

Wanting and Willing

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(forthcoming in *The European Journal of Philosophy*)

How homogenous are the sources of human motivation? Textbook Humeans hold that every human action is motivated by desire, thus any heterogeneity derives from differing objects of desire. Textbook Kantians hold that although some human actions are motivated by desire, others are motivated by reason. This conflict has no substance until one has settled on an understanding of the key terms—‘desire’, ‘reason’, ‘source’, and ‘motivation’—each of which is itself a battleground. One question that has arisen in this vicinity concerns whether there is any overlap between cognitive and conative states, i.e., whether there are states such that to be in one is at once (and indivisibly) to take the world to be a certain way *and* to be motivated to act. This is the *state-question*. My question here is different: not whether cognitive and conative states are necessarily distinct, but whether passion and reason constitute fundamentally distinct sources of human motivation. This is the *source-question*. In what follows, I argue for an affirmative answer to the source-question while remaining neutral on the state-question. I adopt a posture of neutrality not because of any uncertainty as to its answer,¹ but in order to show that recourse to this answer is not required to defend a (broadly) Kantian picture of human motivation.

I begin by isolating (in section one) one source of human motivation: orrectic desires, which are associated with the appetites and, more broadly, pleasure. Anorectic

¹ I defend the affirmative answer in Marcus 2012, ch. 2 and Marcus 2018.

desires, which are associated with judgments of the good, are another plausible source of human motivation. I argue that the two sorts of desires constitute distinct sources of motivation initially on the basis of their differing epistemological profiles. Specifically, self-attributions of anorectic desires are governed by the transparency condition, self-attributions of orectic desires are not. It emerges from this discussion (in sections two and three) that the motivation for performing an action arises in very different ways from each sort of desire. This difference, in turn, is explained (as I show in section four) by their differing relations to the will. Roughly, an orectic desire *influences* the will, but an anorectic desire *is* the will. And the motivation associated with an anorectic desire derives just from the determination that the relevant action is to-be-done—from reason.

I. Framing the Issue

Progress on the source-question depends on being careful with the term ‘desire’. One might try to formulate it this way: “Are we motivated to act by anything other than desire?” But this won’t do, since there is a broad and a narrow use of ‘desire’, on the first of which the answer is a trivial ‘no’. But it will take work to bring the contrast between these uses into view. And we must be careful as we do to keep the state- and source-questions separated. Furthermore, there are various categories of desire that are crucial for understanding the structure of human agency, but which are not relevant to the source-question at all. Sorting all of this out requires a section of its own.

T.M. Scanlon contrast broad and narrow senses of ‘desire’ in the following passage:

‘Desire’ is sometimes used in a broad sense in which the class of desires is taken to include any “pro-attitude” that an agent may have toward an action or outcome, whatever the content or basis of this attitude may be. Desires in this sense include such things as a sense of duty, loyalty, or pride, as well as an interest in pleasure or enjoyment. It is uncontroversial that desires in this broad sense are capable of moving us to act, and it is plausible to claim that they are the only things capable of this, since anything that moves us (at least to intentional action) is likely to count as such a desire.... A substantial thesis claiming a special role for desires in moving us to act would have to be based on some narrower class of desires, which can be claimed to serve as independent sources of motivation and perhaps also of reasons to act.²

Scanlon’s point is borne out by the fact no prominent defender of a (broadly) Kantian view of human agency would deny that, whenever someone acts, it is possible to explain their so acting by saying something along the lines of “S is x-ing because she wants ____”. For example, even as John McDowell defends the Kantian view that moral requirements are unconditional, he insists that in “construing obedience to a categorical imperative as acting for a certain sort of reason, we can see the obedience as a case of doing what one wants.”³ Part of his point is that the source of such a desire is reason, since it is “consequential on” the subject’s holding a view of how things are—a “state or

² Scanlon 1998, 3.

³ McDowell 1998, 25.

disposition of one's cognitive equipment".⁴ Thus, to do what one wants (in the broad sense) is not necessarily to be motivated by the passions.

McDowell, then, holds that the answer to the source-question is 'yes'. But in the essay from which those remarks are drawn, the state-question is front and center: a cognitive state, McDowell urges, can also and inseparably be a conative state. Michael Smith famously demurs, advancing against McDowell (among others) a theory of desire (in the broad sense) according to which it is marked by a 'mind to world' direction of fit and which contrasts with belief, marked by a 'world-to-mind' direction of fit. His central point is that "...what Humeans must deny and do deny is simply that agents who are in belief-like states and desire-like states are ever in a *single, unitary, kind of state*. This is the cash value of the Humean doctrine that belief and desire are distinct existences."⁵ This way of replying to McDowell, whatever its intrinsic merits, sidesteps the source-question. For even if one were to answer the state-question in the negative on the basis of Smith's analyses of desire (in the broad sense) and belief, there would remain the question of whether the passions and reason constitute distinct sources of motivation.

