

A Puzzle about Desire

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It seems uncontroversial that we know at least some of our desires. I know I want a drink of water when I'm thirsty, but I also know that I want my friends to be healthy, I want more humane treatment of factory farm animals and I want Chicago's "L" to be more efficient. How I know these facts is not so obvious. Despite the burgeoning work on self-knowledge, there has been little developed discussion concerning the epistemology of desires. When philosophers have put forth detailed accounts of how we know what we want, they have been almost entirely silent on issues concerning what desires are.¹ From the other direction, those who have worked on the metaphysics of desire have not been concerned enough with what the epistemic implications are for their favorite view of desire. Timothy Schroeder (2004), for example, in his recent full-length work on desire, is completely silent on how we know our desires given what he thinks desires are. I think this narrow-minded focus in both the epistemology and metaphysics of desire is problematic. More precisely, it is the burden of this paper to demonstrate that one's views concerning the metaphysics of desire can have a profound impact on one's views on the self-knowledge of desire and vice versa. I argue for this contention by exploring a certain novel puzzle about desire. The puzzle is as follows:

¹ Jordi Fernandez (1999), Krista Lawlor (2008), Alex Byrne (2011b) and Lauren Ashwell (2013) in the only recent full-length works on the self-knowledge of desire, are almost completely silent on the metaphysical nature of this state.

- (1) All desires are dispositional mental states.
- (2) We have privileged access to at least some of our desires.
- (3) We do not have privileged access to any dispositional mental state.

(1) is defended by a number of philosophers working on the metaphysics of desire. (2) is thought to be true by the majority of philosophers concerned with the epistemology of desire. And (3), as Brie Gertler (2011a) notes, is also widely embraced. But (1)-(3) are jointly inconsistent. Given the inconsistency of this triad at least one of these propositions is false. Solving this puzzle, then, involves figuring out which independently plausible proposition to jettison.²

In what follows, I work to (i) motivate the above puzzle and (ii) defend the view that a certain solution to this puzzle fails. More specifically, concerning (ii), I argue that while a number of philosophers will want to reject (3) of the puzzle—the claim that we lack privileged access to any dispositional state—there are good reasons to think this part of the puzzle is true. While my main focus in this paper involves accomplishing (i) and (ii), I conclude by offering what I take to be the most promising solution to the puzzle, one that involves denying (1)—the claim that all desires are dispositional states. I further explain why my reasons for denying (1) might also help explain how we have privileged access to some of our desires.

² I am unaware of anyone in the literature who has explicitly developed and discussed this puzzle. The closest analogy to it can be found in the work of Boghossian (1989), where the latter raises a problem for the compatibility of privileged access and content externalism. Briefly put, Boghossian's concern is that insofar as the content of thought is individuated *externally*, this poses a threat to our alleged privileged access to contentful states. Boghossian argues that content externalism and privileged access are indeed incompatible since we cannot have privileged access to relational properties. The puzzle I am interested in is not couched in terms of content, but rather in terms of dispositional analyses of desire, analyses that can be coupled with internalist accounts of content.

Motivating the Puzzle:

The first proposition of our puzzle is that all desires are dispositional states. In his recent work on the nature of desire, Schroeder (2004) notes that a popular way of understanding what desires are—a version of what he calls the *Standard Account of Desire*—is as follows:

ST: To desire that p is to be disposed to act in ways to bring it about that p.³

David Armstrong (1968), Robert Stalnaker (1984) and Michael Smith (1994) among others have held ST or something close to it.

Schroeder goes on to note that perhaps the main rival to ST is a hedonic theory of desire that sees desire as intimately connected up with pleasure. The most plausible pleasure-based theory of desire construes all desires dispositionally as well. A crude version of such a view is the following:

HT: To desire that P is to be disposed to tend to feel pleasure if it seems that P, and/or displeasure if it seems that not-P.⁴

Thus, two of the more popular ways of understanding what desires are, construe all desires as dispositional states. And it bears mentioning that those who adopt alternative

³ Schroeder (2004; p. 11).

⁴ *Ibid* (p. 27).

theories of desire also construe desires dispositionally.⁵ The view that all desires are dispositional states—what I will refer to as *strict dispositionalism about desire* (SDD)—is the dominant view concerning these states.⁶

But what does it mean to say that a particular desire is a dispositional state? Eric Schwitzgebel (2002), who is sympathetic with a dispositional account of desires, suggests that we characterize dispositional states by means of conditional statements of the following form: If condition C holds, then an agent S will Φ , where Φ can be understood as a mental event, a behavior, or an action. Call these mental events, behaviors, or actions *manifestations* of the disposition. Call the event of C occurring *the trigger*. S has the disposition in question if the conditional holds. So on the standard view of desire, S has the desire in question if, given certain conditions, S acts in ways to bring about the content of that desire.⁷

The conditions in question, of course, will depend on the content of the desire. But generally speaking, at least some of the conditions that must be in place for the manifestation to occur, according to Smith (1994), are conditions that will involve tokening certain means-ends beliefs and other desires. Let us try to understand Smith's

⁵ For instance, one might think that T.M. Scanlon's (1998) attention-based understanding of desire is also strictly dispositional in nature. Roughly, Scanlon's view can be understood as follows: For S to desire p is for the thought of p to keep occurring to the organism in a favorable light, so that its attention is directed insistently toward considerations that present themselves as counting in favor of p. One might reasonably interpret this as the agent being *disposed* to think of P in a favorable light. I should note that Scanlon himself shies away from the claim that *all* desires are to be understood along attention-based lines.

⁶ I want to stress here that my claim is only that SDD is the *prevailing view* of the metaphysics of desire. I do not mean to suggest that there are no non-strictly dispositional accounts of desire. However, such accounts are clearly minority views. I offer the broad contours of a non-strictly dispositional account of desire in the conclusion of this paper.

⁷ Schwitzgebel might follow Ryle (1949) in holding that what it is for S to instantiate a dispositional property is merely for a certain complex counterfactual to be true of S. But if one rejects this view in favor of what is sometimes called a *realist* account of these properties, one can still think, as Mumford (1998) and others do, that S instantiating a dispositional property *entails* that a certain counterfactual is true of S. Most metaphysicians who work on dispositions, at the very least, think that dispositional properties entail certain complex counterfactuals.

suggestion by way of an example. Suppose I desire a glass of Syrah. The conditions that must be in place in order for me to act in Syrah-seeking ways might be tokening the belief that I can readily obtain this wine, or tokening the belief that drinking Syrah will be pleasurable, etc., while the desires that might need to be in place include the desire to have a pleasurable experience, etc. Needless to say, spelling out sufficient conditions for the triggering of a manifestation of even our simplest of desires is going to be no easy task. But at least the broad form of the types of conditions that must be in place for a manifestation to occur should be clear enough.

