague at work, which, to your own surprise, instantly fascinates you, and suddenly you feel a strong desire to find out more about this perfume, to buy it and wear it yourself. You may then go on to adopt this as a standing desire, but this is not necessary. So occurrent desires need not correspond to some already existing standing desire, and they do not necessarily inaugurate a corresponding standing desire.

⁹ See e.g. Crane (2001: 103, 2013: 163-6).

¹⁰ More precisely: “[M]ental states *obtain* over, and throughout, intervals of time, and at times; whereas mental events and processes *occur/happen/unfold* over time and/or at times. The idea here is that even when a mental state and a mental event (or process) have the same temporal extension – even when they occupy the same interval of time – they won’t have the same temporal character. They will fill that interval of time in quite different ways” (Soteriou 2013: 27). See also Soteriou (2007); and Steward (1997).

¹¹ It is a further question whether occurrent desires have a *non-derivative* phenomenal character – that is, whether there is a *conative phenomenology* of a distinctive sort, independent from the phenomenology of other mental episodes they may involve or be accompanied by (mental imagery, bodily sensations, sensory perceptions and so on); see e.g. Krigel (2013, 2015: ch. 2); and Friedrich (this volume). We remain silent on this, but note that the analogous question about cognitive phenomenology has attracted a fair amount of attention recently; see e.g. Bayne & Montague (2011); and Smithies (2013a, 2013b).

an occurrent, conscious thought (or judgment) that you desire that p .¹² It is also possible for your standing desire that p to ‘surface’ in your consciousness.¹³ Yet this does not mean that, when this happens, your standing desire somehow transforms itself into a phenomenally conscious attitude (and then back into an unconscious one, when its ‘manifestation’ is over); it means only that you experience an occurrent desire which has the same content as your standing desire. However, as already noted, the occurrent desire that p is not simply the conscious version of the standing desire that p ; that is, it is not simply the standing desire that p plus consciousness.¹⁴

So standing desires are not phenomenally conscious mental events. But what exactly are they, then? Here we cannot offer more than a very rough answer, though one that is located within a familiar theoretical framework. On our view, standing desire is a *dispositional profile* of a distinctive kind (let us call this *the desiderative dispositional profile*); accordingly, having some standing desire that p consists in having some specific dispositional profile of that distinctive kind.¹⁵ We shall not attempt here to give a full characterisation of the desiderative dispositional profile that we identify with standing desire; we shall, however, briefly address some features of it that we take to be crucial.¹⁶

¹² There is another sense in which one might be said to be ‘conscious’ of one’s standing desire that p : you may have a standing belief that you have that desire. Being in this state may constitute a form of self-knowledge, but it does not accord phenomenal consciousness (or conscious ‘monitoring’) of your standing desire, for the standing belief in question is just as unconscious as the standing desire itself: you can have both of these attitudes while you are dreamlessly sleeping and have no phenomenal consciousness at all.

¹³ Thus, when we call standing desires unconscious, we do not thereby mean that they are all unconscious in a Freudian sense. Indeed, most standing desires (well, except for Freudian ones) will also have what Ned Block (1995, 2002) dubbed *access-consciousness*. As Block makes clear (1995: 232), access consciousness is an entirely functional notion; an attitude can be access-conscious, without actually figuring in the subject’s stream of consciousness. Crane (2013) suggests that access-consciousness should be understood in terms of a mental state’s disposition to ‘manifest’ itself in consciousness via some conscious, occurrent state.

¹⁴ This is why Crane (2001: 105-8, 2013) thinks that “occurrent belief” is a misleading label for conscious episodes of entertaining some proposition in the doxastic mode. This would also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to “occurrent desire”, but we will not worry about it here.

¹⁵ See esp. Schwitzgebel (2002, and 2013). Our approach is in general quite similar to Schwitzgebel’s, though we seem to have some disagreements over the details. As will become clear shortly, we think that kinds of attitudinal dispositional profiles have some necessary features, whereas Schwitzgebel (2002: 252) seems to deny this, conceiving of attitude concepts as strictly cluster concepts. Then again, his focus is largely on attitude ascriptions and their appropriateness; so there is reason to think that our approach may be reconcilable with his. However, although he does not quite endorse evaluativism, Schwitzgebel (2013: 89-90) explicitly downplays the differences between desiring something and believing it to be good, saying that they amount to nothing more than a “nuance” (90). We are, in general, sympathetic to the idea that dispositional profiles of different kinds can overlap to some degree, but we shall argue in what follows that the contrast between the conative state of desiring that p and the cognitive state of believing that p is good is quite a bit more significant than Schwitzgebel seems to think. For further discussion of the dispositional conception, see e.g. Smith (1987, and 1994: ch. 4); Ashwell (2014); Hyman (2014). See also Alvarez (this volume).

¹⁶ Note that even this rough first approximation entails that, just as the occurrent desire that p is not simply a conscious version of the standing desire that p , the standing desire that p is not simply a dispositional version

The core idea behind dispositionalism about standing attitudes is that the fact that you now have some such attitude does not consist in what is now going on in your conscious mind, but rather in the fact that you now have a complex disposition to act and/or react in certain ways under certain circumstances. What sorts of disposition might having a standing desire involve? One very widespread thought is that desiring that p necessarily involves an inclination to act in ways that one takes to be conducive to the realisation of p . We can spell out this idea a bit more formally as follows:

- (D₁) Necessarily, for any agent a , any proposition p , any time t , and any act type φ , if, at t , a desires that p , then a is disposed at t to φ in circumstances where a takes¹⁷ her φ -ing to be conducive to p 's being the case.¹⁸

We think that (D₁) is true: the sort of multi-track disposition it specifies is partly constitutive of any desiderative dispositional profile. We shall elaborate on a few points in order to make clear what our endorsement of (D₁) does and does not imply.

First, we do not think that having the kind of disposition specified in (D₁) is *sufficient* for having a standing desire – our claim is merely that it is necessary for it.

of the occurrent desire that p – that is, not simply the *disposition to have* the occurrent desire that p . The standing desire that p is a complex desiderative dispositional profile which includes many different dispositions, even though it is plausible that token desiderative profiles typically include a disposition to have the relevant occurrent desire (indeed, one might even regard this as necessary).

¹⁷ We formulate the stimulus condition this way because we do not want to rule out that a cognitive attitude somewhat weaker (less committal) than outright belief (such as mere acceptance; see Cohen 1992; and Bratman 1992) can also be sufficient to trigger the manifestation.

¹⁸ Ascriptions of dispositional properties are standardly analysed in terms of counterfactual conditionals; accordingly, (D₁) can be reformulated as follows:

- (D₁*) Necessarily, for any agent a , any proposition p , any time t , and any act type φ , if, at t , a desires that p , then, if, at t , a took her φ -ing to be conducive to p 's being the case, a would φ , *ceteris paribus*.

According to the standard Stalnaker-Lewis semantics (Stalnaker 1968; Lewis 1973), the truth value of the counterfactual conditional in (D₁*) is determined by what goes on in the closest possible worlds in which its antecedent is true: the counterfactual is true iff a performs φ at those closest antecedent-worlds. The counterfactual approach has quite a bit of intuitive appeal; as is well known, however, a number of counterexamples have been offered against it: dispositions can be ‘finked’, masked, or mimicked due to the presence of certain interfering factors (there is a huge literature on these issues – see, to name just a few, Johnston 1992; Martin 1994; and Bird 1998); hence the “*ceteris paribus*” clause in (D₁*). Critics argue that this move faces a dilemma. Either one attempts to specify what other things have to be equal for the manifestation to occur in the stimulus conditions or one does not. Leaving the *ceteris paribus* clause unspecified seems to render the whole analysis vacuous: it is as if one were saying that the manifestation would occur in the stimulus conditions *unless* it did not. On the other hand, a comprehensive specification of all the things that have to be equal seems rather unlikely in the case of most dispositions. Responses to this dilemma fall broadly into two categories: Some (e.g. Lewis 1997; Choi 2008; Manley & Wasserman 2008; Contessa 2013) seek to provide a general, but non-vacuous formula for specifying the *ceteris paribus* clause. Others (e.g. Schwitzgebel 2002, 2013; Steinberg 2010) deny that accounts with unspecified *ceteris paribus* clauses are *ipso facto* vacuous. Here we shall not take a stand on these issues since we are not committed to (any particular version of) the counterfactual approach (though we shall deploy it in the following, for convenience).

There are other dispositions that are plausibly typical, though perhaps optional, elements of particular desiderative profiles. Moreover, there might also be further necessary components of the desiderative dispositional profile.¹⁹ Second, we take “act type φ ” in (D₁) to refer not just to overt bodily actions, but also to speech acts as well as mental acts.²⁰ Given these two caveats, it should be clear that (D₁) does *not* commit us to what is sometimes called “the motivational/action-based theory” of desire; the dispositionalism we favour does not focus exclusively on dispositions to engage in observable overt behaviour and is openly ‘holistic’ in spirit.²¹

Some philosophers oppose to the idea that a desire that p necessarily disposes one to act in ways one takes to be conducive to p ’s being the case; they think that cases where a person (allegedly) desires something that is (logically, metaphysically, or merely nomologically) impossible for them to bring about by doing something constitute counterexamples to (D₁).²² It will be instructive to address this issue at some length, because this will allow us to introduce two further crucial features of desire.

