

~~Forthcoming in~~ Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (eds.), *Weakness of Will and Varieties of Irrationality*, Oxford University Press.

Accidie, Evaluation, and Motivation

Sergio Tenenbaum

Department of Philosophy

University of Toronto

E-mail: sergio.tenenbaum@utoronto.ca

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Accidie seems to be a phenomenon in which evaluation and motivation go completely apart; someone who suffers from *accidie* supposedly still accepts that various things are good or valuable, but is not motivated to pursue any of them. This kind of phenomenon seems to be devastating for theories of practical reason that aim to maintain a tight connection between motivation and evaluation, and in particular, for any theory according to which judging something to be good or valuable necessarily gives rise to a corresponding desire in the agent.¹ In this paper, I will look into what I call “scholastic views” of practical reason, views that postulate a quite strong connection between motivation and evaluation; I will actually focus on an “extreme” version of the view; a view according to which motivation and evaluation are somehow *identified*. I will argue that phenomena such as *accidie* do not pose a threat even to extreme versions of the scholastic view. I will argue that these versions of a scholastic view can not only account for the phenomenon, but they might help us understand in which ways *accidie* may be a form of irrationality. If all this is correct, there is no reason to think that such phenomena present a threat to the general view that motivational states such as desires always aim at the good or to the view that we only desire *sub specie boni*.

1. The Scholastic View

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant discusses what he calls the ‘old formula of the schools’:²

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¹ The *locus classicus* of this kind of criticism of theories according to which “only the good attracts” is Michael Stocker’s “Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology”, *Journal of Philosophy* 1979, pp. 738-753.

² I have adapted the formulation of the “old formula of the schools” which is found in Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. by L. W. Beck; New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 61. Beck cites Wolff and Baumgarten as Kant’s sources for the formula.

We desire what we conceive to be good; we avoid what we conceive to be bad.³

I will call any view that accepts some version of the ‘old formula of the schools’ a ‘scholastic view’, but I will be mostly concerned with a particular strong version of the scholastic view. In this section, I will present a brief overview of the motivations for accepting a scholastic view. I’ll start with relatively weak versions of the scholastic view, and then work up the reasons to accept a stronger version.

Let us start with the following ‘minimal’ scholastic claim:

(S1) If α desires X, then α conceives X to be good.

If one thinks that the old formula of the school should also be understood as a biconditional, when also accepts the converse of (S1):

(S2) If α conceives X to be good, then α desires X.

We can introduce (S3), the conjunction of the two conditionals:

(S3) α desires X if and only if α conceives X to be good.

(S3) should be distinguished from the stronger claim that desiring X and conceiving X to be good are just one psychological state:

³ The latin phrase that Kant uses is “*Nihil appetimus, nisi sub ratione boni; nihil aversamus nisi sub ratione mali.*” To avoid too many awkward constructions, I will often speak only of pursuing good, instead of pursuing good and avoiding evil.

(S4) To desire X is to conceive X to be good.

We'll often refer to the agent's desires as pertaining to his "motivation", and the agent's conceiving of various things to be good as pertaining to his "evaluation". (S1) -(S4) are various theses regarding how motivation and evaluation are connected. The most extreme claim, (S4), takes the difference between 'evaluation' and 'motivation' to be what Descartes would have called a "distinction of reason".

Evaluation fully determines motivation and vice-versa. (S3) doesn't quite make that claim. If (S3) is true, then, indeed, if an agent positively evaluates X, then the agent must be motivated to do X, and vice-versa.

But (S3) allows for significant gaps between evaluation and motivation. (S3) does not rule out the possibility that an agent will be strongly motivated to do something that she finds to be only slightly valuable, or that the agent is weakly motivated to do something that she finds immensely valuable. All these possibilities are ruled out by (S4). I will start by looking into the reasons for accepting (S1). I will then try to show that the reasons that motivate accepting (S1) also provide a good case for accepting (S4), and thus *a fortiori*, (S2) and (S3).⁴ My aim here is not to provide a conclusive argument for a scholastic view, but to present it as an attractive option in the field. Indeed, I think much of the resistance to scholastic views come from cases in which it seems that one must concede that evaluation and motivation have come apart. Since *accidie* seems to be a case in which we have an agent finding things valuable but having *no* motivation to pursue them, and thus to exemplify a particularly extreme version of this kind of phenomenon, if we can show that scholastic views can explain this kind of phenomenon, we will have taken a major step in establishing the cogency of scholastic views.⁵

⁴ For an independent argument in favour of a claim roughly equivalent to (S2), see Steven Aronovich, "Goals, Wishes, and Reasons for Action" in Sergio Tenenbaum (ed.), *New Perspectives in Philosophy: Moral Psychology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, forthcoming).

⁵ Michael Smith, for instance, takes the possibility of *accidie* to pose a major obstacle to John McDowell's account of the virtuous agent. See his *The Moral Problem*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, section 4.7. What seems to be a problem there is exactly the "scholastic" character of the view (the claim that the evaluation of the agent can't leave her unmoved). See McDowell's "Virtue and Reason", in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998. *Akrasia* seems to be another serious stumbling block for scholastic views. In "The Judgement of a Weak Will" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, December 1999, pp. 875-911, I argue that scholastic views can provide better accounts of *akrasia* than non-scholastic views. I look into other kinds of recalcitrant phenomena in "Desire and the Good" in Sergio Tenenbaum (ed.), *New Perspectives in Philosophy: Moral Psychology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, forthcoming). Some of the points made in the following paragraphs are also made in these papers.

However, before we look into the reasons for accepting any of the above claims, it might be worth saying a few words about the notion of desire in question. Many philosophers have distinguished between two senses of “desire”, a broader sense, which is supposed to include any pro-attitude towards an object, and a narrower sense of “desire”, which is often accompanied by a more vivid phenomenology. When one says, for instance: “I don’t have any desire to go out in the rain and vote, but I have to”, one would be using “desire” in the second sense.⁶ “Desire” here is meant in the broader sense. However the scholastic view, as I understand it, is interested in the notion of desire only insofar as it does work in deliberations⁷ or intentional explanations.⁸

Many philosophers have argued for the claim that a desire must have an intelligible object of pursuit.⁹ To use Anscombe’s example, if someone wakes up with an inexplicable impulse to put all her green books on the roof, it would seem at best misleading to consider putting all her books on the roof as something she wants. And one could expect that such impulse would not enter her deliberations unless she could, at some stage, see *a point* in moving the books to this location.¹⁰ Moreover if she did proceed to put books on top of the roof, and someone were to ask her why she was doing this, it would seem that no proper intentional explanation would be given if the agent would respond by saying: “I simply wanted to put the green books on the roof” or “for no particular reason”. As Anscombe puts it:

If someone hunted down all the green books in his house and spread them carefully on the roof, and gave one of these answers to the question ‘Why?’ his words would be unintelligible unless as

⁶ See Fred Schueler, *Desire* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995). For similar points see also Thomas Scanlon, *What we Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, esp. Part I, and Thomas Nagel, *Possibility of Altruism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

⁷ This does not mean that the deliberations must be *about* the desire, rather than its content. See Michael Smith and Philip Pettit, “Backgrounding Desire” *Philosophical Review*, 1990, pp. 565-592.