We might wonder, given the above characterization of dispositional states, why (1) is so widely embraced. The short answer to this question is that a number of philosophers of mind are sympathetic with the view that attitudes—including desires—are to be understood in terms of what these mental states do. And insofar as certain conditions need to be met in order for desires to do what they do, it is natural to adopt the view that (1) is true. Consider: if one thinks the role desires play in our mental economy is to motivate action, but one also maintains that desires only motivate action when certain conditions are in place, then one is well on their way towards embracing a strictly dispositional account of desire. It is not surprising, then, that (1) is thought by some to be obviously true.

(2) is the claim that we have privileged access to some of our desires. I follow others in embracing the following account of privileged access:

PA: An agent S has privileged access to F, iff. (a) S knows F in a highly epistemically secure way and (b) S arrives at this knowledge by way of a uniquely first-personal means.⁸

How epistemically secure must S's knowledge be in order to have privileged access? While some philosophers have required epistemic certainty or perfect reliability in order to satisfy (a), I do not think the possession of privileged access demands that level of epistemic security. Instead, I will understand the epistemic security needed to have privileged access to be that approaching epistemic certainty with respect to internalist accounts of knowledge and that approaching perfect reliability with respect to externalist accounts of knowledge.⁹

On the account of privileged access I favor it's not enough to have highly epistemically secure knowledge. One must also arrive at this knowledge via a uniquely-first personal means. To say that S knows F in a uniquely first personal way is to say that S knows F by employing a means that cannot, in principle, be used by other agents in order to arrive at this same knowledge. So, for example, I can find out that I desire a certain person's affection by observing my behavior when I'm around her (e.g. I stutter; I go out of my way to get this person's attention, etc.) or I can learn that I have this desire from a psychologist. But these are ways *you* can come to learn that I have this desire as

⁸ See Moran (2002), for a similar way of characterizing privileged access. Byrne (2005, 2011b) calls (a) *privileged access* and (b) *peculiar access*. He, however, notes that a number of philosophers are comfortable construing the former as the conjunction of (a) and (b), which is the way I have construed it above. William Alston (1971) provides a nice overview of various ways of understanding privileged access.

⁹ See Gertler (2011a), Neta (2011) and Byrne (2005, 2011b) for the claim that one can have privileged access without having certain or perfectly reliable knowledge of the fact in question.

well. These ways of knowing the content of one's mind, then, would not be uniquely first-personal ways of knowing.

Given PA, why should we think that we have privileged access to any of our desires? The following example will help motivate the view that it is plausible to think we have this type of access:

Nevada Desert:

Carson is driving through a relatively untraveled part of Nevada in the middle of a heat wave when his car breaks down. Unfortunately, no one is around to give Carson a ride and he must walk to get help. As his walk drags on, Carson runs out of water. He is struck with an almost unbearable thirst. He judges that he wants water.

In the above example it seems reasonable to suppose that Carson's knowledge that he wants water is highly epistemically secure. It also seems reasonable to suppose that Carson knows he has this desire in a way in which no one else could know this. Carson does not have to observe his own water-seeking behavior or wait for someone to come along and tell him he wants water in order to know that he does. This case, and others like it, render it *prima facie* plausible that we possess privileged access to at least some of our desires.¹⁰

¹⁰ I stress the qualified nature of this claim. I certainly think more needs to be said in defense of (2) before we embrace the view that this part of the puzzle is true. This is all the more the case given that a growing number of philosophers think we either lack privileged access to any mental state or, less radically, that the scope of such access is much more limited than has previously been thought. See Medina (2006), Schwitzgebel (2008), and Carruthers (2005 and 2011) for some recent defenses of this type of skepticism.

It also seems reasonable, however, to think that we do not have privileged access to any dispositional state. Gertler (2011a) has recently defended the view that (3) is true. She points out that in order to know that we are instantiating a dispositional state we would have to know that a certain complex counterfactual is true of us. In order to know, that is, that we are disposed to Φ , where Φ -ing is some type of action, we would need to know that we would Φ in certain circumstances. But, according to Gertler, it is reasonable to think that how we would act in a certain situation does not seem to be something we can know via first-personal means.¹¹ To see why, consider that determining how I would act in certain circumstances might very well require me to make an inductive inference from behavioral evidence concerning how I have acted in the past to how I would act in similar circumstances. That would be a process, though, that could be used by others. Furthermore, it seems that while such a means might afford me with knowledge, it would not afford me with the type of robust knowledge required for privileged access.

Gertler, then, maintains that knowledge of our dispositional attitudes is outside the realm of privileged access. She further contends that the majority of philosophers involved in the current scope-of-privileged access debate embrace this contention (2011a; pp. 75-76). If Gertler is right and dispositional states are outside the realm of privileged access, we are faced with a problem: (1)-(3) are independently plausible, but they also form an inconsistent triad.

I imagine many SDD-ists will want to find their way out of the puzzle by denying (3).¹² Let's call the view that we have privileged access to dispositional desires, *Access*

¹¹ Gertler (2011a; p. 73).

¹² Michael Smith has indicated to me that he would deny (3).

Dispositionalism (AD), and those who hold it *Access Dispositionalists*. A number of Access Dispositionalists will likely protest that Gertler has not considered whether the most plausible accounts of self-knowledge—including certain widely-held transparency accounts of self-knowledge—can explain why (3) is false. Such a lacuna, I think, needs to be addressed. This is especially the case insofar as transparency theorists arguably offer us the most plausible way of making sense of our privileged access to dispositional desires. But while I think (3) above needs further defense, I also think that once we investigate the matter more carefully, we will see that there are good reasons for thinking that Access Dispositionalism is false. I turn to a defense of this claim next.

Access Dispositionalism & Introspectional Accounts of Knowledge:

Historically, the most popular way of explaining our self-knowledge of mental states such as desire has been to posit that we *look inward* to detect these states. Arguably, the two most influential introspectional approaches to self-knowledge are the acquaintance account and the inner sense account. Although both of these views construe our self-knowledge as a matter of looking inward, acquaintance theorists hold that the introspectional process is a unique, *non-causal* process involving direct awareness of one's mind, while inner sense theorists hold that the introspectional process is a causal process akin to visual perception.