Timothy Schroeder has us imagine a mathematician in Ancient Greece (let us call him Pythagoras) who does not know the value of π , but (allegedly) has a strong desire that it turn out to be an irrational number (which it already is).²³ There is nothing Pythagoras could do to determine the value of π , and he himself does not believe there is. So he has a desire, despite not being disposed to do anything, or so the argument seems to go.

Galen Strawson presents a scenario that is quite a bit more fanciful:

¹⁹ Some philosophers (e.g. Strawson 1994) seem to think, for instance, that having a desire that p necessarily involves being disposed to feel pleasure upon its seeming that p . This is surely false; one can have a strong desire to attend to the funeral of a close relative, without being disposed in any sense to feel pleasure upon his attending it (compare Smith 1998: 453-4). Consider a different affective disposition instead: Necessarily, for any agent a , any proposition p , any time t , if a desires that p at t , then a is disposed at t to feel relief (to some non-zero degree) when it seems to a that p . This is more plausible as a necessary element of the desiderative profile, yet we cannot pursue this any further here. See also Hyman (2014: 85); and Friedrich (this volume).

²⁰ So the dispositional account we have in mind has no ‘reductive’ aspirations.

²¹ Compare the taxonomy in Schroeder (2014). We state this explicitly, because evaluativism is commonly supposed to be an alternative to the so-called motivational/action-based theory; so committing ourselves to the latter view at the outset would seem to be dialectically illicit. Neither dispositionalism about standing desire in general nor the particular version of it we outline here is in principle incompatible with evaluativism, however – so no question is begged against the evaluativist.

²² See e.g. Strawson (1994: ch. 9); Schroeder (2004: 16-20); Arpaly & Schroeder (2014: 113-16). See also Lauria (this volume).

²³ See Schroeder (2004: 16).

The Weather Watchers are a race of sentient, intelligent creatures. They are distributed about the surface of their planet, rooted to the ground, profoundly interested in the local weather. They have sensations, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, desires. They possess a conception of an objective, spatial world. But they are constitutionally incapable of any sort of behavior [...]. They lack the necessary physiology. Their mental lives have no other-observable effects. They are not even disposed to behave in any way.²⁴

Strawson imagines that the Weather Watchers are also incapable of performing any mental acts: although they can passively experience many different sorts of mental episode, they cannot actively initiate them. They are also under no illusion that they can change the weather. Strawson claims that these beings can have desires that the weather be this or that way, although they are not disposed to act in any way.²⁵

Our diagnosis will eventually be that neither Pythagoras nor the Weather Watchers, as they are described originally, have the relevant desires. The important point is, however, that this is not so because they fail (D₁): they *can* have the relevant dispositions all right, but it is still wrong to say that they have the relevant desires.

Let us first focus on the case of Pythagoras, who, we are told, desires π to be an irrational number, and believes that there is nothing he can do to contribute to that result. The question is whether, for any φ , he is now disposed to φ in circumstances where he comes to think that his φ -ing is conducive to π 's being an irrational number. Any such thought would be incorrect, of course, but that is not to the point; what matters is only whether Pythagoras would φ , *ceteris paribus*, if he came to form some such thought, and we see no reason to think that he would not. We will argue in what follows that Pythagoras should not be described as having a desire, but assuming that he has one, there is no reason to think that he fails (D₁).²⁶

²⁴ Strawson (1994: 251).

²⁵ See Strawson (1994: 251-8).

²⁶ To be fair, Schroeder (2004: 16-7) presents this argument against a much cruder rendering of the idea that desires necessarily involve dispositions to act, and then concedes that a more refined formulation of it, which is more similar to our (D₁) above, would not be affected by cases like this. However, he believes that such more refined versions would still be vulnerable to counterexamples of the following kind: "Suppose I desire that a committee make up its mind in my favor without my intervention. This is a state of affairs I might want very much, yet because of the very nature of the desire it makes no sense to try to act as to satisfy it. What I want is that the committee make a certain decision without my needing to do anything" (Schroeder 2004: 17; see also Strawson 1994: 287, and 1998: 473). We fail to see how this is supposed to constitute a counterexample to (D₁). It is simply false that your desire that a committee decides in your favour without any interference on your part is not satisfiable through *any* agential contribution of yours. If you have that desire, then there will be (under normal circumstances) plenty of actions that you take to count as interfering with the committee's decision process, and you will also think that refraining from performing them is conducive to satisfying your desire. (D₁) predicts, plausibly, that, if you desire that the committee decides in your favour without your intervention, you will be disposed to refrain from performing any acts that you regard as interfering. Besides, this desire will involve not just dispositions to 'perform' intentional omissions, but also dispositions to perform 'positive'

The case of the Weather Watchers is certainly more complicated. First, it is not clear whether these creatures are even capable of taking their performance of some act to be conducive to fulfilling their desires; they might simply lack the cognitive resources to form such thoughts, to represent themselves as acting.²⁷ But even if they could, they would not act in any way, simply because they are ‘constitutionally’ incapable of acting.²⁸ This sort of inability to act would certainly be ruled out by the *ceteris paribus* clause in (D₁) – that is, a general ability to act is one of the things that have to be equal for the disposition to manifest.²⁹ So the question is, in any case, whether we can ascribe to the Weather Watchers dispositions to act in certain ways which cannot possibly manifest – that is, unmanifestable dispositions.³⁰ We think that we can and should, and here is why.

Since we employ (though are not committed to) the conditional analysis here, the issue can be framed in terms of counterpossible conditionals, that is, conditionals with impossible antecedents. Now, according to the standard Lewis-Stalnaker semantics, all counterpossible conditionals are trivially true.³¹ But if there are to be any non-trivial unmanifestable dispositions, some counterpossibles must have non-trivial truth values. We reject the triviality of counterpossibles in general,³² but we shall illustrate this point with a specific example that is more relevant to the discussion here. Suppose that Wendy the Weather Watcher has a very strong conative attitude towards there being a snow shower; in fact, this is the only positive conative attitude she has.³³ By contrast, she feels positively averse to there being a

actions. Suppose that it came to your attention that your uncle, who is a particularly well-connected individual, heard about the committee and is going to make some phone calls to increase your chances. (D₁) predicts, again, plausibly, that, given your desire, you would, *ceteris paribus*, ask your uncle not to intervene in any way. See also Smith (1998: 450-1); Wall (2009); and Ashwell (2014: 473) on this issue.

²⁷ Both options seem fine by Strawson (1994: 252-3).

²⁸ It is not clear whether this implies metaphysical impossibility. The Weather Watchers’ complete practical incapability may be “constitutional” by virtue of being grounded in their intrinsic features, without being grounded in essential properties of them. In that case, their cognitive capacities could be enhanced, for instance, by neurochemical means so that they could at least perform mental acts. In what follows, we shall ignore these complications, and assume that it is metaphysically impossible for the Weather Watchers to act.

²⁹ Alternatively, one could extend the stimulus conditions in (D₁) so as to require explicitly that the agent be capable of performing the act in question.

³⁰ See Jenkins & Nolan (2012) for a recent defence of unmanifestable dispositions.

³¹ Since the antecedent is not true at any possible world, any antecedent-world is trivially the consequent-world, for any consequent.

³² The standard way of providing counterpossible conditionals with non-vacuous truth values is to extend the Lewis-Stalnaker semantics by introducing impossible worlds; see Nolan (1997); Berto (2013); Brogaard & Salerno (2013); and Bjerring (2014).

³³ Whether this attitude is a desire depends on other features of Wendy’s psychology, as we shall shortly explain.

rain shower. We think that Wendy now has a disposition to make herself visually imagine a snow shower in circumstances where she thinks her imagining a snow shower is conducive to there being a snow shower and she is capable of making herself imagine something. Accordingly, we think that the following counterpossible is non-trivially true:

- (W₁) If Wendy were to think that her imagining a snow shower is conducive to there being a snow shower and if she were capable of making herself imagine something, she would make herself imagine a snow shower, *ceteris paribus*.

To see why it makes sense to think that (W₁) is non-trivially true, contrast it with another counterpossible about Wendy:

- (W₂) If Wendy were to think that her imagining a rain shower is conducive to there being a rain shower and if she were capable of making herself imagine something, she would make herself imagine a rain shower, *ceteris paribus*.

