

Akratic Action under the Guise of the Good

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Abstract: I defend a strong version of the view that we act “under the guise of the good,” on which all intentional action requires belief that one ought to perform the action. My focus is on the central counterexample of akratic action, or intentional action that one believes one ought *not* perform. I use a criticism of Davidson’s view of *akrasia* to raise the possibility of appealing to conflicting beliefs: a belief that one ought to do something, and a belief that one ought not. I then address concerns that this appeal is insufficiently explanatory, attributes too much conflict, attributes mistakes about one’s own beliefs, and leaves out an essential asymmetry in action against one’s ‘better’ judgment. On the contrary, appealing to conflicting beliefs reduces one problem to another, helps explain why akratic action is puzzling, attributes a small but plausible amount of error in self-attribution, and leaves room for various forms of asymmetry.