Concerning the acquaintance approach, the most common way for acquaintance theorists to make sense of the non-causal introspectional process is by positing that we introspect a first-order state when one's second order judgment about the first-order state

embeds or contains the first-order state.¹³ What this embedding or containment relationship amounts to is a complex matter, but the general idea is that some introspective judgments can be partially constituted by the state one is making a judgment about. Inner sense theorists, on the other hand, hold that introspection does not involve a relationship of constitution between first and second-order states, but rather amounts to a causal scanning process that involves becoming aware of mental state M via attention mechanisms of the brain "scanning" M, an awareness that in turn causes one to judge that she is in M.¹⁴

What is important for our purposes is that neither acquaintance nor inner sense accounts of self-knowledge appear to be promising ways of making sense of our privileged access to dispositional states. No contemporary acquaintance theorist, for instance, embraces the view that we can be directly acquainted with dispositional states. The short explanation why is that most proponents of acquaintance follow Russell (1912) in holding that the only things we are acquainted with are things whose existence we cannot rationally doubt.¹⁵ The acquaintance theorist holds that we cannot rationally doubt the existence of, e.g., an occurrent pain, while we are undergoing it. It is highly implausible, however, to suggest that we *cannot* rationally doubt that we have a certain dispositional desire, the latter of which can never be at the fore-of-consciousness. It is not surprising, then, to find Gertler (2002), Chalmers (2003), Balog (2012) and other

¹³ See Gertler (2002), Chalmers (2003), Horgan and Kriegel (2007) and Balog (2010) for contemporary acquaintance theorists who posit a constitutive relationship between first-order mental states and second-order judgments about those mental states. See Gertler (2012) for a nice overview of the acquaintance approach to self-knowledge.

¹⁴ See Armstrong (1968), Lycan (1996), and Goldman (2006) for philosophers who embrace inner sense theories of self-knowledge.

¹⁵ See Fumerton (1995) and Gertler (2012) for two acquaintance theorists who think we should employ a Cartesian-inspired doubt test in order to arrive at a conclusion concerning what objects we can be acquainted with.

acquaintance theorists claiming that second-order states are only partially constituted by first-order states when the latter are conscious, occurrent states.¹⁶

Concerning the inner sense theory, as Alvin Goldman (2006) points out, it is difficult to see how an internal scanning process that is supposed to be the internal analogue to visual perception enables us to *directly* grasp dispositional properties. In the same way that perception does not allow us to (directly) grasp that a vase is fragile, inner sense does not appear to enable us to (directly) grasp dispositional properties. It seems, then, that such a process is going to be inferential in nature. And if desires are dispositions to act in particular ways, then the most reliable inferences we can make concerning whether we token such states would appear to be inferences that rely on observations of our past behavior. But this way of coming to know our desires would be a way others could come to know our desires. In other words, such a means would be non-uniquely first-personal.¹⁷

It might be objected at this point that even if desires are understood motivationally, we might nevertheless come to possess privileged access to them by making inferences from non-behavioral, internal manifestations of the underlying disposition. The thought is that we can infer that we have a particular underlying dispositional desire on the basis of our access to what Krista Lawlor (2008) calls “internal promptings” or inner evidential indicators, including relevant phenomenal states. So, for instance, we might be able to infer from the fact that we are experiencing hedonic

¹⁶ It bears mentioning here that most acquaintance theorists think we can only be acquainted with objects for which there is no appearance/reality distinction. Occurrent sensations are prime candidates for states for which there is no appearance/reality distinction because the appearance, ostensibly, just is the reality. Dispositional states on the other hand are states for which there is an appearance/reality distinction.

¹⁷ Carruthers (2005; 2011) is also sympathetic with the view that inner sense accounts of self-knowledge cannot afford us with uniquely first-personal knowledge for similar reasons. That being said, he is also skeptical that any “observational” account of self-knowledge can explain privileged access to dispositional states.

phenomenology at the thought that p, as well as other relevant internal promptings, that we desire that p. Lawlor refers to this way of knowing our dispositional desires as “causal self-interpretation.”¹⁸

One question we might have concerning whether invoking causal self-interpretation can help the strict dispositionalist vindicate AD is how we know (or at least have good reason to believe) that the type of states that could be internal promptings are actually caused by an underlying dispositional desire. This question is important given that such states would not be what we might call “essential manifestations” of the underlying disposition; i.e., they would not be manifestations that would in part define desires as the type of state they are.¹⁹ Given this, it would be possible that one could, for example, experience pleasure at the thought that p, without such an experience being caused by a dispositional desire.²⁰ One could, for example, experience pleasure at the thought of a beautiful sunset without being disposed to bring about that sunset. How then, would our awareness of the fact that the thought that p engenders a pleasurable experience—a fact we *might* have privileged access to—provide us with good reason to think we desire p?

¹⁸ It is not clear whether Lawlor thinks we have uniquely first-personal, highly epistemically secure knowledge via causal self-interpretation, as opposed to such a process affording us with *knowledge simpliciter* of our dispositional desires. This is because Lawlor couches her discussion in terms of knowledge not privileged access. Other philosophers have suggested a similar way by which we can *know* our desires (as opposed to having privileged access to them) including Ashwell (2013). And it should be mentioned that a similar line of thought has been used to defend the view that we know our dispositional beliefs in this manner as well. See Silins (2012) for a defense of this latter view. One philosopher who I think is unsympathetic with the view that causal self-interpretation affords us with privileged access to our desires is Cassam (2014).

¹⁹ For the action-based theorist of desire, the essential manifestation of desire would be action, or more broadly, behavior. Non-essential manifestations would ostensibly include internal promptings such as taking pleasure in the thought that P, etc.

²⁰ Note that if one didn’t think this was possible, then one should, it seems, embrace a version of the hedonic theory of desire discussed above.

Working within the strict dispositionalist, action-based theorist's framework, one plausible suggestion would be that we are able to determine that states that could be non-essential internal promptings are in fact caused by a dispositional desire on the basis of our awareness of the fact that: (a) we are motivated to act in ways to bring about the state of affairs in question, and (b) this motivation is preceded and/or accompanied by, e.g., the experience of pleasure at the thought that p. We could then determine that the pleasurable experience is intimately connected up with motivation in a way that makes it reasonable to infer that it was caused by a disposition to act in the relevant ways.