Smith's argument for the Humean doctrine "is really quite simple. It is that it is always at least possible for agents who are in some particular belief-like state to the effect that their Φ -ing is right to none the less lack any desire-like state to the effect that

⁴ McDowell 1998, 18

⁵ Smith 1994, 119

they Φ .”⁶ One might then connect the state-question and the source-question as follows. A belief is never the source of motivation, because desire (in the broad sense) to Φ is both necessary and sufficient for the motivation to Φ . But from the (purported) fact that no desire (in the broad sense) can be a belief, it doesn’t follow that *the source* of the motivation to Φ is the passions, rather than reason. On the Kantian view I envision, the source of the motivation to perform some actions is desire (in a narrow sense), the motivational source of other actions is belief. But this position leaves open the possibility that the answer to the state-question is ‘no’, that there is no single state that is both a desire and a belief.

We have, then, a broad use of ‘desire’, which is, in the words of Philippa Foot, “a use of ‘desire’ which indicates a motivational direction and nothing more.”⁷ To have a desire in this sense, says Thomas Nagel, “simply follows from the fact that [the relevant] considerations motivate me”⁸ These are Davidson’s ‘pro-attitudes’.⁹ This use contrasts, as I’ve said, with a narrower one. G.F. Schueler calls desires in the narrow sense “desires proper;”¹⁰ I use the expression ‘orectic desire’. ‘Desire’ is employed in the narrow sense when we say that it is “possible for me to do things that I have no desire to

⁶ Smith 1994, 119.

⁷ Foot 1979, 149.

⁸ Nagel 1970, 29.

⁹ See Davidson 1980.

¹⁰ Schueler 1995, 35.

do.”¹¹ In its extension falls “hunger, thirst and the rest”, whereas the broad sense includes “moral and political beliefs”.¹² The argument to follow turns on an account of the distinction between orectic desire and what I call anorectic desire. For the moment, I will use Schueler’s formula to anchor our grasp of orectic desire. When we say that someone did something despite having no desire to do it, we are using ‘desire’ in the orectic sense. We might also put the idea this way: when we desire (orectically) to Φ , we *feel like Φ -ing*, and how much we feel like Φ -ing corresponds to the strength of the desire.

Since my concern here is with the ultimate source or sources of our motivation to act, I will ignore in what follows desires that borrow their power to motivate from sources further upstream. Among those derivative sources of motivation are instrumental desires: those that we possess only because their satisfaction is a means to satisfying a further desire. For example, I might go to the store to buy a bag of Cheetos. My desire to go to the store is instrumental insofar as doing so is a means to buy Cheetos. Another derivative source is what Nomy Arpaly and Timothy Schroeder call

¹¹ Schueler 1995, 33.

¹² Schueler 1995, 34. In a similar vein, Christine Korsgaard holds that “animal actions and human actions involve the interaction of two factors, an incentive and a principle. The incentive is a motivationally loaded representation of an object” (Korsgaard 2009, 109). Korsgaard’s incentives correspond (roughly) to desires in the broad sense. She too holds that the genus is not exhausted by orectic desire: “Desires and inclinations are incentives; so is respect for the moral law” (Korsgaard 1996, 165).

realizer desires.¹³ Realizer desires are those that we possess because their satisfaction satisfies a (more general) desire in a specific way, e.g., for example, my desire to buy *that* bag of Cheetos realizes my desire to buy *a* bag of Cheetos. Instrumental and realizer desires are *motivated* in Nagel’s sense: they “are arrived at by decision and after deliberation”. An orectic desire is *unmotivated*—they “simply come to us.”¹⁴ A plausible candidate for the ultimate source of desire in our example is an orectic desire to eat Cheetos, which (we can suppose) is neither instrumental nor realizes another desire.

One point of this essay is to show that there is a kind of desire—anorectic desire—that is like instrumental and realizer desires in being motivated, but unlike them insofar its power to motivate is original. For example, the desires to be a good friend, to bring peace to the Earth, and to live justly, are (often) not held in virtue of their conduciveness to some further desire. But, unlike orectic desire, they do not simply come to us. We can arrive at them by deliberation and decision. The existence of anorectic desires makes the answer to the source-question ‘yes’.

II. Orectic Desire and the Limits of Transparency

It has become a familiar (though contested) point that our knowledge of what we believe is, in some sense, a by-product of our determination of what’s true. This is the

¹³ Arpaly and Shroeder 2014.