⁸ For sake simplicity, I will talk mostly about intentional explanations, and leave deliberation aside. All I say, however, should also apply to deliberation.

⁹ See, for instance, J. Raz, “The Moral Point of View” in J. B. Schneewind (ed.), *Reason, Ethics and Society*, Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 70ff, my own “The Judgement of a Weak Will”, and, to some extent, Warren Quinn in “Putting Rationality in Its Place” in his *Morality and Action* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe’s claim that one can want an object only under a desirability characterization. See her *Intention*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 70-74.

¹⁰ Of course, *the fact that she has that impulse* might enter her deliberations, since it can be, for instance, something bothersome and that she would like to get rid of.

joking and mystification. They would be unintelligible, not because one did not know [sic] what *they* meant, but because one could not make out what the man meant by saying them.¹¹

Let us now make a first attempt at trying to turn these remarks into an argument for the scholastic view. In a proper intentional explanation, the agent (or a third person) will be able to explain the point of engaging in such an activity; in other words, he will be able to explain what good does he see in the pursuit of this activity. On this view, a desire for an object as it typically appears in, for instance, an intentional explanation in the form of a belief-desire explanation, must show what the agent found attractive in the choice of this action. But if the desire is not for something that one can intelligibly conceive to be good, or if it is not for something that the *agent* conceives to be good, we would not know what point could the agent see in such an action, and we would therefore not have made the agent intelligible agent. We would be left in this case, incapable of, to use Anscombe's words, "understanding the man".¹² Thus, we come to the conclusion that desire, insofar as it has role to play in deliberations and intentional explanations, must involve a positive evaluation of its object, or, it must conceive it to be good.

If this reasoning is sound, it establishes (S1), but it certainly does not establish (S4). All that this shows is that in explaining the agent's behaviour in this particular manner, one needs to appeal to what the agent found good in the end she was pursuing; we need to provide what Anscombe calls a "desirability characterization". But it does not show that an evaluation of the agent might leave her completely unmoved, let alone that motivational and evaluative elements in the agent's psychology have to be simply identified.

The reasons to accept (S4) will be clearer if we look into an objection to (S1), and see how a defender of (S1) can respond to this kind of objection. Suppose one grants that one finds somewhat awkward that an agent gives the answer above when asked "why are you putting the books on the roof?". However, the objection goes, this says more about how we expect agents to behave than about the nature

¹¹ *Intention*, pp. 26-27.

¹² *Intention*, p. 27.

of intentional explanations. It is true that agents rarely have an “unmotivated” or basic desire¹³ to put books on rooftops, and it would thus come as a surprise that an agent is so motivated. But, suppose we found no other source of motivation for the agent’s actions. We would surely want to say that the impulse was what brought the action about. And that would mean that in this case the impulse does explain the action. If one is attached to a scholastic view, one might be tempted to insist that in this case the impulse is not a desire or that the explanation is not properly speaking an explanation, but this might now seem completely *ad hoc*. Is there any essential difference between an explanation that mentions an unmotivated or basic desire that has this kind of odd content, and one that mentions an unmotivated desire that has an ‘intelligible content’? Would there be any reason not to see the desires of the ‘odd’ agent as working in any way differently from the desires of the ‘normal’ agent?

If the defender of (S1) is going to answer the above questions affirmatively, she must appeal to a conception of intentional explanation that can make sense of treating these cases differently. An attractive possibility is to appeal to a broadly “Davidsonian” conception of intentional explanations, a conception according to which, intentional explanations are guided by what Davidson calls “the constitutive ideal of rationality”.¹⁴ One way to understand this idea is that intentional explanations aim to display the agent’s behaviour as aspiring to conform to the norms and ideals of rationality.¹⁵ Given that we are imperfectly rational beings, intentional explanations will not always make agents fully *rational*, but they should make them at least *intelligible*;¹⁶ we should at least be capable of seeing how the agent could have *taken* this kind of behaviour to be rationally warranted. Putative “desires” whose objects cannot be understood to be intelligible objects of pursuit (and thus could not be conceived as good) will not be able to throw any light on how the behaviour was intelligible, and explanations that cite such “desires” would thus not serve the same explanatory aims as intentional explanations do.

¹³ I am using this expression in Thomas Nagel’s sense. See his *The Possibility of Altruism*.

¹⁴ See “Mental Events” in *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

¹⁵ Cf. John McDowell’s claim that “the concepts of propositional attitudes have their proper home in explanations of a special sort: explanations in which things are made intelligible by being revealed to be, or to approximate to being, as they rationally ought to be.” In “Functionalism and Anomalous Monism” in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

¹⁶ I put the point in this way, partly because I think that this Davidsonian picture is not far from Anscombe’s understanding of intentional explanations in *Intention*.

This way of understanding a commitment to (S1) will make it dependent on accepting this broadly Davidsonian conception of intentional explanations. I will not try to defend this conception here.¹⁷ What matters to us is that if we accept (S1) on those grounds, it will be plausible to accept (S4) on the same grounds. For suppose there is a gap between motivation and evaluation. Suppose we find that there is an element of brute motivation (or lack thereof) in desire that can work to some extent independently of the agent's evaluations, independently of how the agent conceives or judges things to be good. Since this element would not help to make the behaviour intelligible, it would be extraneous to the aims of intentional explanations. Insofar as these elements could cause the agent's body to move they would be better conceived as *interfering* with activity that could be the subject of intentional explanations; mentioning those causal influences would be better understood as an explanation for the lack of availability of a proper intentional explanation. Assimilating unintelligible impulses into intentional explanations would be a mistake akin to assimilating body ticks, jerks, and paralyses to those explanations;¹⁸ the mental origin of the behaviour would not contribute any further to its intelligibility.¹⁹ Since, on this view, the *point* of intentional explanation is to show how an action appeared reasonable to an agent, it will be difficult to find room there for brute motivation.²⁰

Of course, given that human agents are imperfectly rational, we must make room for the possibility that the behaviour explained would be irrational. But there is no reason to think that this should proceed by finding some kind of brute motivation in the agent. Theoretical irrationality is generally not understood in terms of brute dispositions, but rather in terms of conflict of judgments, or

¹⁷ See John McDowell, 'Functionalism and Anomalous Monism', and Jennifer Hornsby, *Simple-Mindedness*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998, for some arguments for similar views.