But how, it might be asked, do we know that (a) is true of us; i.e., how do we know we are motivated to act to bring about the state of affairs in question? The most reasonable answer to this question if we are strict dispositionalist, action-based theorists, is that we would know this on the basis of our awareness of our actions to bring about the state of affairs in question. Given this, it might be contended that if we determine that we are motivated to bring about p, and also that we are tokening hedonic phenomenology at the thought that p, we could use our awareness of these facts as a basis to infer that we were tokening the underlying dispositional desire.

But it seems much more plausible to suggest that *if* we have highly epistemically secure access to our dispositional desires, understood motivationally, it is on the basis of our inferring that we token such states from our awareness of our actions, not by noticing that our actions are associated with hedonic phenomenology and then making a further inference from our awareness of the connection between such actions and hedonic phenomenology to the conclusion that we have the underlying dispositional desire. And, as I have already argued, the former, more plausible way of explaining how we might

have epistemically secure knowledge of our dispositional desires, is a means that is non-uniquely first-personal. So it remains unclear how we are able to determine in a uniquely first-personal, highly epistemically secure way that we have a given dispositional desire on the basis of internal promptings.²¹

There is, though, another way in which we could ostensibly know, in a uniquely first-personal way, that we have a particular dispositional desire on the basis of internal promptings. The means I have in mind involves the possibility that one of the manifestations of an underlying dispositional desire is a state with phenomenology that motivates us to act. Let's refer to such states as "PM-states," for "phenomenal-motivational states." Perhaps we have privileged access to our PM-states and we are also aware of the fact that when we token PM-states, we, e.g., experience pleasure at the thought that P. We could then infer from the fact that we token both a PM-state and a state of pleasure that we have the underlying dispositional desire.

There are two things to note in response to this suggestion. First, it seems that a more direct, epistemically secure way of knowing that we have the underlying dispositional desire would be via the PM-state as opposed to by way of non-essential manifestations. After all, the PM-state is the state that is intimately connected up with action. One could, it seems, posit that we make the type of awkward, indirect inferences referenced above, but this does not seem like a psychologically plausible account of how we have privileged access to what we want.

²¹ It might be objected that in focusing on only one type of internal prompting, I am presenting a misleading view of Lawlor's position. After all the latter claims that we can, in principle, have access to a number of different internal promptings, and that therefore our evidential base for inferring that we have a given dispositional desire would be much more robust than I am making it out to be. However, I think the same question I posed above concerning hedonic internal manifestations can be raised about these other non-essential manifestations as well.

Acknowledging this worry, Access Dispositionalists might instead embrace the more plausible view that we have privileged access to our dispositional desires via inferences from the fact that we have a given PM-state to the fact that we have an underlying dispositional desire. However—and this brings me to my second point—there are strong reasons to think, as I have argued at length elsewhere,²² that if PM-states exist, such states are occurrent desires. Below, I will explain in more detail why I think this is true. But if this contention is correct, then no strict dispositionalist could consistently defend Access Dispositionalism in this manner. To do so would be to concede that SDD is false.²³

I take my defense of the view that PM-states are occurrent desires to suffice to set aside the contention that we can vindicate AD by inferring that we have a particular dispositional desire from the fact that we have a given PM-state. That being said, I am also skeptical that we have *privileged access* to our dispositional desires on the basis of inferring them from PM-states. This skepticism is rooted in the fact that I believe we, with some regularity, token PM-states without such states being the result of underlying dispositions or engendering dispositions. As an example of this phenomenon, consider a politician who reflects on the reasons why we should implement certain affirmative action policies, and on that basis comes to token a PM-state motivating him to actualize such a state of affairs. It might also be the case, though, that because of some deep-seated views this politico was not previously disposed to act in ways to bring this state of affairs about; nor did his reflection on these reasons and creation of the token PM-state engender a disposition in him to work to actualize this state of affairs. Such an agent would have, it

²² See Peterson (forthcoming).

²³ Note that if PM-states are occurrent desires, then the above discussed indirect-inferential-route-response is a problematic way to defend Access Dispositionalism for this reason as well.

seems, the relevant PM-state but lack any corresponding dispositional desire.²⁴ If such cases are not aberrant, then it is not unreasonable to think that inferences from the fact that we token a PM-state to the fact that we have an underlying dispositional desire might not be reliable enough to afford us with highly epistemically secure knowledge.²⁵ As I implied above, though, I don't think, that I need to embrace this controversial claim in order to put to rest the view that AD can be vindicated by supposing we come to possess privileged access to our dispositional desires on the basis of our access to PM-states.

Given the above discussion, then, I think that at the very least, the burden is on proponents of introspectional accounts of self-knowledge to demonstrate that we have privileged access to some dispositional desires, a burden I am skeptical can be met.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Gertler's (2011b) defense that one can token an occurrent belief/judgment without possessing the corresponding underlying dispositional belief, or for that matter creating a dispositional belief. Gertler uses the example of an agent who judges that spilling salt does not cause bad luck, but dispositionally believes the opposite.

²⁵ Cf. those who think we know our dispositional beliefs on the basis of our occurrent judgments. Those who think this typically refrain from claiming that we have privileged access to our dispositional beliefs on the basis of our occurrent judgments. Silins (2012) for instance speaks of our having a *defeasible* reason for believing that we have a dispositional belief on the basis of our occurrent judgments.

²⁶ One might object to the above discussion by claiming that the inferential processes described above for how we might come to know that our internal manifestations are caused by dispositional desires are over-intellectualized. Instead, one might contend that we are simply hard-wired to believe that we have an underlying dispositional property in most situations in which we token particular types of non-essential internal manifestations (or, perhaps, sets of such manifestations). Of course, we would need (empirical) reasons for thinking that we are hard-wired in such a way, and it would seem, as suggested above, that there are going to be a number of instances in which we token types of states that could be internal manifestations of a particular underlying dispositional desire, but aren't. Additionally, while I won't dwell on this point, it bears mentioning that a number of philosophers are convinced that self-knowledge of any of our mental states, not just dispositional desires, is not a result of such a brute causal process. This is one major reason why a number of philosophers reject inner sense accounts of self-knowledge. See Peacocke (1998) and Zimmerman (2008).

It might also be maintained that in only focusing on action-based accounts of desire, my discussion of the causal-interpretation defense of AD has been too quick. The thought here is that such a process might fare better with respect to non-action based accounts of desire. However, I think such alternative accounts of desire can be treated similarly. In short, I think that with respect to these alternative accounts, either the most direct, plausible route to possessing privileged access to dispositional desires will involve making an inference from occurrent states that, given the most plausible metaphysical views, will be occurrent desires, or a similar problem concerning how to determine that certain states are actually the manifestations of an underlying dispositional state will confront the Access Dispositionalist.