¹⁴ Nagel 1970, 29.

phenomenon of transparency. Richard Moran explains the transparency condition this way:

I treat the question of my belief about P as equivalent to the question of the truth of P.... [T]he basis for this equivalence hinges on the role of deliberative considerations about one's attitudes. For what the "logical" claim of transparency requires is the deferral of the theoretical question "What do I believe?" to the deliberative question "What am I to believe?" And in the case of the attitude of belief, answering a deliberative question is a matter of determining what is true.¹⁵

Is there, one might wonder, a similar dimension to our knowledge of what we desire? Moran holds that the same point does hold of at least some desires:

Thomas Nagel... distinguishes between "motivated" and "unmotivated" desire... When someone wants to change jobs, or learn French, or avoid being seen, these are "motivated" or "judgment-sensitive" desires in that they depend on certain beliefs about what makes these various things desirable...It is the normal expectation of the person, as well as a rational demand made upon him, that the question of what he actually does desire should be dependent in this way on his assessment of the desire and the grounds he has for it...In fact, by far most of the desires we act upon are of this sort, and not of the sort that simply assail us with their

¹⁵ Moran 2001, 62-63.

force (despite the traditional concentration by philosophers since Plato on the “brute” desires of hunger and lust).¹⁶

I too concentrate on what Moran calls here brute desires (taking consolation in the pedigree of this misguided focus), but I find his epistemology of motivated desires compelling. He holds that by considering the question of what is to-be-desired, I can determine an answer to the question of what I do desire. Do I want to go to the store? Yes, since I need some Cheetos for my salad. I determine that my need for Cheetos makes a trip to the store to-be-desired, and my knowledge of my desire to go to the store is part and parcel of making that determination. When I say “I want to go to the store” I am speaking from the first-person point of view, as the desire’s author. But according to Moran, we have no way to get inside our orectic desires:

The person’s stance toward such desires, and how he deals with them, may be little different from his stance toward any other empirical phenomenon he confronts. From this angle, a brute desire is a bit of reality for the agent to accommodate, like a sensation, or a broken leg, or an obstacle in one’s path.¹⁷

Moran thus argues that the transparency condition does not hold for orectic desires.

Alex Byrne disagrees. He describes a pattern of inference, “if ϕ -ing is a desirable option, believe that you want to ϕ ,” and argues that knowledge of one’s desires is

¹⁶ Moran 2001, 115-116.

¹⁷ Moran 2001, 115.

typically obtained by trying to follow it. Byrne's approach to transparency is importantly different from Moran's. For Moran, one's knowledge of what one desires (where the desire is motivated) is explained by the fact that the desire is constituted by one's determination of what is to be wanted. Our desire itself, as well as our knowledge of it, reflects deliberative activity or agency. Thus, for Moran, the fact that we are passive in relation to our unmotivated desires puts them outside the scope of transparency. For Byrne, the question of what constitutes one's desire is irrelevant to its epistemology. All that matters is that "[o]ne's desires tend to line up with one's knowledge of the desirability of the options" (19). Thus, the inference from ϕ -ing's being desirable to its being the object of one's desire is a pretty good one. Agency and activity have nothing to do with it.

But Moran is right about orectic desires. To show the error in Byrne's approach, I will elaborate on one of his examples. Suppose I arrive, hungry, at an Indian restaurant. I scan the menu. Many of the dishes are familiar to me, a few are not. I wonder what to order. Various kinds of considerations might be brought to bear. Perhaps I am reviewing the restaurant, or on a date, or trying to impress my boss, or avoiding carbs, or on a strict budget, etc. But suppose instead that I am visiting the city for a day from an Indian food desert and have dropped in alone in order to have a great Indian meal with no other concerns to detract from the experience. Still, I can't eat everything, and so I must choose. What do I want (or most want)? And how exactly, do I go about answering this question? And how, after I've ordered, do I determine that I've made a mistake, i.e., ordered the wrong dish? And where precisely do we locate the mistake?

It might seem as if "what do I want?" is not a real question at all. Dennis Stampe dismisses it:

But our so-called decisions as to "what we want" are really decisions about what we will have, or what we will do. When I make up my mind that "what I want" is the fish and not the fowl, I am really deciding that I will have the fish.¹⁸

But this is wrong. The question addressed to myself is a real question, one that is often difficult to answer. "What am I in the mood for?", "What will hit the spot?", "Savory or Sweet?", "How much spice?" The thread running through these questions is their answerability to my own pleasure. I am trying to figure out what I will enjoy (or enjoy the most).

Aristotle is helpful here. He describes desire as "the craving for pleasure,"¹⁹ and suggests a plausible account of how I figure out what I want. I use the imagination—'phantasia'—so as to "concretely envisag[e] candidate courses of action", as Hendrik Lorenz puts it.²⁰ Jessica Moss describes the motivational role of such imaginings as follows: "pleasurable phantasia induces desire and pursuit, just as would the actual pleasurable perception. Phantasia's key contribution to action is its pleasurable representation of an object not presently perceived, which thereby becomes desired as a goal."²¹

¹⁸ Stampe 1987, 370.

¹⁹ Aristotle 350, 18-27.

²⁰ Lorenz 2006, 127.

²¹ Moss 2012, 62.