¹⁸ However, those impulses can give rise to rather complex behaviour (for instance, in those who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorders), and it would be implausible to claim that no instances of such behaviour admit of intentional explanation. I try to show that a scholastic view can allow for some explanations of this kind of behaviour to count as intentional explanations in my 'Desire and the Good'.

¹⁹ Anscombe gives example of other mental causes that do not contribute to making behaviour intelligible in the same way. See *Intention*, pp. 15-16.

²⁰ To say that it is 'difficult' does not mean that it is impossible. One might try to find a way to accommodate this possibility within the Davidsonian framework (perhaps by appealing to a notion of 'partial intelligibility). But part of the point of this paper is to argue that there is no need to take this route since apparent counter-examples to (S4) can be explained without abandoning a scholastic view.

incoherent conceptions, or in the improper formation of judgments, etc. There is no reason to think that the same should not be true of practical reason.

However if irrationality resists these kind of explanations, we might need to revise this understanding of irrationality, and if it puts too much pressure into the scholastic view, it might force us to abandon this view. Indeed cases of irrationality often appears to be cases in which postulating a gap between motivation and evaluation is the only way to account for the phenomenon. Moreover the Davidsean framework seems particularly unsuited to accommodate explanations of purported cases of irrationality, given that it understands intentional explanations as essentially rationalizing explanations. Thus showing how a scholastic view can accommodate *accidie* and related phenomena, as well as the possibility of irrationality in these cases, is indispensable for establishing the plausibility of this kind of view.

2. The Problem with *Accidie*

A scholastic view seems to be at its best when dealing with reasonable persons engaging in normal behaviour under calm and controlled conditions. However, problems seem to abound when we look at various human failings and unfortunate circumstances. Evil, weakness of the will, and dejection, just to cite a few examples, seem to threaten the equation of desiring and conceiving something to be good. In a famous paper, Michael Stocker argued that looking at these kinds of phenomena should do away with any temptation to identify motivation and evaluation. According to Stocker, *accidie* and other similar cases of ‘lack of will’, in particular, cannot be accounted in terms of shifts in one’s conception of the good:

Through *accidie*, (...), through general apathy, through despair (...), and so on, one may feel less and less motivated to seek what is good. One’s lessened desire need not signal, much less be the product of, the fact that, or one’s belief that, there is less good to be obtained or produced (...) Indeed, a frequent added defect of being ins such ‘depressions’ is that one sees all good to be won or saved and one lacks the will, interest, desire or strength.²¹

²¹ ‘Desiring the Bad’, p. 744.

‘Good’ is said in many ways, and one could try to argue here that the objection Stocker is raising is based on confusing a formal notion of good employed in the scholastic view, a notion of the good that does not commit us to any particular answer to the question ‘what is good?’, and a more substantive notion of good. Suppose someone says ‘I want to be bad’ when she is about to engage in morally dubious behaviour. This kind of assertion need not be seen as a counter-example to the scholastic view, as an expression of the agent’s lack of interest in the pursuit of any good. An agent who makes such a statement is claiming that she wants that which is (allegedly?) morally bad, not what is bad *simpliciter*. The scholastic view can say in this case that the agent conceives that which she considers to be morally bad as good.

However one cannot account for the dejected agent in the same way. Indeed, Stocker’s apt description of the dejected person seems to pose a particularly difficult challenge. The person in a state of *accidie* is not rejecting a particular conception of the good in favour of other, perhaps socially devious, goods. The dejected person seems to be simply lacking in the will to do *anything* she finds good or valuable, however generously we conceive of goodness or value; she seems to be unmotivated to act *from any conception of the good*. It would seem indeed odd to come to the conclusion that in some sense, however attenuated, she conceives inaction to be good, and thus it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that there is a purely motivational element in intentional action here that is independent of evaluative considerations.

It is worth putting forth the following tentative characterization of the dejected agent, or the agent who suffers from *accidie*. We can say that the dejected agent is an agent who, for some period of time, is not motivated to do anything in particular, or someone who has very little motivation to pursue ends that she herself would recognize she would pursue if she were not in a ‘dejected state’. However, she also denies (sincerely) that she no longer understands the value or importance of the things she no longer pursues, and she does think that it is in her power (at least in some sense) to pursue these things, and she does not think that she is pursuing anything of greater importance at the moment. Moreover we have no

reasons, or at least no *prima-facie* reasons,²² to think that her self-description is systematically mistaken. Persons in a state of *accidie*, under this description, might range from the “average” person who at times might lack the motivation to get out of bed, or engage in meaningful activities, to some cases of clinical depression.²³ If this is an apt description of the dejected person, it seems hard to deny that he conceives, for instance, his own health to be good, but just does not desire to pursue it.

We can present this challenge to the scholastic view as follows: the scholastic view assumes that our judgments of the good will issue in action without any interference from any purely motivational sources. *Accidie* presents a rather stark counter-example to this assumption; one’s motivation to pursue the good in this case is simply absent. Under a simplistic understanding of the scholastic view, the objection is indeed devastating. Suppose the scholastic view takes each desire of the agent to be something that she judges to be good, and deliberation consists in “adding up” the good to be found in each of the options open to the agent. Then a scholastic view could only account for *accidie* in terms of the agent finding that there is more good in “staying put” than in doing anything else. This is certainly not a very plausible account of the phenomenon. However, I will try to show that a more sophisticated version of the scholastic view will be able to account for the phenomenon in a quite different manner. In particular, instead of trying to show how the dejected agent finds some good in staying put that other agents don’t, or finds some kinds of “disvalue” in acting, I will argue what is distinctive in *accidie* is how the agent in a state moves from particular desires to a general conception of the good. My claim is that a scholastic view can account for *accidie* by understanding the agent in this state to be putting certain constraints on the formation of a general conception of the good. Insofar as *accidie* is irrational, its irrationality should be accounted for in terms of a judgment of legitimacy of these constraints in ours and the agents’ eyes.

²² Of course, we might end up having theoretical reasons to conclude that her self-description is mistaken.

²³ Certainly not all cases of clinical depression can be described in this manner or pose any particular threat to scholastic views. In many cases, patients simply “don’t care” about anything in such a way that it would be hard to say that they still value anything. See DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) entry on Major Depressive Disorders.