Up to this point I have been taking for granted that an introspectional account of self-knowledge explains how we know our attitudes. But as I implied earlier, a growing number of contemporary epistemologists reject this assumption. They instead hold that we know our attitudes via *extrospectional/transparent* means. I turn to such accounts next.

Transparency Accounts of Self-Knowledge & the Epistemology of Desire:

A number of epistemologists are convinced that we know attitudes like belief and desire not through introspectional observation, but by examining features of the world these states are about. These philosophers follow Gareth Evans (1982) in holding that we know whether we believe, for example, that the next president will be a Democrat, by considering whether the next president will in fact be a Democrat. Richard Moran (2001) defends a version of this view by invoking what he calls *the deliberative stance*. According to Moran, we know whether we believe that P by considering whether we *ought* to believe that P; this question in turn requires us to consider what reasons we have for believing this proposition. Moran explains what a purely transparent method of self-knowledge involves as follows:

A statement of one's belief about X is said to obey the Transparency Condition when the statement is made by considerations of the facts about X itself, and not by either an 'inward glance' or by observation of one's own behavior (2001; p. 101).

Considerations of the facts about *X itself* in turn involve a focus on the reasons for holding X. Knowing one's beliefs, for Moran, then, is a matter of having one's reasons for that belief determine that belief. The method is thought to be transparent insofar as one directs one's attention not towards the belief itself, but towards one's reasons to believe.

Moran further suggests that it is not just our beliefs we come to know by adopting the deliberative stance, but our desires as well. His contention is that in determining whether we desire, e.g., a career in medicine, we consider whether we ought to desire that career, which in turn leads us to consider whether a career in medicine has features that make it worth desiring. Moran holds, then, that we come to know that we desire P by directing our attention to the reasons we have to desire P, reasons concerning the value of P.

Alex Byrne (2012), in more explicit fashion than Moran, defends the view that a transparency account of self-knowledge can explain how we possess privileged access to our desires. He claims that we have privileged access to our desires via the following rule:

DES If P is desirable, believe that you desire that P.

Byrne's thought is that a judgment that P is desirable²⁷ can provide the basis from which to infer that one desires that P.²⁸ Insofar as there is an intimate connection between what

²⁷ Byrne appears to think that what it is for x to be desirable is for x to have the type of qualities that tend to cause us to want x— properties such as being pleasant, agreeable, delectable, and goodly. See (2011b; p. 76) for this suggestion.

²⁸ I take it as obvious that Byrne means for his account to be an account of knowledge of desire *simpliciter* as opposed to, e.g. *all-things-considered desire*. If the account is only meant to apply to the latter, then it is a much more limited account of self-knowledge than it at first appears to be.

we judge to be desirable and what we desire, DES might be a reliable enough rule to afford knowledge of our desires. And if that is the case, directing our attention to P can in turn generate knowledge that we want P.

It is important to note, however, that Byrne does not think following DES is what explains how we have *privileged access* to our desires, where *following* DES involves it actually being the case that P is desirable. He suggests instead that merely *trying* to follow DES generates reliable beliefs about our desires, the type of reliability that affords us with privileged access to these states.²⁹ As he contends, "Since one's desires tend to line up with one's beliefs about the desirability of the options, *whether or not those beliefs are actually true*, DES is *strongly* practically self-verifying" (178, emphasis added), where being *strongly practically self-verifying* means that if one merely tries to follow DES, then one's beliefs about what one wants are likely to be true.³⁰ The fact that DES is strongly practically verifying, i.e. that merely trying to follow DES leads to reliably produced true beliefs, according to Byrne, is what explains our privileged access to our desires.

Access Dispositionalists might think Byrne's account can provide a reasonable explanation of how we have privileged access to our dispositional desires.³¹ After all,

²⁹ See (2011b; p. 178) for this claim. Byrne thinks something similar is true in the case of self-knowledge of our beliefs. He thinks that merely trying to conform to the following rule—BEL: If P, believe that you believe that P—leads to reliably produced beliefs about what we believe. I think it is more plausible that BEL is what Byrne calls *strongly practically self-verifying*, than that DES is. But while I will not argue for this claim at length here, I think that BEL, *pace* Byrne, is not strongly practically self-verifying either.

³⁰ Byrne notes that trying to follow an epistemic rule involves believing that the consequent of that rule is true *because* one believes that the antecedent obtains, regardless of whether the antecedent actually does obtain. See his (2011b; p. 171) for this claim.

³¹ In what follows I focus on Byrne's account of self-knowledge as opposed to Moran's account because it is much easier to determine how Byrne's account is supposed to explain privileged access to our desires than it is to determine how Moran's view is supposed to. In fact, as O'Brien (2003) and Shoemaker (2003) point out, it is not entirely clear how Moran's account provides an explanation of our self-knowledge of our attitudes. If one is concerned, however, that I have given Moran's view too short shrift, I should mention

transparency theorists often imply that their views are applicable to dispositional states. Whether it can will in part depend on whether Byrne is right in thinking that (i) our desires tend to line up with our beliefs about the desirability of the options, and (ii) this alignment allows for highly reliable beliefs about our desires.³² Call the conjunction of (i) and (ii) *the Desire-Desirability Reliability Thesis* (or DRT). If DRT is false, then, trivially, trying to follow DES will not be *strongly practically self-verifying* and Byrne's approach will not vindicate AD. I think DRT is false. I will defend this claim by first examining how DRT fares if desires are what most Strict Dispositionalists think they are—viz. states that generate action.

The Standard View of Desire, Transparency & Access Dispositionalism:

Recall that the most popular theory of desires construes them as dispositional states that dispose us to act to bring about the state of affairs in question. If this is what desires are then whether DRT is true will depend on whether our beliefs about what things are desirable are a reliable guide to how we are disposed to act.³³ In examining this question we might first ask (i) whether mistaken beliefs about what is desirable can provide a reliable guide to what we are disposed to do, and (ii) how common are mistakes about what things are desirable. These questions are important since, as discussed above, Byrne thinks DES explains our privileged access to our desires even if we make mistaken judgments about what things are desirable. But if DES is not reliable when we do make

that a number of the critical points I make concerning Byrne's position vis-à-vis Access Dispositionalism will also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Moran's account.