Given what we know about Wendy's current psychology, (W₂), unlike (W₁), seems clearly and non-trivially false, even though the antecedents of both (W₁) and (W₂) are necessarily false, as, *ex hypothesi*, it is impossible for Wendy to make herself imagine something.³⁴ Wendy may be necessarily incapable of acting, but this does not, by itself, suffice to trivialise all of the truths about how she would behave in certain conditions that are impossible to obtain; given her present conative states, she would act only in certain specific ways, and not others, if she were, *per impossibile*, capable of acting.³⁵

The upshot of this is that an agent can be *inclined* to act in a certain way under certain circumstances, even if she is necessarily *incapable* of acting in that (or any) way; the incapability in question may necessarily prevent the inclination from manifesting without completely extinguishing it.³⁶ What make (W₁) non-trivially

³⁴ Here is a more 'mundane' example: Suppose that John is huge fan of the Belle Époque and has a very strong conative attitude towards having a first-hand experience of the period. By contrast, he has no interest whatsoever in the Early Medieval Period. If John thought that he can have first-hand experience of the Belle Époque or the Early Middle Ages by travelling back into one of the periods and if backwards time travel were possible, he would travel back into the Belle Époque, rather than the Early Medieval Period, *ceteris paribus*. So John is now disposed to travel back into the Belle Époque under certain circumstances, although this disposition is unmanifestable, as backwards time travel is (*ex hypothesi*) impossible. By contrast, it would be wrong to ascribe to John any disposition to take a time travel back into the Early Medieval Period, even if that disposition too would be just as unmanifestable as the former.

³⁵ Michael Fara (2008: 849-53) seems to contend this, though his focus is slight different than ours.

³⁶ This also highlights the fact that "dispositional properties come in different flavors. For example, there are tendencies, capacities, liabilities, and pronenesses, each differing in modal profile" (Schwitzgebel 2013: 79).

true and (W₂) non-trivially false are certain facts about Wendy's current conative psychology, the unmanifestable dispositions she now has or lacks.

But if the Weather Watchers can have dispositions to act despite their incapability of acting, and thus can in principle satisfy (D₁), why do we still insist that they do not have any desires? The reason is that their situation, as described by Strawson, seems to conflict with another necessary constraint on desire:

- (D₂) Necessarily, for any agent *a*, any proposition *p*, any time *t*, if, at *t*, *a* desires that *p*, then there is at least one act type *φ* such that, at *t*, *a* does not think her *φ*-ing not to be conducive to *p*'s being the case.

(D₂) does not require that, in order to have a desire at all, one must think that there is some act type such that one's performing it is conducive to satisfying one's desire. You can desire that *p* even if you do not think of any particular act that it will be conducive to *p*'s being the case, and this is perfectly compatible with (D₂). (D₂) merely rules out that you can desire that *p*, while thinking that nothing you could do in any possible situation would be conducive to *p*'s being the case. You may be undecided whether any act on your part would contribute to satisfying some desire of yours, but you cannot be clear that nothing would make some such contribution.

(D₂) captures the familiar idea that the object of a desire must be taken by the person who has it to be "attainable, in the sense of being a possible future outcome."³⁷ Note also that (D₂) does not apply to mere wishes, and thus serves to

Being capable of *φ*-ing can be glossed, very roughly, as the disposition to *φ* in circumstances where one tries to *φ*. We claim that one can have an inclination to *φ* even if one is not, or even cannot be, capable of *φ*-ing, although of course, being capable of *φ*-ing is a necessary condition for the manifestation of the inclination. However, it sounds odd to say that you can have the capacity to *φ*, even if that capacity cannot manifest, because its stimulus condition cannot be fulfilled – because, that is, it is (perhaps even merely psychologically) impossible for you to even try to *φ* (incidentally, this might be all that Fara wants to argue, and if so, we agree with him on this score; see fn. 35 above). This suggests that there is a significant contrast between *practical inclinations* (inclinations to act in some way) and *practical capacities* (capacities to perform some act): whereas one can possess a practical inclination that is unmanifestable, a practical capacity is essentially manifestable (on this and related issues about practical capacities, see Maier 2014, esp. sect. 2-3). One final note: Alvarez (this volume) argues that desires are not just essentially manifestable, but even essentially *manifested* dispositions. It might seem that this contradicts our verdict that there can be unmanifestable practical inclinations, but this is illusory. On our view, having some standing desire is having a particular desiderative dispositional profile which consists of various different dispositions (Alvarez herself accepts a similarly 'pluralist' picture). The inclination to 'act' in ways that one takes to be conducive to satisfying one's desire is just one (though necessary) element of such a profile. Alvarez claims that one cannot be said to *have* some particular desiderative profile between *t*₀ and *t*₁, if *none* of the constituent dispositions of that dispositional profile are manifested at least once between *t*₀ and *t*₁, though she is clear that it is not required for having that desire between *t*₀ and *t*₁ that *any particular* constituent disposition be manifested between *t*₀ and *t*₁. This is perfectly compatible with what we have said about unmanifestable inclinations, which are, after all, not themselves desires, but rather necessary elements of desiderative dispositional profiles.

³⁷ Velleman (1992a: 17).

distinguish them from desires.³⁸ This is why we believe that both the Weather Watchers and Pythagoras are best described as having wishes, rather than desires: they believe that nothing they could do would in any way contribute to satisfying their respective conative attitudes. Wishes involve an inclination to act in certain ways just as desires do, yet the latter type of conative attitude is subject to further restrictions such as (D2).³⁹

The thought that the object of a desire must be regarded as an attainable, possible future outcome by the person who has it has a further implication that we would like to briefly clarify:

- (D3) Necessarily, for any agent *a*, any proposition *p*, any time *t*, if, at *t*, *a* desires that *p*, then, at *t*, *a* does not think *p* already to be the case.⁴⁰

If you think that *p* already is the case, then you cannot even be undecided about whether some act of yours is conducive to *p*'s being the case; nothing can be conducive to *p*'s being the case, if *p* already is the case. Thus, you cannot desire something you take to already obtain.⁴¹

³⁸ Drawing the distinction between desires and wishes this way is not just intuitively plausible; there is also some linguistic evidence for it:

- (1) I wish that I had been there.
- (2) I wish that he were here too.
- (3) *I want/desire that I had been there.
- (4) *I want/desire that he were here too.

In all of these examples, the use of past perfect and past subjunctive signals the perceived unattainability of the object of the relevant conative attitude, and, unlike (1) and (2), (3) and (4) are clearly ungrammatical. This is not to deny, of course, that the verb "want" can sometimes be used to report wishes rather than desires: an utterance of "I want him back!" by someone in grief sounds perfectly natural, for instance.

³⁹ In fact, it seems plausible that having an inclination of the type specified in (D1) is something that *all* (positive) conative attitudes have in common, or perhaps even what makes conative attitudes conative in the first place – the essence of (positive) 'conativity', as one might put it. Compare Velleman (2000: 260-3).

⁴⁰ (D3) corresponds to what Lauria (this volume) calls "the death of desire principle." See also Massin (this volume); and Oddie (this volume) for discussion.

⁴¹ So (D2) entails (D3), but the converse entailment does not hold: (D3) applies to wishes as well, for instance, whereas (D2) does not, as argued above. Lauria (this volume) endorses both (D2) and (D3), but disputes that (D3) is entailed by (D2). He gives the example of a person who believes that *p*, and also believes that he can change the past. He then goes on to suggest that it will be likely that this person can believe her performing of some acts to be conducive to *p*'s being the case. However, Lauria's discussion leaves it unclear why believing that one can change the past might lead you to believe that you can contribute to *p*'s being the case through your actions, *despite* already believing that *p*. Here is a concrete example that one might think to challenge the idea that (D2) entails (D3). Between t_0 and t_1 , John desires to be a father. At t_1 , he becomes a father and forms the belief that he is one. It follows from (D3) that, at t_1 , John no longer desires to be a father (though, of course, he may desire to continue to be a father). Suppose now that, at t_1 , John also believes that he can change the past and make it the case that he is not a father at t_1 . It might seem plausible that, in such a case, John, at t_1 , might also believe that his refraining from changing the past in such a way that he is not a father at t_1 is conducive to his being a father at t_1 . But if so, John, at t_1 , believes both that he is a father at t_1 and that his 'performing' a particular act is conducive to his being a father at t_1 – and this would be a counterexample to the claim that believing that *p* implies believing that nothing can be conducive to *p*'s being the case. Besides, if we suppose

(D₃) is compatible with one's being undecided about whether *p* is the case, while desiring that *p*; it only rules out that one can desire that *p*, while clearly thinking that *p* already is the case. Importantly, (D₃) does not rule out that you can think that *p* already is the case and desire that it *continues* to be the case; for, even if you think that *p* already is the case, you can think that (or be undecided about whether) something you could do would be conducive to its *continuing* to be the case that *p*.⁴²

This concludes our preliminary discussion of certain key features of desires. In what follows, we shall take for granted the admittedly rough picture outlined in this section. It will prove useful to take a closer look at the principal motivation for evaluativism in the next section, before we go on to critically examine the two main variants of it.