I want to argue that a certain version of the scholastic view can account for *accidie* in this way. A central feature of this view is that desires are “appearances of the good” from certain evaluative perspectives. Whether or not one should pursue an object that appears to be good in a certain way will depend in part on whether and how one thinks that the relevant evaluative perspective should be incorporated in one’s general conception of the good, and in one’s unconditional judgment of the good. This will in turn depend on whether one holds that a certain relation, which I call a relation of “conditioning” obtains between certain states -of-affairs and the evaluative perspective in question, and whether one believes that these states-of-affairs obtain.. My claim is that *accidie* can be understood as accepting a relation of conditioning of this kind and a belief to the effect that the condition does not obtain. The rationality of *accidie* would then be a function of the rationality of accepting the relation and forming the belief in question.

3. Appearances of the Good and Evaluative Perspectives

Since a scholastic view claims that we desire only what we conceive to be good, a natural way to start looking into our favoured version of the scholastic view is to spell out how it understands the ‘good’. As we suggested above, the notion of the good employed by such a plausible scholastic view is a quite general notion. Attempts to incorporate a rather substantive notion of the good will typically render the scholastic view wholly implausible. For example, if we take ‘good’ to stand for ‘morally good’, we will be committed to the insanely optimistic claim that we only want what we regard to be morally good. Reading it as “aesthetic good” or “gastronomic good” can have only worse results. So the good here is to be understood as a formal notion. Saying that desire aims at the good is akin to saying that the desire presents to us the object as worth pursuing, as having a point, and saying this does not rule out the possibility that there might a number of irreducible substantive goods. It does imply, however, that desire is not a blind impulse, as, for instance, one might feel if one were possessed by a random impulse to switch around copies of the *Republic* in the various offices in one’s department. To say that desire aims at

the good is not unlike saying that belief aims at the truth,²⁴ the latter does not imply a particular conception of *what* is true, but it does seem to be in tension with a conception of belief as a mere disposition to assert.²⁵

Moreover a desire should not be identified with *judging* or *believing* something to be good, but rather *conceiving* it to be good from a certain evaluative perspective. Desires are not “all-out” attitudes. That is, it is possible without any irrationality or inconsistency to desire incompatible things. I may have a desire for sweet foods (because they are tasty) and a desire for abstaining from sweet foods (because they are unhealthy). Since a desire commits me at most to pursue its object *all other things being equal*, this pair of attitudes is perfectly coherent. The same is not true of beliefs. A rational agent ought to revise her beliefs when she finds out that they are incompatible.²⁶ Thus desires and beliefs are improperly regarded as analogous notions in their realms.

If anything, desire under this view is the practical counterpart of an “appearance” as in “This conclusion appears to follow from the premises” or “This shirt appears to be yellow”. Rather than appearances of what it is the case, desires are appearances of the good.²⁷ Desiring X thus would amount to *conceiving* X to be good in a certain manner, but not necessarily *judging* it to be good. The analogy with theoretical appearances can be helpful here. No doubt appearances can be deceptive. But more importantly, appearances can continue to be deceptive, even when I understand that this is merely an appearance. This is, for instance, the nature of visual illusions. If certain dots are flickering in my computer in the right way, I’ll see something that appears to be in 3D, even though I know that computer screen is flat. My awareness that this is an illusion will not, however, make things appear different from the perspective of my visual experience; the image still *looks* to be in 3D.²⁸ And despite the fact that I

²⁴ But see below for some caveats.

²⁵ See, for instance, Gareth Evans’s remarks on the problems of understanding belief as a disposition to assert in *Varieties of Reference*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 224-225.

²⁶ I am ignoring here complications that might arise from cases in which revising beliefs in face of inconsistency might be extremely costly.

²⁷ For a similar view, see Dennis Stampe, “The Authority of Desire”, *Philosophical Review*, 1987, pp. 335-381.

²⁸ For a remarkable example, see Donald Hoffman’s website, especially <http://aris.ss.uci.edu/cogsci/personnel/hoffman/cylinderapplet.html>. These illusions are discussed in Donald Hoffman’s *Visual Intelligence*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998.

know that the image is not in 3D, when it appears to me that it is so from a visual perspective, it appears, from that perspective, that it is *true* that the image is in 3D; in fact, one can hardly distinguish between “appearing” and “appearing true” in the theoretical realm.

In the same way, there will be cases in which something appears good in a certain way even when I “know” it not to be so. I might want a new BMW when my car contrasts so poorly with the neighbours’ car, even if I am convinced that there is no value in trying to “keep up with the neighbours”. My “awareness” that there is nothing good in owning a BMW,²⁹ does not change the fact that from what we could call “the perspective of envy” owning a BMW still appears to be good. The scholastic view, understood in this manner, does not prevent us from seeing agents as desiring what they know to be bad; this would be no different from the fact that, in the theoretical realm, often certain contents will appear to be true in certain ways when the agent knows them to be false. Following the analogy with a visual perspective, we can say that desires are appearance of the good from a certain evaluative perspectives. Envy, as we pointed out above, could be considered to be an evaluative perspective, and for the envious person, various things will appear to be good; in other words, this perspective will provide the agent with various desires (like wanting to do harm to the neighbour’s lawn, to buy a nicer car, etc.). Similarly, our gastronomic sensibilities could also be viewed as constituting an evaluative perspective. From that perspective, the consumption of sweets, heavy cream, etc. appear to be good, but the consumption of cough syrup appears to be bad. Evaluative perspectives thus generate various desires, and *eo ipso* various appearances of the good. However, in this version of the scholastic view, desires should not be identified with how the agent *judges* things but with how various things *appear* good to the agent.³⁰

3. Forming General Conceptions of the Good

Since from different perspectives different things appear to be good, an agent should be capable of forming a general conception of good by reflecting upon and assessing these various perspectives. Of

²⁹ I am assuming that I see no putative good in owning a BMW other than the higher status it would grant me.

³⁰ Similar points are made in “The Judgement of a Weak Will”, and “Desire and the Good”.

course, an agent could just embrace an evaluative perspective and ignore all others; one could live just to satisfy one's gastronomic inclinations. However an agent who did not try to form a reflective conception of the good would hardly be recognized as an agent. We can say that what appears to be good within this general conception of the good is what the agent desires from a reflective perspective. A reflective being tries to form a general conception of the good, and if she does not always act on it, she is at least *committed* to acting in accordance with what upon reflection she deems to be good.

We should not understand a general conception of the good to be a large-scale plan of life in which one delineates one's life goals, and possibly ranks all possible alternative lives with respect to their desirability. Although such a large-scale conception of the good may function as a regulative ideal of some kind, it is hard to believe that any agent has in hand such a blueprint of the ideal life and a whole host of contingency plans. So a conception of the good should be understood here as an "all-things-considered" evaluative conception that is substantive enough to justify the choices that the agent makes in a given situation when her decision does not manifest any kind of practical irrationality. The agent must try to find a way to adjudicate between the various "claims" made by distinct perspectives, from which various objects appear to be good, and the considered view that emerges from this attempt is the agent's general conception of the good.