We can begin to think through this idea by returning to our example. Suppose that the prospect of eating lamb biryani is what most excites me, and so I order one. “I really want a lamb biryani”. The dish arrives and it tastes exactly the way that lamb biryani should and just the way I remember it tasting. But I don’t enjoy it. Here are two possible descriptions of the case. I *did* really want a lamb biryani even though eating one did not please me. I merely *thought* I wanted a lamb biryani. It is the latter, I find, that makes the best sense of the way that we approach the question of what we desire. In the case at issue, I am trying to think of what would (most) please me. Insofar as I fail to identify it, I have arrived at the wrong answer to the question “what do I want?”. If what I would actually enjoy (most) is something other than the biryani, then the answer to “what I do desire (most)?” is *not* the biryani.

Once we move from ordering food to weightier decisions, the substance and difficulty of this question become even more striking. Consider an undergraduate pondering what career path to pursue. There are likely many factors in play aside from their own career satisfaction: what their parents want them to do, what would be most useful to society, what is most prestigious, most lucrative, and so forth. But they surely should also consider what they themselves want—in this case, what they would find most fulfilling. (The notion of pleasure that figures in our characterization of orrectic desires is an expansive one; this is not a doctrine worthy of swine.) Perhaps they have narrowed it down: poet or philosopher. But which one? The answer can be very hard to know. They will attempt to concretely envisage possible careers in each field, finding motivation in their own reaction to their imagined prospects. But the capacity of a student to imagine concretely what it might be like for them to be a poet or a philosopher is very limited. And the problem is not just that they might lack

information about the life of the poet and the philosopher. It is also a problem of self-knowledge: which sort of world and work would they find most rewarding? This is hard to know. One is often surprised at the way one responds to a situation in reality, even if one has imagined it accurately.

The transparency condition does not apply to orectic desire because I am *in the picture* when it comes to the question of what I desire (orectically) in a way that I am not when it comes to the question of what I believe. There is no doxastic analogue to my own pleasure. To know what I believe, I can typically simply consider the way the world is. Sometimes the proposition in question concerns me, but this is because of the specific content of this belief and not its form, i.e., not because of what it is to be a belief. Belief is in this sense impersonal. But *my* feelings help to determine the facts about what I desire (orectically), and this connection characterizes the form of orectic desire.

Byrne raises a worry about his own view. Recall that he is defending the idea that one knows what one wants by looking ‘outwards’. The worry is that to know the desirability of an option, we must look ‘inwards’, even if not to our own desires:

[A]lthough one’s own desires are not among the features that make for the desirability of an option, one’s other mental states sometimes are. For instance, I might well conclude that I want to go to the Indian restaurant partly on the basis of the fact that I like Indian food: I like, say, andar palak and plain naans....[B]ut the considerations [raised earlier] indicate that the epistemology of likings should be in the same world-to-mind style. And initially, that is not at all implausible: if I sample andar palak for the first time, and someone asks me if I like it, I turn my attention to

its flavor. Does it taste good or bad? There is little reason to think that this involves investigating my own mind, as opposed to the andar palak itself.²²

When I consider whether I want the biryani, my answer to the question is informed by whether or not I like it. Byrne sees this, but holds that the question of whether I like it is transparent to the question of whether it tastes good. He concludes that my knowledge of whether I want the palak is based on thinking about the world and not myself. But this does not follow. The way that I react to the prospect of eating it is not determined by whether I imagine that it will taste good to competent judges or most people, but whether I expect it to taste good *to me*. When I decide in favor of the biryani, it is precisely in anticipation of the pleasure eating it will give me. And that is part of what it is to imagine that it will taste good. When I say what I want to eat (understood to isolate the relevant orrectic desire), I aim to cite a food that will in fact please me, will taste good to me. If I choose it and it is what I imagined it would be, but I do not enjoy it, then it is evidently not what I desired—not something whose tasting good (to me) justified my ordering it.

My point is not that to know our orrectic desires we must look *inward*. That would be to conflate them with mere sensations. Like pain, orrectic desires are passive in the sense that they typically come upon us unbidden. Unlike pain, however, the identity of a specific desire is constituted in part by the way I would respond to the world around

²² Byrne 2011, 27-28. I would argue that my basic objection to Byrne also applies to the view advanced in Fernández 2007.

me. Whether it is a fact that I want the biryani or the palak depends upon which I would enjoy (most). Unlike my own pain, I cannot know this on the basis of an inward glance, i.e., purely phenomenologically. The way that I know my orectic desires is through the imagination: I gauge my desire by imagining the pleasure I would (or wouldn't) take in performing the relevant action.

So far I have focused on orectic desires that concern myself and my own pleasure, but they need not. I might enroll my daughters in a certain after-school program because I think it will improve their hand-eye coordination. The explanation might be expanded in the following direction. The thought of their being uncoordinated is painful to me and this induces an aversion to this outcome that serves as the motivation for my decision to enroll them. Orectic desires, furthermore, might concern no one at all. I might simply find amusing the idea of my old belt buckle buried in a ditch at the bottom of the Grand Canyon where no one will ever find it. These are orectic desires, even though my reason for performing the relevant actions is not my own pleasure. Still, my own pleasure in contemplating the desired result—pleasure felt in anticipation of that result—motivates me to perform the action. And if the result is just as I envisioned but its actuality does not please me, it is evidently not what I desired.