3. Motivating Evaluativism

Why think that evaluativism about desire is true? The view is typically motivated by focusing on the issue of the explanation of intentional action.⁴³ Actions are usually understood as belonging to the ontological category of events, though they are clearly not just any old event. An action is not something that simply *happens* to the agent, but rather something that is *performed* by the agent. Moreover, intentional action makes up a special subclass of behaviour performed by an agent. Involuntary reflex movements, for instance, are certainly not intentional actions. Intentional actions are *purposeful* and *goal-oriented*: they are performed with a purpose in mind

that John, at *t*₁, is disposed to refrain from changing the past in such a way that he is not a father at *t*₁, a disposition that is manifested (let us suppose) at *t*₁, it might seem, *contra* (D₃), that he, at *t*₁, *desires* to be a father, *despite* believing, also at *t*₁, that he already is a father. We believe that this description of John's case is mistaken. Given his belief that he is a father, John cannot simultaneously believe that something is conducive to his being a father – that is, he cannot take something to be contributing to bringing it about that he is a father, while he is convinced that his being a father is *already brought about*. However, given his belief that he can change the past, he might believe, at *t*₁, that his refraining from changing the past in such a way that he is not a father at *t*₁ is conducive to its *continuing* to be the case that he is a father. Now if we suppose that John, at *t*₁, is disposed to refrain from changing the past in such a way that he is not a father at *t*₁, this disposition would be explained by the desire that John has at *t*₁ to continue to be a father. Further, John might also believe that his changing the past in such a way that he is not a father at *t*₁ would be detrimental to his being a father at *t*₁. If so, then we can also explain John's disposition to refrain from changing the past in terms of his being glad at *t*₁ that he is a father at *t*₁, for it seems plausible that being glad that *p* necessarily involves both believing that *p* and being disposed to refrain from performing actions that one takes to be detrimental to *p*'s being the case. Hence, neither the idea that believing that *p* implies believing that nothing is conducive to *p*'s being the case nor the idea that (D₂) entails (D₃) are threatened by the possibility of believing that one can change the past.

⁴² Compare Hyman (2014: 86).

⁴³ See e.g. Stampe (1987); Quinn (1993); Wallace (1999); Johnston (2001); Tenenbaum (2007: 9-16); Hawkins (2008); Schapiro (2009); Friedrich (2012, this volume); and Schafer (2013).

and some sense of how to achieve that purpose – they are, in short, actions performed *for a reason*.⁴⁴

The above contrast is also reflected in the respective ways in which mere events or non-intentional behaviour on the one hand, and intentional actions on the other hand, are supposed to be explained. When we pose a question of the form “Why did x happen?” where x is an event that is not an action, the sort of explanation that is called for is a merely causal one. By contrast, questions of the form “Why did the agent φ ?” are supposed to be answered, roughly, by citing the reason for which the agent φ -ed, by specifying what purpose she took her φ -ing to serve – that is, by giving a *teleological* explanation.⁴⁵

Teleological explanations of actions make reference to certain psychological states of the agent, and here desires are supposed to play a crucial role. This should hardly come as a surprise, since, as we have seen in the previous section, desires necessarily involve practical inclinations, dispositions of an agent to act in certain specific ways under certain specific circumstances. When a desire figures in a correct teleological explanation of an agent’s φ -ing, the propositional content of her desire encodes what she seeks to bring about, the goal she pursues. When this picture is supplemented with the agent’s beliefs encoding information about possible ways of bringing about the desired outcome, we get a sense of what motivated her φ -ing, what led her to perform this particular action. The action is explained, in other words, not just as a mere effect of certain causal processes, but essentially as the pursuit of a goal.⁴⁶

A teleological explanation of an action, then, cites the agent’s propositional attitudes (some desire of hers, along with a means-end belief) in order to make sense of her overt behaviour as the pursuit of a goal. Explaining actions in terms of reasons

⁴⁴ The thesis that intentional action is action performed for a reason is widely endorsed in contemporary philosophy of action. Davidson (1980a: 6) writes, for example, that we can define “an intentional action as one done for a reason”. Compare also Davidson (1980b: 264); Anscombe (1963: 9); Goldman (1970: 76); and Mele (1992).

⁴⁵ Whether teleological explanations are just a special form of causal explanations or constitute an independent, irreducible type of explanation is a matter of ongoing debate, but nothing hinges on this in the present context. For further discussion, see e.g. Smith (1987, and 1994: ch. 4); Sehon (1994); Schueler (2003); Mele (2003: ch. 2). See also Alvarez (2007) for a nice overview.

⁴⁶ Note that the view outlined here is a theory of the explanation of intentional action; it does not imply anything substantial about the nature of desire (or any other attitudes, for that matter), let alone the so-called “the motivational/action-based theory.” Indeed, as we shall see soon, most evaluativists motivate their view broadly within the framework of this theory of the explanation of intentional action.

by appeal to certain elements of the agent's psychological setup is commonly thought to have a further important implication: it *rationalises* or *subjectively justifies* the action, at least in the minimal sense of making her behaviour intelligible as the pursuit of a goal. Whether the action is *objectively justified* (relative to whatever system of norms), whether the reason for which the agent acted is in fact a *good* reason, is, of course, a different issue. The claim that someone φ -ed for a reason need not be *genuinely normative*: it does not necessarily entail that this person did what she has normative reason to do or *ought to* do.⁴⁷ But once we understand the reason for which she acted, we can at least see what, from the agent's perspective, counted for performing the action, what the *point* of what she did was, at least in her eyes.

This precisely is the point at which evaluativists typically launch their distinctive claim. They agree, first, that intentional action is action done for a reason, and also that action done for a reason implies rationalisation or subjective justification in the sense explained above. They then go on to argue, thirdly, that the relevant sort of rationalisation is not to be had if desires are understood as non-evaluative phenomena.⁴⁸ An intentional action is motivated by a desire of the agent which encodes a goal, but if such behaviour is to be considered rational (even in the aforementioned minimal sense), desires must, so the story goes, also involve an evaluation of that goal as something *worth* pursuing. Here it is useful to consider Warren Quinn's influential example of a man who feels an urge to turn on each and every radio he sees:

Suppose I am in a strange functional state that disposes me to turn on radios that I see to be turned off. Given the perception that a radio in my vicinity is off, I try, all other things being equal, to get it turned on. Does this state rationalize my choices? Told nothing more than this, one may certainly doubt that it does. But in the case I am imagining, this is all there is to the state. I do not turn the radios on in order to hear music or get news. It is not that I have an inordinate appetite for entertainment or information. Indeed, I do not turn them on in order to *hear* anything. My disposition is, I am supposing, basic rather than instrumental.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ This contrast is sometimes explicated by distinguishing between *motivating* and *normative* reasons (see esp. Smith 1987, and 1994: ch. 4). Motivating reasons are not necessarily normative, but they "render an agent's action intelligible," by "specifying what there is to be said for acting in the way in question" (Smith 1994: 95).

⁴⁸ One important exception is Scanlon who thinks that "the only source of motivation lies in [one's] taking certain considerations [...] as reasons" (1998: 35). So desires must involve some positive evaluation not just in order to rationalise actions, but also (or perhaps, rather) in order to be motivationally efficacious at all.

⁴⁹ Quinn (1993: 236-7). For similar examples, see Anscombe (1963: 70 ff.); and Helm (2009: 250).

Quinn then raises the question whether ascribing to the agent this bare disposition to turn on radios suffices to rationalise his behaviour, and answers it negatively. This is not to simply deny that desires can minimally rationalise actions; but, Quinn maintains, they can only do so if they accommodate “some kind of evaluation of the desired object as good”.⁵⁰ From this evaluativists draw the moral that *Radioman* has no genuine desire, because he does not value turning radios on in any sense. They thus propose to understand desire as an evaluative notion rich enough both to give agents reasons for acting from their personal perspective and to render their behaviour intelligible from an objective point of view. Evaluativists urge, in other words, that “we do not get a proper intentional explanation of an action, or even a proper motivating reason or desire, if we cannot understand how the agent saw the object of his desire or action as good in some way”.⁵¹

The basic idea behind evaluativism about desire and what typically motivates it should now be clear. There are two main versions of evaluativism, which differ in how they construe the evaluative element that desires are supposed to incorporate. We shall designate them as *doxastic evaluativism* and *perceptual evaluativism*. In the following two sections, we will discuss these two versions in turn. Some of the arguments we will present against them overlap, but these accounts are different enough to merit separate address.

4. Doxastic Evaluativism

According to doxastic evaluativism, the desire that *p* either just is or, at least, necessarily involves, the belief that *p* is good.⁵² Doxastic evaluativism is a radical view, as it runs counter to, and indeed threatens to collapse, the intuitive conceptual distinction between desires and beliefs as entirely disparate mental states (or, in Humean parlance, as ‘distinct existences’ without any necessary connections between them), either by identifying desires with evaluative beliefs or by establishing a necessary link between the two.⁵³ This does not quite show that doxastic

⁵⁰ Quinn (1993: 247).

⁵¹ Tenenbaum (2013: 3).

⁵² Doxastic evaluativists include: Anscombe (1963); Davidson (1980a, and 1980c, on one reading, at least); de Sousa (1974); Raz (1999, 2010).