But in what kind of relations can an appearance of the good stand to the agent's general conception of the good? The most obvious relation is that the fact that an object is deemed good from a certain evaluative perspective will make a positive contribution to the value of the object. So, for instance that I greatly enjoy the taste of chocolate makes it the case that in absence of any stronger desire to avoid chocolate, I'll choose to consume it when the opportunity comes. However, although on a purely "hydraulic" theory of motivation,³¹ this is the *only* relation between a desire and the eventual choice or intention of the agent, a scholastic view does not need to subscribe to the view that one should always take the claim of an appearance of the good in this manner. Another obvious possibility is that some

³¹ I am borrowing this notion of a "hydraulic" theory of motivation from John McDowell, "Might There be External Reasons?" in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*.

appearances will be, upon reflection, deemed illusory. So, for instance, the impulse to “teach the driver who cut me off a lesson”³² might be one that is not merely overridden by my interest in getting home alive and well. I might, upon reflection, come to the conclusion that the appearance that there is value in such actions is completely illusory; as much as I am sometimes tempted by it, there is really nothing to be said for punitive driving.

4. Conditioning and Value: Happiness and Virtue

I want to explore a third relation between an evaluative perspective and a conception of the good, the relation of *conditioning*: a certain perspective is conditioned by X if what appears to be good from this perspective could only be correctly judged to be good if X obtains.³³ I think the clearest statements of such a relationship obtaining appears in Kant’s discussion of the relationship between happiness and virtue. I will thus start by looking into Kant’s account of this relation. I will outline the way in which Kant sees the relationship and try to show that this is a plausible understanding of how one can come to see the value of one’s happiness as dependent on one’s character. I will then try to generalize this relation in two ways. I will try to show that the relevant relation can hold of a number of conditions and evaluative perspectives, and also that we can talk about a less stringent relation between certain conditions and evaluative perspectives of which this kind of relationship will be just a particular case. I will then argue that we can make a plausible case for understanding cases of *accidie* as particular instances of a general relation of conditioning. I will finally examine the ways in which loss of will can be a form of irrationality on this account. This detour through Kant’s views serves various purposes. First, it will help us understand the nature of the relation of conditioning. Second, it will help us avoid looking like we are introducing an *ad hoc* modification to accommodate *accidie*. If I am right, *accidie* is a particular case of a relation that obtains in various other contexts. Finally, the relation between virtue and happiness as Kant

³²The same would hold, for instance, for the agent that Gary Watson describe who is tempted to smash her racket into the opponent’s head after losing a game. See his ‘Free Action’, *Journal of Philosophy* 57(1975), pp. 205-220. On this issue, see my ‘The Judgement of a Weak Will’.

³³ See the more precise definition below, p. 19.

understands it displays the relation of conditioning in a setting in which no irrationality is involved. This will help us in understanding what kind of irrationality may or may not be displayed in *accidie*.

Kant famously argued that a relation like this obtains between virtue and happiness, and that a virtuous disposition is what makes one worthy of being happy. Kant describes the relationship between virtue and happiness often from the point of view of an impartial spectator, who cannot be pleased by disproportion in the unhappiness of the virtuous person or the happiness of the vicious persons.³⁴ This claim implies at least that if one's ends are evil, they should not be satisfied, and thus to that extent the person should be unhappy; the object of the happiness of the evil person is often itself morally objectionable.³⁵ No doubt when one imagines a vicious person being happy, one will include in the conception of his happiness the satisfaction of evil ends (such as, for instance, the *Schadenfreude* of seeing other people humiliated). These are certainly ends that an impartial spectator could not consider to be good. However, this doctrine also implies something about how a virtuous person conceives of happiness brought about by (or conjoined with) evil, *even when there is nothing untoward about the object of one's happiness*. This point might be clearer if we move from "an impartial spectator" to the virtuous agent's own conception of the worth of her happiness when brought about, or accompanied, by evil. How would a virtuous agent conceive of possible cases in which she would obtain something genuinely valuable through immoral means?

Suppose Isabel can spend a weekend in New York that she very much wants, but only if she betrays her friend, Ralph (suppose Ralph's enemies offer the trip in exchange for breaking Ralph's confidence). No doubt that fact that the weekend can be obtained only by this means does not affect that fact that Isabel's representation of vacationing in New York is the representation of a genuine form of value. However, one might say, the value of loyalty overrides the value of any other enjoyment afforded by such a vacation. This is certainly true, but here again this seems to fail to capture appropriately what it would be for Isabel (a virtuous person for our purposes) to betray Ralph. For what Isabel imagines when

³⁴ See, for instance, *Practical Philosophy* (translated and edited by Mary Gregor), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 228-229, (Ak. VI, 110).

³⁵ See Kant's examples of what an immoral person would want in *Practical Philosophy*, p. 594 (Ak. VI, 481).

she sees herself in New York at the expense of her friend, it is not just that she settled for a lesser good. It seems plausible that Isabel will see her stay at New York is not worth having at all rather than something that would be a second best to staying loyal to her friend.

It would certainly be wrong to say that when Isabel represents herself spending time in New York due to an immoral act, something changes in the content of the representation; it is not the case that she represents now New York as noisy, chilly, and consumerist or that she suddenly remembers that crowded places can be unpleasant. We would naturally describe this situation as a case in which Isabel is so disgusted with herself that she would not enjoy her trip. However, we must be careful here in reading this description. For it is not the case that we would be merely making a psychological prediction. Isabel would find her character wanting, if she realized that were her happiness brought about by evil, she would have no problem enjoying herself under those conditions; she would probably not think that if she succumbed to temptation here, she should at least try to find some kind of therapy that would allow her to enjoy the trip. What would be lacking here is not the capacity to appreciate the good, as might be the case if someone were to face an exquisite dessert after having had too much of the main course. The problem is not in what is available in New York or with her sensibilities; the problem is just that the trip was made possible by those means.