In the philosophy of action, the term 'motivation' is often used to refer to a rationale for action, to a goal or reason or desire. In ordinary contexts, another use is common. When we speak of someone 'lacking motivation', we don't mean that they are unaware of a rationale for pursuing the relevant course of action. We are motivated to perform an action, in the relevant sense, if we feel like doing it. Consider, e.g., Billy, who, at eighteen years old, is floundering scholastically. He knows, having heard it many times, that his mother "didn't get to be a partner at Skadden Arps by sleeping

through classes, smoking weed, and half-assing [her] homework”. He wishes to have her life as an adult but simply cannot get himself to do the things he knows are necessary. He doesn’t feel like doing then. He lacks motivation sufficient to overcome his adolescent torpor. Nor can he muster the self-command required to overcome his apathy—a topic we will return to below.

Motivation, in this sense, is not an all or nothing matter. Competitive athletes are in general motivated to win. But they famously use even remotely diminishing comments made by their opponents as *motivation*. Such comments neither give them a new goal nor create motivation ex nihilo. Rather ‘bulletin board material’ gives them something to focus on that will drive them to pursue a goal they already (know they) have with greater intensity.

The source-question, recall, is whether passion and reason constitute distinct sources of motivation of human action. I hold that when an agent acts on an orectic desire, the source of the motivation for performing it is the passions. She does what she feels like doing. Suppose I am Φ -ing, where my desire to Φ is orectic. You ask: “Why are you Φ -ing?”. I say: “Because p.” There are various sorts of possible substitution instances for p: Cheetos taste good. My kids will become more coordinated. It would be so cool! My desire’s being orectic entails that I feel like eating the Cheetos/enrolling my kids in the program/burying my belt buckle. The pleasure I feel in the contemplation of performing the relevant action spurs me to act. It is an efficient cause of my action. This doesn’t mean that my *goal* in performing it is necessarily to feel pleasure, i.e., to do something that I will take pleasure in doing. Nor does it mean my *reason* for doing it is necessarily that the outcome will please me. My reason for enrolling my daughters is that it will improve their hand-eye coordination. Improving

their hand-eye coordination is the *rational cause* my enrolling them.²³ But the pleasure I feel in anticipation of achieving the results prompts me to act. The drive to do it is channeled from the pleasure I feel at the idea of doing it.

What, then, of anorectic desire?

III. Anorectic Desire

What are we saying about someone when we explain their actions by appealing to something that they want to do? My point in this essay is that there are two species of desires, two sorts of states appeal to which shed (different sorts of) light on the motivational provenance of an action. This difference is not one of content but of form. The sort we have considered so far, orectic desire, is the product of the passions, i.e., the pleasure-seeking part of the human psyche. Now we will consider anorectic desires, the product of reason.

We have said that orectic desires are characterized in part by a distinctive sort of uncertainty. A statement of what one wants is vulnerable to the failure to please of the stated object of desire. I am hungry. Do I want the biryani or the palak? To know this, I use my imagination. But my imagination is not an infallible guide to my actual reactions. Orectic desires are also characterized by their motivational power. When one acts on the relevant desire, one is doing what one feels like doing. The form of desire is linked to its supplying motivation, not in the sense that our end is to please ourselves,

²³ See Marcus 2012 for more on the idea of a rational cause.

but in the sense that *feeling like doing it* is itself the pleasurable contemplation of the idea of doing it.²⁴

Anorectic desires have thus far only been identified negatively: they are neither orectic desires, instrumental desires, nor realizer desires. Now consider the following example. Suppose you learn that I am donating fifty-thousand dollars to Doctors Without Borders. “Why do you want to give so much money to them?”, you ask. I cite the good work they do and the way their efforts are limited by inadequate funding. Now suppose soon after I make the donation, I find myself wishing that I had the money back: Rick Owens has just released an irresistible, *very* limited-edition alligator leather jacket. I freely admit to you now that I regret my decision. But where do we locate the error?

If what was at issue was an orectic desire, the fact that the ensuing action made me miserable would reflect a failure of self-knowledge at the time of action. But that need not be so in this case. I said that I wanted to give the 50000 to DWB and doing so did not please me. This does not prove that I didn’t really want to give the money to DWB. Whether or not it shows this depends on whether my motivation in making the donation was derived from my pleasure in contemplating it. It may not have been. I might simply have made a determination of what would be good to do. If you were to

²⁴ This approach might also suggest the beginning of an answer to the question posed by Tamar Shapiro in her (2014), the question of “how we can be passive in relation to our own self-movement” (149). Orectic desires are passive; but because they are a function of what pleases us, we identify with the actions to which they give rise.

say: “I guess you didn’t really want to give DWB the money after all,” I might honestly reply that my later regret does not reflect a failure to identify what I wanted. I may simply regret that I went with my judgment of the good rather than my (orectic) desire.