⁵³ This distinction is commonly cashed out in terms of the different ‘directions of fit’ beliefs and desires are

evaluativism is false; but given its radical consequences, it is particularly in need of a substantial defence.

One general worry about this variety of evaluativism is that the picture it presents seems ‘over-intellectualising’ in the extreme. Desires are closely connected to goal-directed behaviour, and while goal-directed behaviour is clearly observed in creatures with psychological apparatus less complex than adult humans, conceptual evaluation seems to require a considerable degree of cognitive sophistication. We normally ascribe desires to many non-human animals as well as to human infants and toddlers, but, as many have noted, doxastic evaluativism appears to entail that only more mature humans who have a sufficient grasp of and competence with evaluative concepts can have desires. This is indeed very counterintuitive, for it seems perfectly sensible to think that a dog or a human infant can want to play ball, for instance, even if we would hesitate to say that a dog or an infant can believe that playing ball is good.⁵⁴

Doxastic evaluativism has implausible implications even if we put aside this particular objection, however. First of all, it seems quite clear that the belief that *p* is good does not suffice for desiring that *p*. Recall the constraint we called (D2) above: you cannot desire that *p* if you think that nothing you can do would be conducive to *p*’s being the case. But no constraint of this sort applies to evaluative beliefs; states of affairs that a person takes to be unattainable can very well be believed to be good by that person. Suppose that you have the evaluative belief that the state of affairs that Mozart lived until his late seventies and produced a host of great masterpieces after

supposed to have; see esp. Smith (1987, and 1994: ch. 4). See also Anscombe (1963: 56); Searle (1983); Humberstone (1992); Gregory (2012, this volume); Lauria (this volume); and Railton (this volume). Compare David Lewis’s (1988, and 1996) treatment of this issue within the framework of formal decision theory.

⁵⁴ See e.g. Velleman (1992a: 7); Copp & Sobel (2002: 258); Friedrich (2012: 292, and this volume). Some caution is advised in pressing this objection, however. First, the objection seems to presuppose both a particular (broadly Fregean) conception of propositional content and a particular understanding of what it takes for a creature to possess concepts or to have some mental attitude with propositional content. Second, the objection could be transformed into an objection against the much more general view that desires are propositional attitudes. For if propositional content is conceptual in general, and if non-human animals and human infants can have desires although they do not possess any concepts, then it might seem mistaken to understand desires as propositional attitudes (see Thagard 2006 for an argument to this effect). Still, one could argue that doxastic evaluativism meets a more serious challenge here, because evaluative concepts are acquired in much later stages of cognitive development (see esp. Hawkins 2008). Moreover, if both standing desires and standing beliefs are to be analysed in terms of dispositional profiles, one way to formulate the objection would be as follows. Whereas the doxastic dispositional profile necessarily involves dispositions to perform certain mental and linguistic acts that require fairly complex conceptual capacities, the desiderative dispositional profile does not, and this is why many non-human animals and very young humans can have a desiderative profile, while it is at least questionable that they can have a doxastic profile (compare Baker 2014: 5-6, fn. 8).

his forties is valuable. But this state of affairs cannot be the object of a desire of yours, even if it can be the object of a wish, given your belief that nothing you can do would contribute to prolonging Mozart's life and boost his creativity.

Moreover, the objects of our evaluative beliefs are in most cases states of affairs that we think already obtain. However, as argued above, (D₂) entails another constraint, namely (D₃), that rules out desires directed at states of affairs that one takes to already obtain. Thus, while you can now believe that Obama's being president is good, you cannot now desire (nor even wish, for that matter) Obama's being president, because this is a state of affairs you already know to obtain (though you can, of course, desire that he remains in his post).

Yet quite apart from these two constraints on desire, it is in general implausible that belief in the goodness of that state of affairs implies that one desires it. Take, for example, Pollyanna, the famous die-hard optimist. Suppose that she is falsely accused of stealing milk and, after an unfair trial process, is sentenced to six years in prison. Still, being a hopeless Pollyanna, she somehow manages to believe that it is good that she will be incarcerated (because, say, she will have plenty of time for reading). Does this mean that she genuinely wants to be sent to jail? Surely not. The same reasoning goes for less pathological cases of post-hoc rationalisation and occasional sugarcoating of prospective misery.⁵⁵

But even if an evaluative belief is clearly insufficient for a corresponding desire, it is perhaps necessary for it. It is difficult to see, however, why this should be the case. As pointed out both by Michael Stocker and David Velleman, having 'perverse' desires, that is, desiring some state of affairs that one believes to be bad overall, and even desiring it precisely *because* it is so bad, seems perfectly possible.⁵⁶ Stocker and Velleman mention in their discussions quite exceptional cases (Milton's Satan, agents who are depressive, or self-destructive), but desiring something that you believe to be bad is possible even in more mundane, ordinary situations. Suppose that, at the beginning of a long business meeting with your colleagues, you suddenly remember a joke that a friend told you some time ago. You do not think that there is anything good about telling the joke during the meeting; not only would it be

⁵⁵ Compare Ruth Chang's (2004: 68) discussion of "rationalizers".

⁵⁶ See Stocker (1979: 747-9); and Velleman (1992a: 17-21). See also Watson (1975: 210-1).

generally inappropriate, but the joke would in fact be extremely offensive to some participants and is not even slightly funny. Still, it seems possible that you desire to tell it, even if that desire is fortunately too weak to actually influence your behaviour.

Doxastic evaluativism is not only incompatible with cases in which a person desires p while believing p to be bad, but also with cases in which a person desires p , but does not have *any* opinion about the value of p , either because she has not considered it or because, having considered it, she suspends (or withholds) judgment about it. Let us focus first on cases of the former sort, which we believe are ubiquitous: the vast majority of our everyday desires are such that we just have not even considered the value of their object and formed an opinion about it. This becomes especially salient when one considers extrinsic (or instrumental) desires. Suppose that Thomas is reading this paper. He plans to have a short break in about an hour and desires to go to the kitchen to brew some coffee. Is it really plausible to say that Thomas now literally believes that going to kitchen in fifteen minutes is (instrumentally) good? Fair enough, we can plausibly ascribe to Thomas the means-end belief that he can brew coffee by going to the kitchen, but the belief that φ -ing is a means of bringing it about that p is not the same as the belief that φ -ing is instrumentally valuable – thinking of φ -ing as conducive to the obtaining of some state of affairs is one thing, and thinking of it as promoting something valuable is quite another.

It might be thought that we can also ascribe to Thomas the *disposition to believe* that going to the kitchen is (instrumentally) good: the disposition to take this standing attitude, or, perhaps, the disposition to have an occurrent belief (a conscious thought) to that effect. We can imagine that these dispositions would manifest (so Thomas would form the standing or the occurrent belief that going to the kitchen is good), for instance, if he were asked what good he sees in going to the kitchen. These specific doxastic dispositions are, however, importantly distinct from the standing belief that going to the kitchen is (instrumentally) good, itself understood as a doxastic dispositional profile.⁵⁷ You may, at t , have a mere disposition to form the standing belief that p , or to occurrently judge that p , without

⁵⁷ This point is argued extensively in Audi (1994). See also fn. 16 above.

having, at t , the standing belief that p , without having the p -related doxastic dispositional profile, that is. Now we do not think that desiring p necessarily involves being disposed to believe that p is good, but even if this were true, doxastic evaluativism would not be any less wrong. Even the weakest version of doxastic evaluativism posits a necessary connection between desires and corresponding evaluative beliefs that rules out, at a minimum, that, for any time t , one can, at t , desire that p , although one does not believe, at t , that p is good.⁵⁸ Suppose that, between t_0 and t_1 , Thomas desires to go to the kitchen. During that time interval, he also has the disposition to form both the standing and the occurrent belief that going to the kitchen is good. It is perfectly possible that, although Thomas has those doxastic dispositions between t_0 and t_1 , these dispositions do not manifest between t_0 and t_1 . But if so, then, during that period of time, Thomas has the desire that p , although he has neither a standing nor an occurrent belief that p . But this result is incompatible with any form of doxastic evaluativism.⁵⁹

Turn now to cases where a person desires that p , yet does not believe that p is good, because she is suspending judgment about the value of p .⁶⁰ This can happen, for example, when one cannot form an opinion about the value of something that one desires *in advance*, *before* the state of affairs one's desire is directed at actually obtains. Suppose that there is a new French film coming out. Pauline is a dedicated cinephile and a true fan of many of the classic arthouse movies. However, over the past few months, she has seen some recent French films that she regarded as appallingly pretentious and derivative. In the present case, she is very uncertain about what to expect. The film is a directorial debut, so she has no information about the previous works of the director. She read conflicting reviews of the movie on the internet: it is one of those controversial, love-or-hate kind of films that has already divided critics. For all she knows, in short, it could be a masterpiece or a complete fiasco. Being a true cinephile, Pauline's curiosity is piqued, and she has a strong desire to go watch the movie. Despite her curiosity, however, she knows very well

⁵⁸ See fn. 1 above.