Of course one might say that the fact that she cannot enjoy the trip saddened by the fate of her friend can be fully accounted by the fact that she recognizes that the betrayal is a much greater loss than anything that can be gained by it. But this, again, fails to capture the situation. No doubt the trip might not be enough *to compensate her for* the fate of her friend, neither in the sense that she will think that overall it all worked for the best, nor in the sense that the trip will suffice for her check the “yes” box after the question “Are you happy?” in a welfare survey. But if her happiness is not *conditioned* by her disposition not to betray her friend, there is no reason to say that she could not enjoy the trip, for the fate of her friend would not make it the case that she would be *indifferent* to the prospect of a weekend in New York. Her friend’s well-being in her being in New York would make just two independent contributions to her well-being. It might be worth comparing Isabel’s fate with the fate of the person who just before embarking for

his trip to New York learns that a pretty good friend has been fired from his job. It might be the case that person would have gladly given up her trip if it could save her friend's job. But it would perfectly reasonable for her in these circumstances to continue as planned and thinking that, given that nothing will be gained by staying home, he might as well enjoy the trip (even if his friend's loss of a job would be enough for him not to check the "yes" box in the welfare survey).³⁶

Suppose now Isabel, in a moment of weakness, does betray her friend. Now in an important sense, Isabel still sees the value of spending time in New York at the same time that she cannot judge this to be good. If asked: "Don't you think that enjoying art is one of the greatest things in life, and that it's just wonderful to take walks at Central Park?", she might respond that she does agree with those things. She can say all those things and still refuse to go to New York because she thinks that her betrayal of her friend no longer makes this end worth pursuing. We can distinguish between judging that X is worthy of pursuit (and thus "good" in our sense) in situation S, and judging that X is valuable in this more general sense,³⁷ by saying that an agent judges that something is worth pursuing in situation S, if she would judge it to be good if she were to find herself in S. Following the above cases, we can say that the agent finds X valuable if the agent would find X worthy of pursuit if certain conditions would obtain, and these conditions are such that the agent finds it desirable that they obtain. In Isabel's case, she would find going to New York something that is worth pursuing if she could travel there without having to engage in vicious behaviour, and she certainly wishes she could travel there without engaging in vicious behaviour. Of course this is not the only case in which the agent might find something valuable but not worth pursuing. One might find that a valuable object is not worth pursuing because of overriding values or because the agent cannot reasonably expect that it is in his power to bring about the object. However, all that matters to our present purposes is to note that there are at least some cases in which the agent does not find a valuable object worth pursuing because a condition on an evaluative perspective does not

³⁶ Of course, he might find that it is his duty to stay and support his friend. But it is easy to assume that no such duty obtains, say, if, for instance, the friend goes back home (and home is miles away) to cope with the situation, or decides to spend the next few weeks in isolation.

³⁷ From now on I will just use "valuable" in this more general sense.

obtain; in an important and clear sense, even when Isabel no longer thinks that her trip is worth pursuing, she still retains his understanding the value of engaging in such a trip. As one might have guessed, this point will be crucial in letting us understand how the agent who suffers from *accidie* still, at least in some sense, values the things that he does not pursue.

5. Generalizing Conditioning

If we talk about virtue being the condition of happiness in the sense that no worth will be attached to happiness when conjoined with a disposition that is not virtuous, we better have relatively low thresholds for virtue. For minor failings certainly will not, and should not, do all that much damage to how I conceive the worth of my happiness. A few trivial lies, a broken promise to my grandmother to visit her more often, and my occasional dumping of a recyclable bottle in the nearer garbage bin will not make the prospect of going to New York seem much less worthy of pursuit to me. This is not just a fact about the uncaring beings we are, but seems perfectly justified: only an extremely gloomy person would be incapable of enjoying life as a result of some minor vices. A relaxed notion of conditionality can make room for an attitude to the relation between virtue and happiness that falls in between these two cases. Let us distinguish between the following:

Strong Conditionality: **C** strongly conditions an evaluative perspective for an agent **A** if and only if, for every **O** conceived to be good from that perspective, **A** should judge **O** to be good (or **O** should be considered desirable in **A**'s reflective conception of the good) only if **C** obtains.

Weak Conditionality: **C** weakly conditions an evaluative perspective for an agent **A** if and only if, for some **O** conceived to be good from that perspective, **A** should judge **O** to be a lesser good (or **O** should be considered less desirable in **A**'s reflective conception of the good) if **C** does not obtain than if **C** obtains.

So we can think of an interpretation of Kant's claim that the highest good is happiness *in proportion* to virtue that seems to make it into a plausible requirement on conceptions of the good, if we allow that at most only the absence of a thoroughly vicious disposition strongly conditions our happiness (or the evaluative perspectives from which we consider various elements of our happiness to be good). Although there is nothing here that approximates mathematical exactitude in the calculation of proportionality, we may say that one's ethical disposition is relevant to how we conceive our happiness to be good, and, of course, the worse the vice the less we should see our happiness as desirable.

It is important to note that conditionality cannot be incorporated into the evaluative perspective itself. It is not the case that when we learn that the worth of our happiness suffers those bruises from our disposition, we should conclude that being virtuous is part of the good that one enjoys when one goes to, say, the Rockies. It would be ludicrous to suggest that as I see the beautiful landscape, I am appreciating something like the mereological sum, or the "organic whole", of my virtue (such as it is) and the beauty that surrounds me.³⁸ What I enjoy is just the beauty itself, and this is what constitutes this happy aspect of my existence, and whatever relation there is between my virtue on the one hand, and my enjoyment and its worth on the other, it can't be a part-whole relation. It is important to note that I am not pressing here a general criticism against the idea of an organic whole.³⁹ Let us grant that the notion of an organic whole provides a good account of the nature, for instance, of aesthetic goods. But here is plausible to say that one's experience and art object are both relevant parts of what is being appreciated when one appreciates art. We do talk about a certain piece being "moving", for instance, which suggests that we appreciate both the piece and its effect on us. But let us look back at the New York example. Suppose Isabel has now gone to New York by unimpeachable means, and that she is now fully enjoying a stroll at Central Park. Would it be plausible to say that what Isabel appreciates is the organic whole formed by the stroll at Central Park combined with her virtue? Certainly Isabel could be enjoying the stroll at Central Park

³⁸ G. E. Moore defines the relevant notion of an "organic whole" in *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903, pp. 27-31. My discussion of conditioning, and especially this point, is obviously indebted to Korsgaard's paper "Two Distinctions of Goodness" in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

³⁹ Not that there are no grounds to be suspicious of the role that this concept can play more generally in a theory of value. See on this issue, Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions of Goodness".

without any thought whatsoever of her virtue. If Isabel were asked to describe what she finds so good about strolling at Central Park, no matter how articulate she would be, she would never mention her virtue. Moreover suppose a completely vicious person is walking alongside Isabel, undisturbed by the effect that his lack of virtue ought to have in his appreciation of this activity. He strolls along having more or less exactly the same reactions that Isabel does. Trying to appeal to the notion of an organic whole would have the implausible conclusion that Isabel and this vicious person are enjoying two completely different kinds of good.⁴⁰

Are those relations of conditioning more general? If we accept Kant's proportionality requirement, we can think that the contribution that an element in a certain evaluative perspective makes to a conception of the good can be *affected* by a certain condition without fully depending on it. That is, even if being *thoroughly* vicious might make one's happiness not worth having, more commonly human vicious dispositions can affect the worth of one's happiness without rendering it an object that can be no longer be judged to make any contribution to the good.