To be sure, failures of self-knowledge are certainly possible in cases where someone professes (what we are calling) an anorectic desire. It is always possible that I am self-deceived about my motives. And sometimes the underlying desire is not quite determinate, or it is determinate but hard to articulate, or hard to bring to mind because it is painful to do so. More generally, any factor that can interfere with the authoritative self-ascription of belief can also interfere with the authoritative self-ascription of an anorectic desire. Transparency holds of the latter in the same way as it holds of the former. My knowledge of what I (anorectically) want is a by-product of my determination that it is to be done.

Some hold theories of desire according to which they are beliefs about the good.²⁵ There is something to this approach, at least as it pertains to anorectic desires. But since I have put to one side the state-question, I will register my limited agreement with this view by saying that the motivation provided by an anorectic desire has its source simply in the judgment that a certain action is to-be-performed. This leaves open whether such judgments are identical to the relevant desires. The crucial point in what remains is that the source of actions motivated by anorectic desire is reason and not passion. Whereas some of our actions are motivated by the pleasure in contemplating their completion, others are motivated simply by the judgment that they should be

²⁵ See, e.g., Humberstone 1987, Little 1997, McNaughton 1998, and Gregory 2018.

performed (perhaps, to keep the distinctness possibility alive, by generating the anorectic desire to perform that action). Note that this does not exclude my taking pleasure in the thought of the result. Perhaps I am delighted at the thought of doctors equipped with the latest medical technology. The point is rather that such pleasure is not an efficient cause of an action motivated by anorectic desire. It's not what prompts me to make the donation.

It must be acknowledged, however, that anorectic motivation is puzzling in a way that orectic motivation is not. There is nothing mysterious about the idea that pleasure can motivate. The pleasure I take in imagining my daughters' improved hand-eye coordination spurs me to do what I can to improve it. But what, if not pleasure, motivates me to act on an anorectic desire?

To answer that question, I must first bring out into the open an assumption I've made in the foregoing discussion. It is now widely (though not universally) accepted that the way citing a desire (of whatever sort) helps to explain an action is by articulating how the agent herself conceived of things such that there was something worthwhile about doing it. Something about the object of desire draws the agent, qua agent, in. It draws the agent in rationally: to act on the desire is to perform the action in light of some feature of the action that rendered it, in the eyes of the agent, worth doing. This is the Guise of the Good Thesis: whatever is desired is desired under the guise of the good.²⁶

²⁶ See the essays in Tenenbaum 2010 for discussion.

It might be wondered whether a fair adjudication of the dispute between Humeans and Kantians is possible under the scope of this assumption, which could be interpreted as stating that our motive in acting must somehow always be derived from reason. But the Thesis is consistent with either answer to the source-question. One might answer ‘no’—i.e., say that the source of all actions is the passions—but still maintain that the way orectic desires supply motivation for action is through the experience of finding the action worthy of being performed, an experience that makes one feel like performing it. We do what we feel like doing, but always under the guise of the good. This also leaves open the possible sorts of explanations of *why* we feel like doing it. Presumably, we might feel like doing it for any number of reasons: because it serves our own interests or the interests of those we love or strangers, or for that matter, no one’s interests. To answer ‘yes’—i.e., to say that some of our actions are motivated by reason—is to give metaphysical weight to the ordinary phrase ‘doing what one doesn’t feel like doing’.

According to the Guise of the Good Thesis, to desire is for a course of action to appear worth pursuing. But this does not exhaust the character of orectic desire, as Talbot Brewer emphasizes (using ‘desire’ where I use ‘orectic desire’):

... [D]esires are best understood as consisting not just partly but wholly in appearances of reasons or values. It must be noted, however, that not just any such appearance will constitute a desire. It is an article of common sense that we sometimes decide that we have good reason to do something, and proceed to do it, even though we have no desire whatsoever to do it... Desires are appearances with respect to which we

are in some significant measure passive. Their occurrence is not wholly dependent upon our active efforts to bring into view the appearances of goodness in which they consist, and their persistence and vividness does not depend entirely on our deliberate efforts to discern the putative goods they call to our attention.²⁷

I would add to this an explanation of “persistence” and “vividness” in terms of feeling. The motivation for pursuing what we desire (in the orectic sense) is derived from the pleasure we feel at the prospect of performing the action. But we cannot complete this picture without adding another element to our account: the will. In the next section, I will extend the foregoing analysis of the orectic-anorectic distinction by considering their differing relations to the will.