⁵⁹ We should also keep in mind that the principal motivation for doxastic evaluativism is to explain how desires can rationalise actions. But why think that a mere disposition to believe that p is good can rationalise or subjectively justify any action, if the (non-evaluative) desire that p cannot? After all, it is possible that, at the time of the action, the agent has the disposition to form the relevant belief, without actually having that belief.

⁶⁰ We take suspending judgment about p to be a distinct doxastic attitude; see e.g. Friedman (2013) on this.

that she will absolutely regret watching the movie if it turns out to be bad: she will not, for instance, feel any satisfaction for fulfilling her 'duty' as a cinephile. So she wants to watch the movie and to find out whether it is any good, but, in her eyes, whether her watching it (and her finding out about its value) is good or bad depends entirely on the value of the movie itself, about which she has absolutely no idea right now. Therefore, she suspends judgment about her watching it and her finding out about its value: if the movie turns out enjoyable, then she will regard her watching it as good, if, on the other, hand the movie turns out bad, she will regard her watching it as a terrible waste of time. Pauline's case constitutes another counterexample to doxastic evaluativism: she wants to watch the movie and find out about its value at some specific time t , but she suspends judgment about the value of her watching the movie and her finding out about its value at that time.

Here is a final worry about doxastic evaluativism. Consider once again Quinn's *Radioman*. The evaluativist's point has been that we cannot quite understand *Radioman's* behaviour, unless we ascribe to him a positive evaluation of his pursued goal. Doxastic evaluativists interpret the required evaluation as an evaluative belief. Now, let us suppose that *Radioman* has the belief that turning on all the radios in his vicinity is intrinsically good. Our question is: Is there any sense in which *Radioman's* action is even slightly more intelligible or less bizarre now that we imagine him as someone who thinks that turning radios on is a worthwhile activity in itself? We think not! Despite having ascribed to him the evaluative belief in question, we are still puzzled as to why he acts as he does; in fact, now that we assume him to be committed to the truth of the idea that turning radios on is intrinsically valuable, the case is even more perplexing, if anything. Note that we need to imagine *Radioman* as believing his goal to be valuable for its own sake; we cannot simply attribute to him the belief that turning radios on is good *for* listening to music, for instance, because Quinn explicitly stipulates that *Radioman's* desire to turn on radios is intrinsic, not instrumental.⁶¹ It seems, then, that if *Radioman's* intrinsic desire cannot provide a minimal rationalisation for his action, neither can his belief that the object of that desire is intrinsically good: Quinn's condition that *Radioman's* desire is to be

⁶¹ See Quinn (1993: 236-7).

understood as non-instrumental already excludes from the case everything that could make the corresponding evaluative judgment intelligible and leaves us with the deeply puzzling belief that turning radios on is good for its own sake. It is therefore redundant to ascribe the relevant evaluative belief to *Radioman*, as this falls short of making the air of bizarreness that surrounds his action disappear.

5. Perceptual Evaluativism

As we have seen, the doxastic route to evaluativism is not really viable. But perhaps the alleged evaluative dimension of desires could be modelled on perception instead. This, indeed, has been the strategy recently followed by many evaluativists.⁶² On such views, desires are generally conceived of as involving both a representational content and a rich phenomenal dimension, and sometimes understood as analogous to or even simply as a special kind of *emotion*.⁶³ According to one currently predominant view, emotions are (analogous to) perceptions, though they differ from ordinary sensory perceptions in that their representational content is evaluative: to fear a lion is to experience it as fearsome or dangerous; to admire it is to experience it as admirable, and so forth.⁶⁴ Despite (sometimes important) differences among them, perceptual evaluativists all share the core idea that, analogously, desiring *p* is a matter of *p*'s being experienced as good or seeming good. Thus, Dennis Stampe argues:

Desire is a kind of perception. One who wants it to be the case that *p* perceives something that makes it seem to that person as if it would be good were it to be the case that *p*, and seem so in a way that is characteristic of perception. To desire

⁶² Defences of perceptual evaluativism include: Stampe (1987); Scanlon (1998); Wallace (1999); Helm (2001); Johnston (2001); Chang (2004); Oddie (2005, this volume); Tenenbaum (2007); Hawkins (2008); Schapiro (2009); Schafer (2013). According to Friedrich (2012, this volume), desires necessarily involve episodic experiences with a distinctive phenomenology. Friedrich is clear that these experiences are not 'evaluative seemings'; they do not have an evaluative representational content. However, he argues that their distinctive phenomenal character presents the desired object as something that must obtain, and claims that this amounts to a form of 'non-cognitive evaluation'. Now, as already announced (see fn. 11), we do not intend to take a stand on the question of whether occurrent desires have a distinctive phenomenal character, but it is not clear to us why Friedrich calls the distinctive phenomenology of occurrent desires *evaluative*, or why, in general, he takes his view to be a form of evaluativism (as he appears to do). It seems that one can have an experience with the phenomenal character he describes without the desired object seeming good or in any *evaluative* way. So, whatever the merits of his view about the phenomenal character of occurrent desires, it does not, as far as we can see, constitute a version of evaluativism at all. On the other hand, Friedrich's thesis that desires in general necessarily involve phenomenally conscious, episodic experiences falls prey to our main argument against perceptual evaluativism; see fn. 73 below for more on this.

⁶³ This is particularly conspicuous in e.g. Helm (2001); Johnston (2001); and Chang (2004).

⁶⁴ See e.g. Goldie (2000); Helm (2001); Roberts (2003); Döring (2003, 2007).

something is to be in a kind of perceptual state, in which that thing seems good [...].⁶⁵

A variation on this basic idea is found in Thomas Scanlon's attention-based account of desire.⁶⁶ According to Scanlon:

A person has a desire in the directed-attention sense that *P* if the thought of *P* keeps occurring to him or her in a favorable light, that is to say, if the person's attention is directed insistently toward considerations that present themselves as counting in favor of *P*.⁶⁷

One clear advantage of perceptual evaluativism over doxastic evaluativism is that the former, unlike the latter, does not require that a person who desires *p* have a fully-fledged evaluative belief that *p* is good. What perceptual evaluativists demand is only that the state of affairs *p* seems good to this person. This allows them to avoid the 'over-intellectualising' conception of agents' psychology that doxastic versions of evaluativism imply: they seem, for example, capable of doing justice to the intuition that many non-human animals and very young humans can have desires of the ordinary sort.⁶⁸ However, there are a number of serious difficulties with this variety of evaluativism as well.

Perceptual evaluativists typically *identify* a person's desiring *p* with *p*'s seeming good to that person.⁶⁹ But the idea that something's seeming good suffices for desiring it is just as implausible as the doxastic evaluativist's analogous claim that believing something to be good suffices for desiring it. To see this, we need only adjust and reapply the counterexamples formulated in the previous section. So suppose that you are confident that Obama is president, and also that nothing you could do would be conducive to Mozart's leading a longer and more productive life than he actually did. When you think about these states of affairs, they may very well seem good to you; however, (D₂) and (D₃) rule out that you can desire them.

⁶⁵ Stampe (1987: 359). Similarly, Oddie (2005: 42) writes: "The desire that *P* is *P*'s seeming good (or *P*'s being experienced as good)."

⁶⁶ See e.g. Copp & Sobel (2002); Schapiro (2009); and Gregory (this volume) for critical discussion.

⁶⁷ Scanlon (1998: 39). This is roughly equivalent to the view that desiring *p* is experiencing *p* as good, because, for Scanlon, "counting in favor of *P*" is roughly synonymous with "being a reason for *P*" (17), and, according to his famous buck-passing account, values reduce to reasons. Note, however, that Scanlon specifies here only a sufficient condition for having a desire. This is a bit odd, given that he means "to capture an *essential* element in the intuitive notion of (occurrent) desire" (39; our emphasis).

⁶⁸ Again, these advantages depend on a certain, non-trivial conception of perceptual content. See Hawkins (2008) on this issue.

⁶⁹ This is observed by Derek Baker (2014: 3, fn. 6) as well. Note, however, that Oddie (this volume) explicitly denies that *p*'s seeming good is sufficient for desiring that *p*, and defends only that the necessity of positive evaluative seemings for desire.

Similarly, consider once again the case of Pollyanna, who has been unfairly sentenced to six years in prison. Being a die-hard optimist, Pollyanna may regard the time she will spend in prison as good, and her attention may be constantly directed towards considerations that seem to count in favor of her being incarcerated (to the prospect of having plenty of time for reading, or writing her memoirs, for instance). Still, it is very implausible to conclude that Pollyanna genuinely desires to be sent to jail.

It thus seems that something's appearing in a favourable light is not sufficient for desiring it. Is it at least necessary for it? Again, the arguments against doxastic evaluativism we presented above apply to perceptual evaluativism as well. Recall, for instance, the case of Pauline the cinephile. Pauline has a strong desire to watch the movie and find out about its value, yet when she thinks about her watching the movie and finding out about its value, these states of affairs do not seem good to her – if her desire involves any evaluative experience at all, then, plausibly, it is an experience of those states of affairs' seeming to her to be evaluatively ambivalent. If this correct, then the case of Pauline constitutes a counterexample not just to the doxastic version of evaluativism, but also to its perceptual rendering.