Further, there is no reason to think that what conditions an evaluative perspective has to be a disposition to act, or anything for which the agent is responsible. The representation of the pursuit of one's happiness after a tragic event will share many of the features of the representation of this pursuit conjoined with the awareness of a vicious disposition. Moreover, certain condition might not have such a general impact on one's conception of happiness. The loss of a loved one might dampen one's appreciation for sports, but make one's commitments to other people all the more important. Also, Kant's conception also makes one's happiness depend on a very specific condition. However, one could think that the general structure of the relation of conditioning does not require anything that specific. One might have just a vague conception that "the way one's life is going" cannot leave untouched one's conception of what is worth pursuing.

⁴⁰ Of course, if one has a purely dispositional understanding of 'desire', there would be no reason not to think that the object of Isabel desire is her strolling in Central Park while being virtuous. But this understanding of 'desire' is incompatible with the Davidsonian understanding of intentional explanation sketched above, since not any disposition to behave would be capable of picking out an intelligible object of pursuit (as, for instance, Quinn's example of an agent who is disposed to turn on radios for no particular reason. See 'Putting Rationality in Its Place').

On the other hand, there might be more specific relations of conditioning. Suppose that as I was growing up I would spend time around my grandfather's hometown, where I would often go fishing, sometimes with him. I might find that after the death of my grandfather (say, from natural causes when he was already advanced in his years) I cannot see much point in fishing in that area or fishing any more. It might not be the case that I liked fishing just because I was doing it, at least at times, with my grandfather. However, even if fishing there is very good, the prospect of driving there and fishing without my grandfather might seem meaningless. It need not be the case that I find these memories painful; quite the opposite, I might cherish my memories of these days. It is just, as one might say, it is not the same without him there (although the sense of "its not being the same" can't be that one no longer understands the point of fishing; one might still be otherwise be an avid fisherman and recognize that this was a prime spot for fishing). It is natural to say that the value of fishing in this area was conditioned by my grandfather being around. Of course, this shows that conditioning judgments need not have, as might be the case of the relation between virtue and happiness, objective purport. I might not find that other people need to have the same attitude towards fishing in that area or anything else in relation to my (or their) grandfather being alive. In fact, it might not even be the case that I would even find myself wanting if this relation were to fail to obtain in my case. I might consider the counterfactual situation in which I still value fishing in that area despite the loss of my grandparent as a case in which my evaluative outlook would be different, but not necessarily defective. Moreover, relations of conditionality can also be much more frivolous than anything I presented so far; one might think, for instance, that certain goods are conditioned by one's age; one might think, for instance, that it does not become a middle-aged man to roller blade around town, or a young fellow to have tea and cookies in the afternoon.

6. Conditioning and *Accidie*

It should be obvious now that I think the best way for a scholastic view to accommodate *accidie* is by means of this relation of conditionality. We can say that the agent in the state of *accidie* takes certain

evaluative perspectives to be conditioned by certain states that do not obtain. In extreme cases, *all* evaluative perspectives are taken by the person suffering from *accidie* to be conditioned, and to be such that the particular condition does is violated.⁴¹ But what could this condition be? Of course, the account does not need to be committed to a particular condition or that the same condition will apply to every case. However, it would be plausible to think that the condition will have something to do with the agent's own state of mind or at least with his assessment of himself. Plausible ways in which we can express the violation of the condition on the evaluative perspective would be the following: "Given that I feel this way", or "Given the kind of person I am", or "Given that my life has turned this way", or "Given all that has happened around me", etc. No doubt all those are vague characterizations of why conditions on evaluative perspectives do not obtain, but, as we said above, there is no need to think that only precisely characterized states-of-affairs can serve of conditions on evaluative perspectives.⁴² But one can say that although the dejected agent judges certain things to be valuable, he thinks that some of the above facts constitute a violation of a condition of their evaluative perspective, and thus a violation of a condition of their being worth pursuing.

How plausible is it to see the dejected agent as committed to taking a certain evaluative perspective to be conditioned by something? To bolster my case I shall start by the advantages. First, we need not claim that the depressed agent, for instance, has completely lost touch with the value of the things he does not pursue, and deny his own assessment of his situation. Doing justice to this assessment is important not just because of philosophical squeamishness about overriding an agent's report of his state of mind. As Stocker points out in the passage quoted above, we cannot very well describe the awful predicament of the person suffering from *accidie* if we do not ascribe to him a certain appreciation of the value in question. Part of the predicament, as Stocker describes in the passage quoted earlier, "is that one sees all good to be won or saved and one lacks the will." We also do not need to postulate newly

⁴¹ As will be clear below, this needs elaboration.

⁴² Although sometimes a more specific condition could be seen to be at work in clinical depression. See, for instance, the following description in DSM-IV-TR, under the heading "Major Depressive Episodes": "The sense of worthlessness or guilt associated with a Major Depressive Episode may include unrealistic negative evaluations of one's worth or guilty preoccupations or ruminations over minor past failings."

acquired desires or evaluative perspectives counteracting the usual course of the old evaluations. It is not like *accidie* is the result of sudden heightened sensitivity to the value of staying put. Finally, we need not see *accidie* as the result of a surd lack of “oomph” on the part of our evaluations, as the result of something completely external to how the agent views the world.

However, not all seems to fall so neatly in place. It seems that *accidie* does not take a form of any particular judgment, and it is certainly not necessarily connected to the awareness that a certain fact renders much that is valuable no longer worth pursuing. But even if there were such a fact, the agent who suffers from *accidie* might resist the claim that she thinks that the fact conditions the value. After all, the depressed person often tries to work against her depression in an apparent recognition that the value is still worth pursuing.

As I said earlier, the relation of conditionality does not preclude the possibility that what conditions a certain evaluative perspective is rather vague. Now if my proposal is correct, we should see the agent who suffers from *accidie* as *committed* to a certain relation of conditionality. The proposal does not require that the agent can immediately describe or even assent to the attitude ascribed to her. The conditions of adequacy of the explanation are given by whether it can help make the agent intelligible, or, in certain cases, whether it helps us better place the origin of certain lack of intelligibility in the behaviour of the agent.⁴³ Nonetheless distinguishing various different forms of *accidie* in light of this account can help us see the extent to which the scholastic view can explain the agent’s view of her situation. Moreover these distinctions will also help us see to which extent the scholastic view can take *accidie* to be a form of irrationality.