³² *Belief* here is being understood broadly to include both (occurrent) judgments and dispositional beliefs.

³³ In what follows, unless otherwise noted, when I use the term *desire* this should be understood as shorthand for what strict-dispositionalist action-based theorists of desire such as Stalnaker and Smith think desires are.

mistaken judgments about what things are desirable, and such mistakes are not uncommon, then DRT is false. So let us first consider whether DES is, in general, a reliable rule when our judgments about what things are desirable are false.

Consider the following mundane example: Sandy judges that pursuing a career in medicine is desirable. However, Sandy believes this only because he has been influenced by others in making this judgment, and his judgment is mistaken. Furthermore, Sandy's behavior suggests that he is not disposed to act in ways to bring it about that he has such a career (e.g., he puts off enrolling in pre-med courses; bringing up his future career in medicine puts him in a foul mood, etc.). Now if Sandy were to attempt to conform to DES, he would infer that he desires a career in medicine. But it seems clear that, insofar as desires are dispositions to act in certain ways, Sandy does not desire this. Cases in which (a) an agent S mistakenly believes that P is desirable, (b) infers that she desires that P, but (c) is not disposed to act in ways to bring it about that P do not seem difficult to multiply. Given this, it seems reasonable to think that in a wide-range of cases, when one mistakenly judges that P is desirable, this is not going to lead to a true self-ascription.³⁴

The above point, as I earlier implied, is not a problem for Byrne's view if we are, by and large, reliable judges with respect to what things are desirable. But, it must next be determined, whether we are such reliable judges. Admittedly, when one focuses on more mundane cases, e.g. judging whether a glass of water is desirable, it seems like we would be quite reliable. However, when one focuses on desires that are not so closely tied to our bodily sensations, i.e. the type of desires Moran and other transparency theorists

³⁴ I think this is also the case if desires are dispositions to have certain pleasurable experiences. It might not be the case if desires are dispositions to judge that something is desirable or valuable; however, examples below will call into question this particular strictly dispositional account of desire.

appear to be most concerned with, it is less clear that we are reliable determiners of desirability. There is, in fact, evidence in the social psychology literature that these types of judgments are often times based on the most accessible, easy to verbalize, and salient features or reasons, where these features or reasons might very well not be representative of all the features or reasons that bear on one's judgment.

Timothy Wilson and Dolores Kraft (1993), for example, describe an agent, Lucy, who attempts to determine whether she will ever marry her current partner. She comes to the conclusion that she won't marry this person on the basis of the fact that when she considers this question, what comes to mind is the dim future earning potential of her partner.³⁵ However, if she were to consider the entire body of evidence in support of a future marriage, she would arrive at a different, and correct, conclusion about this possibility. It does not seem unreasonable to think that something similar might occur, and occur with some regularity, in the case of our beliefs about what things are desirable. The types of judgments are, after all, similar. And given the cognitive effort it would take to bring to mind all the considerations that might need to be laid bare to make an accurate desirability-judgment, it does not seem difficult to conclude that the type of evidence we would typically consider to make these judgments is the type of evidence Wilson and Kraft think we rely on.

It also bears noting that the above discussion of the ways in which we form beliefs about what is desirable implies that we often carefully reflect on what objects we find desirable. But why should we think this? If we really do attempt to conform to DES to know most of our desires, then, insofar as this knowledge is rich and widespread (and I

³⁵ This case is discussed in Gertler (2011b) in the context of her criticism of Byrne's theory of the self-knowledge of belief. It is being used here for different purposes.

imagine Byrne thinks it is), we would need to be making these types of inferences with some frequency. And it would be cognitively tasking to consider all the relevant features and/or reasons in making these desirability-judgments. It seems reasonable to think, then, that a large number of these types of judgments would not be the product of a meticulous process of gathering and evaluating evidence. To suggest otherwise would be to over-intellectualize the cognitive lives of agents. If people are not carefully considering all the relevant features that might need to be considered in order to arrive at a correct assessment of whether *x* is desirable, then this would seem to provide further support for the view that a number of these judgments might very well be mistaken. And if this is the case, then we might not be as reliable at determining what is and is not desirable as we would need to be in order for DES to be strongly practically self-verifying.

I now want to argue, however, that even if, in most cases, we are able to judge correctly that *P* is desirable, conforming to DES will not be a reliable enough rule to afford us with privileged access to our desires. The reason is that there appear to be a number of cases in which we recognize that *P* is desirable and yet are not disposed to act in ways to bring it about that *P*. Consider one of Byrne's own examples:

Lying on the sofa, wallowing in my own misery, I know that going for a bike ride by the river is a desirable option. The sun is shining, the birds are twittering... these facts are easy for me to know, and my torpor does not prevent me from knowing them. If I concluded that I want to go cycling, I would be wrong. If I really did want to go, why am I still lying on this sofa? (177).

In the above example, going cycling is a desirable option. But it seems reasonable to suggest that Byrne does not want to go cycling. After all, as he would be the first to admit, he does not appear to be disposed in the least to get up and go cycling. This case of *accidie*, or lethargic apathy, is one in which desirability and desiring come apart. If such cases are not rare, this calls into question DRT.³⁶

Byrne, however, has a ready-to-hand response to this objection. He claims that in cases like the one above we are not inclined to slavishly follow DES and misattribute a desire to ourselves. Rather, the above case points up that DES needs to be supplemented with a defeater. Byrne suggests the following:

DES DEFEATER: In cases in which S knows that ϕ -ing is a desirable option and considers the question whether she wants to ϕ , S will not follow DES and conclude she wants to ϕ if she believes: (a) that she intends to ψ , (b) that ψ -ing is incompatible with ϕ -ing, and (c) that ψ -ing is neither desirable nor better overall than ϕ -ing (2012; p. 182).

As applied to the above example, DES DEFEATER entails that insofar as Byrne believes that he intends to sit on his couch, believes that sitting on the couch is incompatible with cycling, believes that sitting on the couch is not desirable, and knows that cycling is desirable, then he will conclude that he does not want to go cycling. DES, when supplemented with DES DEFEATER, it might be argued, can help us explain why

³⁶ It deserves mention here that the type of *accidie* cases Byrne discusses appear to call into doubt crude judgment-based accounts of desire—viz. the view that to desire that P is to judge or be disposed to judge that P. As Byrne's example illustrates, it seems like desiring that P can come apart from judging or being disposed to judge that P is desirable. Byrne, for example, judges that going cycling is desirable, but it seems intuitively plausible to think he does not desire to go cycling. If this is correct, then such crude versions of judgment-based accounts of desire are untenable.