IV. Reason, Passion, and The Will

Warren Quinn, like Brewer, holds that orectic desire (which he also calls simply ‘desire’) does not consist simply in the positive evaluation of an option. He explains the additional feature by reference to the will:

I am not saying, however, that desire is in general nothing more than positive evaluation. In some cases we would not speak of desire if the implicit positive evaluation did not provoke or were not accompanied by

²⁷ Brewer 2009, 34.

some kind of appetite that prods the will toward the object for the good that it seems to offer....[continued in the footnote] This kind of motivating state--one that has influence *on* the will--must be distinguished from dispositive states of the will, forms of executive rationality (steadfastness, courage, prudence, and the like) or irrationality (distraction, cowardice, weakness, and the like) that enable or disable the will in its natural pursuit of the best course of action. On my anti-Humean conception...much rational human action comes about *without* the influence of motivational pushes and pulls. I see that it is a convenient time to get needed service for my car and I simply proceed to do it. All that is required is the perception of overall advantage (the safety and comfort of having a well-running car and the convenience of present service) and a reasonable degree of executive rationality. In such a case we may also speak of my desire for the advantage, but this desire is nothing more than my will's healthy recognition of its availability. Such a desire is not something the will *takes account of* in determining a rational choice. ²⁸

Quinn's understanding of the relation between passion, reason, and the will is instructive. What Quinn calls "motivational pulls and pushes" is what I call *feeling like doing it* (or not). My orrectic desires prod me in one direction or another. But my

²⁸ Quinn 1995, 168-169, fn 32.

anorectic desires do not prod me at all, which is to say, they do not prod my will. We should say rather such desires *are* my will.²⁹

Moran, recall, links the transparency of belief to its being an exercise of the person's agency. Orectic desires are passive and so, as we saw, cannot be known simply by looking 'outwards', in the way that one might say what one believes on the basis of considering of what's true. (Again: they also cannot be known by looking 'inward' in the way that one looks 'inward' to answer the question: "how bad is your pain on a scale of one to ten?"). Because they are passive, they are not sustained by our endorsement of what they portray as appealing. To have such a desire is to find oneself drawn, say, to smoke a cigarette. It is, after all, deeply satisfying to draw the smoke into one's lungs, the nicotine buzz is a nice little high, and there is no better way to top off a big dinner. But I quit and can't risk a relapse. And so I resist the desire, which persists without my endorsement. Orectic desire is thus, as Quinn says above, "the kind of motivating state...that has influence *on* the will." Orectic desires, in virtue of their connection to pleasure, "prods the will toward the object for the good that it seems to offer". To have the desire is to feel like performing the action. The more we feel like it—the stronger the desire is—the harder it is *not* to do it.

An anorectic desire, because it is active, is nothing but our endorsement. Or, to abstract from the question of state-distinctness, the motivation provided by an anorectic desire is nothing but the motivation provided by our endorsement. The endorsement in question is the judgment that a certain course of action is to-be-done. The judgment is

²⁹ Cf., Schueler 1995, 33 and Brewer 2009 35.

identical to or is the source of the desire. In the ordinary case, to make the judgment is thereupon (perhaps because of the generation of a distinct desire-state) to possess the motivation. And were I to abandon the judgment, I would cease to possess the motivation. To change my mind is for the action to cease to be my anorectic desire, to cease to be my will.

This pertains to a point Schueler makes: whereas (to use my terminology) a stronger orectic desire *outweighs* a (weaker) competing orectic desire, an anorectic desire *overrides* a competing orectic desire.³⁰ To say that it overrides rather than outweighs is to say that, from the point of view of the relevant judgment of to-be-done-ness, the weight of the desire is irrelevant. When I act on an orectic desire, I am giving myself over to the pursuit of an end that I feel like pursuing (prompted by the pleasure I derive from the contemplation of its completion). To have a conflicting anorectic desire is to judge that an incompatible course of action should be pursued instead regardless of how much I feel like doing it. Failure to act on an orectic desire where one follows instead a different orectic desire reflects the weakness of the former desire in comparison to the latter. Failure to act on an orectic desire where one follows instead one's judgment of what to do does not necessarily reveal anything about the strength of the orectic desire. It shows only the strength of one's will. An anorectic desire is a judgment of what one's will should be, one that in the ideal case thereby becomes one's will. Hence the failure to act on one's judgment of to-be-done-ness shows *weakness of the will*. And success in overcoming temptation shows *will power*.

³⁰ Schueler 1985, 33.

Kant holds that “the will is nothing other than practical reason.”³¹ A full account and defense of this claim is not possible here. Nor, for that matter, is this paper an attempt to interpret or defend the historical figure. But Kant’s remark is (unsurprisingly) suggestive of the framework in which we can best make sense of anorectic desires as states of the will. The basic thought is that reason, in its practical orientation, is our ability to determine what to do, i.e., to answer the question “what should I do?”. And, furthermore, our answer to this question, in paradigmatic cases, just *is* a state of the will. In other words, my answer to the question of what I should do is neither simply a belief that I ought to Φ , nor a belief about that I will Φ , but is at once both a judgment and, in paradigmatic cases, an action. Aristotle puts this by saying that practical reasoning concludes in action, a doctrine that has many contemporary defenders.³² My practical reasoning culminates in a practical judgment—an exercise of a cognitive power—to the effect that Φ -ing is to be done, and that judgment *is* the agent’s Φ -ing, assuming the time to act is at hand, the world cooperates, there is no defect in the will, and so forth.³³

But if this framework is required to make sense of anorectic motivation, then it seems the source- and state-questions are not separable after all. The state question is whether there are states that are at once conative and cognitive. And no slogan

³¹ Kant 1787, 4:412.