On this account, we can distinguish at least three kind of agents suffering from *accidie*: the full-blown, the hesitant, and the inconsistent.⁴⁴ In the first case, the commitment to the absence of a condition

⁴³ Any view of intentional explanations that is committed to the constitutive role of the ideal of rationality will have to make room for the fact that these explanations do not always work by making the agent fully intelligible, but rather by locating or describing an agent’s failure to live up to the ideal of rationality. One is no less than the other part of the more general enterprise of evaluating an agent. Intentional explanations do not only make agents look intelligent, good and perceptive, but also vicious, ignorant, and insensitive.

⁴⁴ Here of course it is a matter of conceptual space. I am not arguing that empirical research will necessarily find abundant cases of all these three kinds.

that makes a certain value worth pursuing will be stable and not challenged by any of the other practical commitments of the agent; that is, the agent simply accepts that a general condition of value does not obtain. This is not to say, of course, that there is nothing that the agent considers regrettable about her situation; it would be hard to describe the case as a case of *accidie* if the agent is completely contented with her situation. Rather what she finds regrettable in this case is the fact that the condition does not obtain: that she is the kind of person she is, that things came down this way, etc. In the full-blown case the agent is not inconsistent, nor does she fail to act in accordance to how she thinks she should act. This does not mean that there is nothing amiss with her practical standpoint. We might think that at least in some cases it would not be completely warranted, for instance, for an agent to think that various pleasures are no longer worth having on account that, for instance, she finds (perhaps also unwarrantedly) that she has failed so miserably in her life. But insofar as these are judgments that she fully endorses, whatever her cognitive failings are, her practical attitudes are coherent. Indeed it might be worth noting that the agent who engaged in vicious behaviour in the past, but now, on account of accepting some kind of Kantian view of the relation between virtue and happiness, does not find her happiness worth pursuing, would be suffering, on this account, from full-blown *accidie*. And if one accepts the Kantian view in question there would be nothing wrong with her attitudes; her happiness would in this view not be worth pursuing.⁴⁵

It might be worth remarking that the fact that this agent turns out to fall into our classification of *accidie* is *not* an unwelcome consequence. Suppose, for instance, an agent in this predicament let pass by a good opportunity to improve her happiness significantly. Her explanation for passing it up could be something like: “Of course it is a good thing when people are happy, and, of course, I see the value of having all those things. However, after what I have done I can’t just live like anyone else.” Just as with

⁴⁵ I am not sure that the view this agent endorses is properly Kant’s views. Insofar as she recognizes her past as vicious and no longer acts in this manner, it is unclear to which extent she still is vicious, and whether her happiness is worth pursuing or not.

other cases of *accidie*, she would still be capable of appreciating the value of those things that would make her happy, but she would be incapable of pursuing them.⁴⁶

But the full-blown case need not be the only case of *accidie*. Another possibility is that the acceptance that the value is not worth pursuing will not be so “full-blown”, but rather that the agent will waver between this view, and the view that the value is worth pursuing, as well as other intermediate positions allowed by the weaker notion of conditionality. Again, depending on one’s theory of rationality, one might or might not see these cases of *accidie* as failures of rationality. If one thinks that there are substantive restrictions on relations of conditionality, one might come to the conclusion that this kind of attitude could not be rationally justified. And one could also think that wavering and hesitation are themselves marks of an irrational disposition.

But one can also be divided, as it were, in relation to the very judgment of conditionality. That is, one might think that one ought to judge that nothing conditions the value that one fails to pursue, but yet find oneself judging otherwise. In this case, I think the agent suffering from *accidie* is, on my view, in this respect, much like the akratic agent, who does not have his reflective understanding of how he ought to judge lined up with the way he judges.⁴⁷ And just as with akratic behaviour, the agent in this case would be manifesting a form of irrationality. Indeed this would be a rather paradigmatic form of irrationality, the irrationality of judging or acting in a way that we ourselves recognize to be unwarranted.

But here it might seem that one can raise a new objection. For if the agent recognizes that he ought to judge that the value is still worth pursuing, and that nothing about him or the world around him makes it the case that there is no unmet condition on the relevant evaluative perspective, then what could be missing? How could there be a gap between thinking that one ought to judge that **p** and judging that **p**? Although a detailed discussion of this issue would take us far beyond our topic, I think it is a misconception about the nature of cognition that leads one to think that there could be no gap here. In particular, I think one is led to this conclusion by the view that there could be no significant differences

⁴⁶ It might be worth noting again here the DSM-IV-TR description quoted above of the importance of self-evaluations of guilt in major depressive episodes.

⁴⁷ I defend this view of the akratic agent in “The Judgement of a Weak Will”.

between ways in which one grasps that there is conclusive reason to accept **p**.⁴⁸ However, if there are significant differences, and if one's grasp of these reasons can be defective, clouded or in any way imperfect, one's judgment might be swayed by more vivid appearance that one recognizes ought not to sway one's judgment. No doubt a person who forms judgments this way is irrational, but this irrationality does not make her a conceptual impossibility.

One might argue that this account still falsifies the agent's self-understanding; after all, on this view, the person suffering from the *accidie* in this view does not accept the unconditional judgment that she should act in the relevant ways. At best, in the case of the "divided" dejected agent, she recognizes that this is a judgment she *ought* to make. And this, one might claim, is not enough to make sense of the phenomenon. But here the lines between the phenomenon and our philosophical understanding of it start to fade. Any understanding of the phenomenon must preserve the obvious fact that the agent suffering from it takes himself to be in a predicament, and this predicament should be understood in terms of the fact that the agent recognizes that he has no motivation to promote ends that he recognizes to be valuable. But this phenomenon is preserved on our account by the fact that something that in normal conditions is valuable cannot be incorporated into one's conception of the good due to undesirable circumstances. And in the case of the divided agent, the predicament is made worse by the fact that the very judgment of conditionality is recognized to be one that the agent ought not to make.

Of course, if one understands the scholastic view in terms of a view that desires are judgments of value, and that forming a conception of the good amounts to no more than adding those up, the scholastic view will not be able to make sense of much human behaviour that clearly falls in the purview of intentional explanations. However this would be conceiving of the scholastic view as a simply mirroring a hydraulic conception of human action, rather than a genuine alternative to it, an alternative in which the rational structure of human agency can come to light, even if human agents fall far short of being perfectly rational.

⁴⁸ For more detail, see my "The Judgement of a Weak Will".