Byrne's approach can explain our epistemically secure knowledge of our desires. This is because, if DES DEFEATER is true, it explains why Byrne wouldn't mistakenly judge that he desires to cycle in the above case, or in cases like it where desirability and desiring come apart. It would thereby ward off the charge that following DES is, in certain cases, unreliable.

Lauren Ashwell (2013), though, notes that DES DEFEATER *alone* will not help Byrne avoid the above objection. As she points out, not all cases in which desirability and desiring come apart are going to be cases in which (a)-(c) are satisfied. In particular, desirability and desiring can also come apart in cases in which what one intends to do (i.e. Ψ) is judged, like that which one does not intend to do (i.e. Φ), to be desirable as well. For example, there could be cases in which Byrne judges that sitting on the couch *is in fact* desirable. But he would still not be able to reliably infer that, because cycling is desirable, he wants to go cycling. Byrne's defeater rule is silent on these types of cases, and therefore, DES even when coupled with DES DEFEATER is not going to render a reliable judgment in these circumstances.

Perhaps the above objection only reveals that Byrne needs to offer additional defeaters. But even granting this, I think DES DEFEATER does not solve the problem generated by the fact that desirability and desiring come apart. This is because DES DEFEATER, as I will now argue, is false. There are cases in which conditions (a)-(c) are met and yet it also seems reasonable to think that we would still conclude we want to ϕ on the basis of the fact that ϕ -ing is a desirable option. Here is one such example:

I know that it's desirable to stay in tonight and read Borges's *Labyrinths*. I also believe that I intend to meet a business associate,

Sam, for a night on the town. I believe that meeting up with Sam is incompatible with staying in and reading Borges. But because Sam is a lout, I further believe that a night on the town with this person is going to be undesirable.

In the above case I know that staying in and reading is desirable. But I also believe that: (a) I intend to meet Sam, (b) meeting Sam is incompatible with staying in and reading, and (c) meeting Sam is undesirable. In such a case, then, the conditions of Byrne's defeater rule are met. But why think I wouldn't conclude that I want to stay in and take a second look at "The Garden of Forking Paths"? I imagine I would conclude just this on the basis of my knowledge of the desirability of staying in and reading, and be upset by the fact that I had to meet up with Sam.³⁷

Now one might object that if I truly desired to stay in and read then I would do so. But this is false. One need not act on a desire one has. More specifically, if one is an action-based dispositionalist, one can make sense of how I do have such a desire. I am disposed to stay in and read tonight and I'll do so insofar as certain conditions are met. But in the above case those conditions aren't met. So out the door I go. It is not true, then, that in all cases in which the conditions of DES DEFEATER are met agents will reason as Byrne thinks they will. So DES DEFEATER is false. And it is not clear how to easily

³⁷ It might be objected that there must be something better overall about meeting Sam as opposed to reading because if there weren't, then I wouldn't get out the door. I am not convinced this is the case. But if it is, note that this causes problems for Byrne's view because it seems like one who thought this should say something similar with respect to the cycling case above. It seems, then, that if the objector is right about the *Labyrinths*' case, then Byrne's defeater doesn't provide an adequate response to the cycling case after all. We can formulate the worry I am offering as a dilemma: either the *Labyrinths*' case is a counterexample to DES Defeater, or if it isn't, then we have good reason to believe that DES Defeater doesn't work in the cycling case, and the latter still poses a problem for Byrne's view.

fix the problem.³⁸ Insofar as DES DEFEATER is untenable, Byrne cannot appeal to it in order to safeguard his account from cases in which desirability and desiring come apart.

Taken together, the above problems indicate that Byrne's account is susceptible to the charge that desirability and desiring come apart in a way that poses a serious problem for his account. Even if we are reliable judges with respect to what things are desirable, we still have good reason to believe that following DES is not going afford us with the type of epistemically secure knowledge needed to possess privileged access.

Access Dispositionalism, Transparency, and Value-Based Accounts of Desire:

At this point, it might be thought that transparency accounts of self-knowledge have a much better chance of vindicating AD if desires are not states that dispose us to act, but rather states that are intimately connected up with value. More specifically, one might think that transparency theories of desire like Byrne's account are most plausible when coupled with the view that desires are—what philosophers such as Dennis Stampe (1987) and Graham Oddie (2005) think they are—viz. perceptions or appearances of goodness. After all, if desires are perceptions of goodness then it would seem more reasonable to think that our judgments about what things are desirable would track what things we desire.

The main problem, however, with such a suggestion in the context of this dialectic is that the most well-developed value-based accounts of desire in the literature

³⁸ One might think Byrne should just stipulate that in *most* cases in which (a)-(c) are met, one will not follow DES and conclude that they want to ϕ . This emendation, however, would be problematic. First, insofar as Byrne made this move, he would be conceding that there are cases in addition to the types of cases Ashwell mentions in which desirability and desiring come apart. Such cases, in sum, would, it seems, be enough to call into doubt DRT. Second, the types of cases that cause problems for Byrne's defeater do not seem uncommon. Given this, it is not clear that in *most* cases in which Byrne's conditions are met, one will respond in the way Byrne thinks they will.

are accounts that construe desires as occurrent, non-dispositional states. For example, Oddie's (2005) view is that desires are appearances of goodness. These appearances are—like the perceptual experiences they are analogous to—occurrent mental events. Such a view of desire would be rejected by a strict dispositionalist. Now the latter could, of course, propose a strictly dispositional value-based account of desire. But such an account does not seem to have much plausibility. This is because if one is convinced that appearances of goodness are intimately connected up with desiring, why hold that it is only being disposed to have such appearances as opposed to the appearances themselves³⁹ that are desires?

If one insists, however, that all desires really are being disposed to token appearances of goodness, there is a further problem. The problem is that it is not clear whether, on such a view, desires are mental states at all. Indeed, one might reasonably think such properties are non-mental dispositions to token mental states. This seems like a plausible suggestion when one considers that appearances of goodness are supposed to be akin to perceptual experiences, and we do not typically think that we have dispositional perceptual states. There is good reason for this. It seems more plausible to think of these dispositions as non-mental dispositions to token perceptual experiences.⁴⁰ Something similar, I think, should be said concerning dispositions of appearances of value. Insofar as this is correct, it is not clear how an SDD-ist can plausibly adopt a strictly dispositional value-based account of desire of the stripe embraced by Oddie and

³⁹ Or at least embrace the view that appearances of value *and* being disposed to have such appearances are desires.