There is, however, a more pressing difficulty with perceptual evaluativism, a difficulty that reveals what is fundamentally wrong with this approach to desire. Recall the distinction between standing and occurrent desires. Here is how this distinction spells trouble for perceptual evaluativism. On the face of it, perceptual evaluativism seems applicable only to occurrent desires since it associates desire with some sort of conscious experience in which the desired object is perceived as good. So even if it is established that occurrently desiring *p* just is, or necessarily involves, experiencing *p* as good, this leaves it entirely open how standing desires are to be understood. Since the standing desire that *p* can be had even when you are not conscious at all, it can neither just be nor necessarily involve experiencing *p* as good. Therefore, perceptual evaluativism cannot pretend to be a general theory of desire; at best, it can account only for occurrent desires.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Does an analogous argument apply to doxastic evaluativism? After all, doxastic evaluativists claim that the desire that *p* necessarily involves the belief that *p* is good, and this does not seem to be applicable to occurrent desires. Well, doxastic evaluativists have an easy solution here: they can simply claim that while the standing desire that *p* necessarily involves the standing belief that *p* is good, the occurrent desire that *p* necessarily

To appreciate how severe this problem is, note that a huge number of the mental phenomena we normally call desire are standing desires, not occurrent ones. Besides, it is also standing desires that take centre stage in many debates in metaethics and the philosophy of action. This is quite unsurprising, given that the vast majority of our intentional actions are not preceded by any occurrent desires, but are rather motivated by our standing desires.⁷¹ So restricting the account to occurrent desires is not much of an option for the evaluativist, at least not within the context of the debate about the explanation of intentional action.

Can the perceptual evaluativist extend his analysis to standing desires? The perceptual evaluativist might propose that the standing desire that p necessarily involves the disposition to occurrently desire that p , which, in turn, is identified with (or, is thought to necessarily involve) experiencing p as good.⁷² It is plausible that dispositional profiles of the desiderative kind typically involve a disposition to have occurrent desires with the relevant content, though we do not think that such dispositions are necessary constituents of desiderative profiles. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the standing desire that p necessarily involves the disposition to have experiences of occurrently desiring that p in circumstances where, for instance, one occurrently thinks about p and so on. Does this solve the perceptual evaluativist's problem with standing desires? It does not, and to see why, consider once again the case of Thomas from the previous section. Between t_0 and t_1 , Thomas has the standing desire to go to the kitchen. We are supposing that, during this period, he also has the disposition to occurrently desire to go to the kitchen. However, this disposition might not manifest at all between t_0 and t_1 , despite being present during that time, and if it does not, then Thomas has a standing desire between t_0 and t_1 , without having any corresponding positive evaluation. But even the weakest version of perceptual evaluativism is incompatible with this, for it must rule out that, for any time t , one can desire, at t , that p , although one does not, at t ,

involves the occurrent judgment (or thought) that p is good. By contrast, it seems that perceptual evaluativists seek to characterise both standing and occurrent desires in terms of mental phenomena that are essentially occurrent and do not have any 'standing' counterparts.

⁷¹ Incidentally, Quinn (1993: 235) states explicitly that *Radioman* is to be understood as having a standing desire.

⁷² This seems to be what Scanlon (1998: 39) has in mind when he writes: "[W]hat is generally called a desire involves having a tendency to see something as a reason". Friedrich (this volume) also mentions this sort of an extension as a possible solution to the problem at hand.

experience p as good.⁷³ So the perceptual evaluativist cannot account for standing desires simply by claiming that desiderative profiles necessarily involve a disposition to have corresponding occurrent desires.⁷⁴

Here is a further worry about perceptual evaluativism. As we have seen in section 3, the principal motivation for evaluativism is that desires cannot have the minimal justificatory function they are supposed to have, if they do not somehow imply that the goal they encode is a goal that is worth pursuing. But it is in fact dubious whether evaluative experiences can have this sort of justificatory force (if, that is, we are to suppose that non-evaluative conative attitudes cannot), even in those cases in which an agent actually undergoes them. After all, perceptual evaluativists require only that the pursued goal *seems* good to the agent, not that the agent really *accepts* that goal as good in any sense. As many have argued, a desired goal may continue to seem good to the agent although he judges that this goal is in fact not worth pursuing. That is, desires may prove *recalcitrant* to the agent's better judgement. Scanlon gives the example of a person who continues to desire a new computer even when her better judgement is that she in fact has no reason to buy a new machine.⁷⁵ The perceptual evaluativist's explanation of such recalcitrant desires is that they must be more like perceptions of value, and not like value judgements – for otherwise we would have to attribute to the person two contradictory judgements, which is very implausible.⁷⁶ As Scanlon puts it, “desires are unreflective elements in our practical thinking”.⁷⁷ We take this to imply that the evaluations involved by desires differ from those involved by beliefs in that they are not regarded as true by the agent. They have “the *appearance* of truth, whether or not [the agent] would

⁷³ See fn. 1 above. Friedrich (this volume) also suggests a stronger link between standing and occurrent desires: if, between t_0 and t_1 , a has a standing desire that p , then not only must a have, between t_0 and t_1 , the disposition to occurrently desire that p , but that disposition must also *manifest* at some point or another between t_0 and t_1 . But this does nothing to bypass the objection above, for even if we were to suppose that the disposition must manifest frequently, at multiple points between t_0 and t_1 , there would at least be some points between t_0 and t_1 at which Thomas does not occurrently desire to go to the kitchen, yet his standing desire persists.

⁷⁴ Furthermore, to repeat a point from the previous section (see fn. 59 above), it is unclear how a mere disposition to experience something as good should rationalise any action. After all, the agent can have the disposition to experience something as good without ever actually undergoing any such evaluative experience before or during his performance of the action.

⁷⁵ Scanlon (1998: 43). See Gregory (this volume) for a critical discussion of this example.

⁷⁶ Patricia Greenspan's (1988: 18) influential argument against doxastic analyses of recalcitrant emotions also applies to doxastic analyses of recalcitrant desires. This is indeed yet another detrimental side-effect of the over-intellectualising model offered by doxastic evaluativists; see e.g. Schapiro (2009) and Friedrich (2012: 293).

⁷⁷ Scanlon (1998: 39).

affirm” its truth.⁷⁸ While this nicely explains the phenomenon of recalcitrant desires (it is only the content of his better judgement that the agent regards as true, whereas the content of his desire merely appears to be true to him⁷⁹), it would seem that this comes at the price of depriving desires of their capacity to rationalise actions. For why should an evaluation which the agent does not even affirm, or regard as true, rationalise his action, if his non-evaluative conative attitude cannot? While Scanlon seems to think that, if their content is not affirmed by the agent, desires cannot even *motivate* action,⁸⁰ Mark Johnston, on the contrary, insists that desires can directly rationalise action “without going by way of the evaluative beliefs which it makes true”.⁸¹ This comes as a surprise, considering that Johnston adopts Scanlon’s perceptual evaluativism about desire and connects it with perceptual theories of emotion.⁸² Whatever Johnston’s reasons for that thesis, it is our view that evaluative experiences that perceptual evaluativists ascribe to agents fail to rationalise actions because experiencing a desired goal as good does not imply that the agent affirms this evaluation.⁸³

Finally, consider how the perceptual evaluativist’s suggestion applies to the case of *Radioman*, setting aside the problems we canvassed above. Let us assume that *Radioman*’s behaviour is motivated by an occurrent desire which consists in his experiencing turning radios on as good for its own sake. Remember that we are not allowed to suppose that this course of action seems instrumentally good to him. So the question is once again whether the assumption that *Radioman* experiences turning radios on as intrinsically valuable makes his action any less bizarre than it was before, and the answer is once again ‘no’. His action is still very odd, and it is even more puzzling that turning radios on should seem intrinsically valuable to him.

⁷⁸ Roberts (2003: 92). Compare the notion of the “appearance of good” in Tenenbaum (2007).

⁷⁹ See Döring (2010).

⁸⁰ He (1998: 41) writes: “Desire [...] characterizes an important form of variability in the motivational efficacy of reasons, but it does this by describing one way in which the thought of something as a reason can present itself rather than by identifying a motivating factor that is independent of such a thought.”

⁸¹ Johnston (2001: 206).

⁸² For more details, see Döring (2007: 387-8, fn. 19).

⁸³ This is not necessarily to deny that the experience of *p*’s seeming good to one can justify the belief or judgment that *p* is good, rather in the way that perceptions justify perceptual beliefs. The claim is, rather, that evaluative experiences cannot play the justificatory role that perceptual evaluativists suppose them to play, because they themselves cannot justify actions directly.