³² See, e.g., Anscombe 2000, Davidson 1980, Rödl 2007, Tenenbaum 2007, Thompson 2008, McDowell 2010, and Fix 2018.

³³ Cf., Fix 2018, 28.

encapsulates an affirmative answer better than ‘action is the conclusion of practical reasoning’. But we can yet tease apart the two issues. Practical reasoning, we can say, concludes in a judgment that provides motivation to act. In some cases, this motivation stems simply from our own endorsement of the action as what is to be done. That is, when our motivation for performing an action is an anorectic desire, we are motivated to perform the action simply because it is what we should do (or so we judge). Whatever effort is required to do it is sustained by this determination, i.e., by the will. Thus, the source of the motivation provided by anorectic desire is practical reason itself.

It will be no doubt be objected here that I’ve made things easy on myself by discussing only cases in which there is a conflict between orectic and anorectic desires. What of cases in which someone orectically desires to do what they also judge is to be done? This, at least on an Aristotlean view, is the scenario that typifies the life of the fully virtuous person: the phronomos. The phronomos is pleased at the prospect of comforting a friend instead of going to the movies.³⁴ Where, then, does the motivation to provide her action come from: passion or reason?

The answer is ‘passion’. The phronomos is motivated by the happy prospect of consoling a friend in need. Unlike the enkratic agent, the phronomos does not need will power to overcome her orectic desire to see the movie. But this answer is misleading for at least two reasons. First, her will stands ready to pick up any motivational slack left by her affections (albeit slack that, since she is a phronomos, will never be left). Second and more importantly, to say that she is motivated by passion rather than reason might

³⁴ See McDowell 1998, essays two and three, and Hursthouse 2006.

wrongly suggest that her affective make-up is not itself an aspect of her practical rationality. It is. The phronimos arrives at her affective dispositions only after passing through an enkratic phase, one in which her passions are not yet aligned with reason. Will power is, in other words, required to achieve a state in which one can act as one should without relying on will power. The passions, then, themselves ideally have a rational shape: they are structured by an understanding of how to act and so motivate one to do what one should. And the passions of the phronimos are also the product of her acting on anorectic desires. But still, insofar as our concern is the structure of human motivation—specifically, the source-question—we distinguish between actions that stem from the passions and those that stem (directly) from the will itself, i.e., from reason. Someone whose passions are not fully rational can still do what they should, but doing so requires motivation provided by reason.

Conclusion

I am under no illusion that this discussion amounts to an impregnable case for a (broadly) Kantian answer to the source-question. I do hope, first, to have shown that the source-question can be assessed independently of the much-more-frequently-debated state-question, a fact that is striking insofar as the interest in the latter is derived chiefly from the former. Second, the differing epistemology of orectic and anorectic desires is itself *prima facie* evidence for their being separate species of desire (in the broad sense). Third, their epistemological differences are neatly explained by an independently plausible conception of their differing relations to the will. The resultant picture supports the ‘yes’ answer to the source-question.

Among the many issues that will have to be addressed going forward is this one: We can be wrong about what we desire. No one contests that. But if my account is correct, we can be wrong about what we want (oretically) in a way that is generally *not* acknowledged: viz., by failing to know what would please one. This suggests a complication for a widely held view of the relation between desire and action. On that picture, common to Kantians and Humeans alike, if I am Φ -ing intentionally I must want to Φ in the broad sense of ‘want’. But what about when I order the biryani, only to find out later that, in fact, I didn’t want it—a case, in other words, where I misidentify what would please me? I didn’t order it because I wanted it; after all, I didn’t want it. In this scenario, someone Φ s intentionally without wanting to Φ even in the broad sense. This strikes me not as a bullet to be bitten or dodged, but as a potentially fruitful vantage point from which to reexamine the way desires influence us. Paradigmatically, in Φ -ing one follows through on a desire to Φ . But that is because in the paradigmatic case, one fully occupies the point of view of a motivating desire. This point of view is characterized, in the orectic case, by finding it pleasurable in prospect to do something and thereby to be motivated to do it. Someone who does not have this sort of knowledge of their orectic desire (as in the case under discussion) is not acting on it; their desire does not rationally explain their behavior in the ordinary sense. An analogous point holds of our beliefs and, by extension, our anorectic desires. If one does not have the right sort of knowledge of one’s belief that p—if one is, for example, alienated from the belief—it cannot rationalize one’s action, though of course it might influence our

behavior in other ways.³⁵ A desire (of whatever sort) rationally explains action only if it is fully integrated into the agents' self-conscious conception of the world upon which she acts.³⁶

³⁵ See Marcus and Schwenkler (2020) for discussion of this phenomenon.

³⁶ Thanks to Keren Gorodeisky, Arata Hamawaki, Doug Lavin, Ram Neta, and an anonymous referee at this journal for helpful comments and discussion.

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