We thus conclude that neither version of evaluativism can provide us with a plausible theory of desire: as the arguments we presented in this and the previous section show, a positive evaluation of the desired object, be it doxastic or perceptual, does not suffice for desiring something; nor is it, in fact, necessary for it. Moreover, it seems that, as far as examples like *Radioman's* go, which are supposed to be the main motivation for evaluativism about desire, turning desires into evaluative beliefs or experiences does not produce any gains. This leads one to think that the bizarreness of the case of *Radioman* is due not to his lack of some positive evaluation of turning radios on, but to something else. In the next (and last) section, we shall sketch out some ideas on what that something else might be and try to explain why evaluativism about desire is an overreaction to whatever challenge it poses.

6. Demotivating Evaluativism

Let us recapitulate what we know about *Radioman*. We know that he desires to turn radios on, at least in the sense that he is disposed to turn on any that catches his eye. Call this particular conative state of *Radioman* DESIRE. We know that DESIRE is intrinsic. We also know that DESIRE does not involve any evaluation of its object as good.

Suppose now *Radioman* enters a room and spots a radio at the other end of the room. He then steadily walks across the room and turns the radio on. Call this particular event ACTION. The question now is whether ACTION can be rationalised or explained by DESIRE as an instance of pursuing a goal. Quinn and evaluativists of all stripes give a negative answer: they think that rationalisation is impossible, because DESIRE lacks the evaluative element that is responsible for making actions intelligible as the pursuit of some goal. We think, on the contrary, that no evaluative element is in principle necessary for such rationalisation, though we also believe that we do not know enough details to make a final decision about this particular case. It may be objected that ACTION strikes one as bizarre even before we are given more information about *Radioman's* psychology and the circumstances of ACTION. We agree that there is something odd about ACTION, but we think that two issues should be distinguished here. On the one hand, there is the question whether ACTION can be understood as *Radioman's* pursuing some goal, given the facts about his psychology.

Suppose that it can be so understood. This is compatible, on the other hand, with *Radioman's* goal being an extremely bizarre one. Indeed, turning radios on is a very odd thing to desire intrinsically; and, as we have seen, the oddness of it does not simply go away when we ascribe to *Radioman* the corresponding positive evaluations, because those evaluations themselves would be every bit as odd as DESIRE itself, if not odder. DESIRE is quite unlike the typical intrinsic desires most people have: the desire to be happy, the desire to be healthy, the desire to be free from pain, and so on. Compared to being healthy or free from pain, turning radios on seems far too trivial a thing to want for its own sake. One might also be tempted to say that *Radioman* intrinsically desires something he has no objective, normative reason to desire. It is controversial in general whether normative reasons can be given for intrinsic desires, but we can safely bypass this controversy, because *that* has never been our question.⁸⁴ Our question was, and still is, whether DESIRE (together with relevant means-end beliefs) can explain ACTION as *Radioman's* pursuit of some goal. We would probably insist that the goal he pursues is absurd; but pursuing an absurd goal is still pursuing a goal.

As already pointed out, it is difficult to give a decisive answer to the question whether DESIRE rationalises (in the relevant minimal sense) ACTION, because the example is, as Quinn presents it, fatally underdescribed.⁸⁵ One might imagine *Radioman*, for instance, as someone who compulsively runs from one radio to another, utterly possessed by a mechanical urge to turn them on. It might be, for instance, that this urge to turn on radios regularly gets into the way of his efforts to satisfy his desires, to realise his intentions and plans. He might also be completely alienated from this urge, feeling that the actions produced by it are not really *performed* by him, but merely *happen* to him.⁸⁶ If this is the correct description of the case, then it clearly does not make much sense to say that *Radioman* genuinely pursues some goal in turning the radio on; in fact, it becomes highly questionable whether his behaviour can still count as an intentional action.

⁸⁴ Smith (2012b) makes this point very clearly in his critical discussion of Scanlon's theory of desire. Note that Quinn himself appears to conflate the two issues at several points; see e.g. Quinn (1993: 253).

⁸⁵ For similar complaints, see Copp & Sobel (2002); and Smith (2012a).

⁸⁶ This is a very familiar theme in the philosophy of action. See e.g. Frankfurt (1971); Watson (1975); Velleman (1992b); Bratman (2000a, 2000b, 2003, and 2007).

The point to be emphasised is, however, that this enriched version of the story does not give us any reason to endorse evaluativism about desire.⁸⁷ It is assumed in Quinn's discussion (and in many subsequent treatments by others) that non-evaluativists are committed to the view that desires just are simple dispositions to act in certain ways. If this were true, then it would perhaps be difficult for non-evaluativists to draw a distinction between desires and compulsive urges such as the one we might suppose *Radioman* to have. But non-evaluativists have no such commitment.⁸⁸ Indeed, as we have argued in section 2, the desiderative dispositional profile does not exhaust itself in the disposition to act in ways that you take to be conducive to satisfying your desire, even if that disposition is a necessary element of the desiderative profile. A more detailed characterisation of the desiderative profile would distinguish it from the dispositional profile associated with compulsive urges, and this would allow non-evaluativists to respond to (the enriched version of) Quinn's example by denying that *Radioman* has a standing desire to turn radios on – so if his conative attitude does not minimally rationalise the way he behaves, then this does not quite show that a desire, understood non-evaluatively, cannot rationalise actions, but rather that compulsive urges cannot rationalise actions.

What other kinds of dispositions might the desiderative profile necessarily or typically involve? Here we can do no more than to point to one kind of dispositions that would be useful for distinguishing desires from compulsive urges. What we have in mind are, very roughly, dispositions that link desires to other agency-related psychological phenomena such as intentions, general agential policies, or long-term plans, and spotlight their place within the broader context of diachronic or 'temporally extended' agency.⁸⁹ It seems plausible, for instance, that the desiderative dispositional profile necessarily includes, roughly, dispositions to form long-term intentions to achieve the object of the desire, to integrate such intentions into more general and complex plans which the agent already has, and to form agential policies

⁸⁷ Compare Baker (2014: 14-22). We do not deny, of course, that evaluativism may also be compatible with this more detailed picture; our point is rather that it is not *uniquely compatible* with it, that the enriched version of the story can be accounted for within a non-evaluativist framework as well. If this is true, then the central motivation for evaluativism is undermined.

⁸⁸ This is also pointed out by Copp & Sobel (2002: 261); and Smith (2012b: 80-3).

⁸⁹ These broader action- and agency-related phenomena have been discussed most elaborately in Michael Bratman's work. See e.g. Bratman (1987, 2000a, 2007).

that encode general patterns of action in certain specific situations. Of course, many or even most desires we have do not actually lead us to engage in such higher agential activities, but they all dispose us to do so under certain suitable conditions. By contrast, urges and compulsions plausibly do not necessarily involve such dispositions: although urges and compulsions of which the agent is conscious are also relevant for the shape her overall agency takes, they are more like external limiting factors than mediators of potential goals. One can take one's compulsive urge to do something that one does not want to do into account when intending or planning to act, yet one does not really intend or plan to act *on them*. So if desires and compulsive urges can thus be contrasted in terms of their different dispositional connections with intentions and plans, for instance, then the non-evaluativist can spell out why acting *out of an urge* does not count as an instance of pursuing a goal, while acting *on a desire* does.⁹⁰

Given the lack of detail, we do not know whether DESIRE fits the desiderative profile, understood as including the sort of agency-related dispositions roughly sketched above, and qualifies as a genuine desire, or whether it is just a compulsive urge. But if it is a genuine desire, it is difficult to see why it should fail to rationalise ACTION in the relevant minimal sense. Again, this need not prevent us from regarding DESIRE as very unusual or even downright outlandish, and *Radioman* himself as quite eccentric. It does not follow from this, however, that we need to ascribe to him an evaluation of the object of his desire in order to understand him as pursuing a goal.

There still remains, of course, the further, independent question of whether *Radioman's* agency-related attitudes make up the kind of coherent whole that can be seen as the trademark of a stronger, more robust form of agency, that is, *ideally autonomous agency*. We need to know much more about *Radioman* in order to decide to what extent he is an autonomous agent in general and to what extent ACTION is an instance of autonomous agency. Does he, for instance, have certain general, higher-order attitudes aiming at self-regulation? If so, how sensitive are the particular action-related elements of his mental setup to these self-governing policies? More specifically, how does he behave when DESIRE comes into conflict with

⁹⁰ This is roughly analogous Smith's (2012a: 394) response to the example of *Radioman*.

other action-related elements of his psychology? These are some of the questions we need to be able to answer before we can tell whether *Radioman* can be evaluated as an autonomous agent, or whether ACTION can be understood as an instance of autonomous agency.⁹¹ Note that failure to comply with forms of autonomous self-regulation, which surely comes in degrees, need not mean that the agent cannot be understood as pursuing a goal. We can still make sense of an agent's behaviour as an instance of pursuing a goal or acting for a reason, even if we think that it falls short of the ideal of autonomous agency.⁹²

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⁹¹ For more on these issues, see esp. Bratman (2007).

⁹² An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Graduate Colloquium in Practical Philosophy at University of Tübingen; we thank Mitchell Green and all of the participants for helpful questions and discussions. We are especially grateful to Julien Deonna and Federico Lauria for their detailed and insightful comments on the penultimate version.

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