⁴⁰ The point I am making here is influenced by Robert Audi's (1994) discussion of the distinction between dispositional beliefs and dispositions to believe. I am arguing that dispositions to have appearances of goodness are more like dispositions to believe in that the latter are not, as Audi convincingly argues, mental states at all.

Stampe and hold that desires are mental states at all.⁴¹ At the very least, then, the burden is on a strict dispositionalist to come up with a plausible, strictly dispositional value-based account of desire. I am skeptical that such an account is in the offing.

In sum, then, I think the above discussion of transparency reveals that this approach to the self-knowledge of attitudes is not going to be able to successfully vindicate AD. This is significant given that transparency accounts of self-knowledge might have been thought to offer the most promising way to explain privileged access to dispositional states.

The Phenomenology of Desire, Strict Dispositionalism, & Privileged Access: An Outline of a More Promising Solution to our Puzzle

In the previous section I argued that Access Dispositionalism is false. If AD is untenable, then those who wish to remain committed to (1) must abandon (2)—the latter being the proposition that we have privileged access to some of our desires. I imagine that given such a choice most Strict Dispositionalists would favor abandoning (2). In this section I want to offer what I take to be a more promising solution to the puzzle, a thorough defense of which must be undertaken elsewhere.

I noted above that I am sympathetic with the view that insofar as there are phenomenal states that motivate action, such states are occurrent states. A number of philosophers have proposed that there is a certain phenomenal character at least associated with desiring—i.e., that there is something it is like to desire that *p*. Ruth Chang (2008), for instance, suggests that some desires involve an attraction towards the

⁴¹ An SDD-ist could embrace the view that desires just are a species of belief. David Lewis (1988, 1996) criticizes such views. And while there have been responses to Lewis's criticism (e.g. Price (1989)) no one to my knowledge has offered a robust defense of the view that desires just are beliefs.

object of one's desire. Acknowledging certain conceptual and linguistic limitations, I think what Chang is referencing here can most aptly be characterized as the experience of being drawn or pulled towards the object of one's desire. I think Chang is right in holding that certain desires are phenomenal states, states that possess the phenomenology of attraction. But if certain desires are phenomenal states, then it seems reasonable to hold that not all desires are dispositional states. This is because dispositional states are states that lack phenomenal character. There is nothing it is like, for example, to instantiate a dispositional desire that one's child is safe. These states are not experienced. They are not felt.⁴²

The claim that dispositional states lack phenomenology appears to be one point of agreement among those participating in the current scope-of-phenomenology debate—that is, the debate concerning what types of phenomenal experiences exist. In surveying this debate, Bayne and Montague (2011) note that one point of common ground among all parties in this debate is that "dispositional or unconscious states have no phenomenological character" (11). They go on to note that reference to the phenomenology of cognitive attitudes should be taken to refer to occurrent tokens of such states only. Insofar as participants in this debate are correct in thinking that dispositional states are not phenomenal states, and I think they are, then an adequate defense of the view that some desires are phenomenal states would put to rest Strict Dispositionalism about Desires.

⁴²This is not to say that the manifestations of dispositional properties lack phenomenology. Consider: an agent might dispositionally believe that there is no solution to the Liar's Paradox. A manifestation of this dispositional belief might be the agent's judgment that the Liar's Paradox has no solution. Some have held that a judgment of this sort has phenomenology. Searle (1992) and Silins (2012) for instance, think judgments do have phenomenology. But even if judgments possess phenomenology, dispositional beliefs themselves lack it. They lack phenomenology in the same way that the dispositional property of fragility lacks the property of sharpness that a manifestation of fragility—broken glass—possesses.

This is not the place to provide a lengthy defense of the claim that some desires are states that possess phenomenology. I do, however, want to provide an outline of how I think such a position can be defended. On the view I am sympathetic with desires are the states that perform the causal role of desiring. In other words, I think that what is known as *realizer functionalism*—the view that mental states are states that play the causal role of the type of mental state in question—is, at least with respect to the attitudes, true. I further hold that the causal role of desire is to motivate action; i.e. I embrace an action-based account of desire. Finally, I hold that what motivates action in certain cases are states that possess attraction—i.e. phenomenal states. It would follow, then, that some desires possess phenomenology.⁴³

The above line-of-reasoning will have its critics. Opponents of action-based accounts of desire, for instance, will deny that desires are essentially motivational states. Less obviously, perhaps, a number of philosophers of mind will deny that desires are states that play the causal role of desiring. Many of these theorists will instead embrace *role functionalism*—the view that mental states are second-order properties of having a first-order property that plays the causal role of the type of state in question. These philosophers champion role functionalism over realizer functionalism because they think the former can account for the multiple realizability of mental states—i.e. the (alleged)

⁴³ It might be thought that: (a) if there really are occurrent desires and (b) such desires are, at least in some cases, the manifestations of underlying dispositional desires, then (c) this offers us a way of explaining how we do have privileged access to some of our dispositional desires. We have such access, it might be thought, by inferring that we have a particular dispositional desire via our awareness of an occurrent desire. According to this line of thought, occurrent desires serve as a guide that enables us to have highly epistemically secure knowledge of our dispositional desires. I addressed this possibility above where I noted that even if we can possess privileged access to our dispositional desires in this way, this would be a hollow victory for the strict dispositionalist. For such a defense of AD would entail the falsity of SDD. I also provided reasons for thinking that even if there are occurrent desires, it is still not obvious that we possess privileged access to our dispositional desires on the basis of inferences that rely on the fact that we have occurrent desires.

fact that psychological kinds are instantiated in a wide-variety of physical kinds—and realizer functionalism cannot. My defense of the view that desires are phenomenal states, and that, hence, strict dispositionalism about desires is false, requires, then, both a defense of the view that we should be realizer functionalists with respect to desires, as well as a defense of the claim that we should embrace an action-based account of desire. I have offered such a defense of both of these theses elsewhere.⁴⁴

If certain desires are phenomenal states, this might also provide the key to explaining how we have privileged access to facts about this type of mental state. Indeed, one who embraces the view that some desires possess attraction could in turn hold that we have privileged access to our desires by type-identifying these states via their phenomenal character. A number of philosophers have argued that we have privileged access to our sensations via their phenomenology. I am proposing that something similar is the case with respect to desires.⁴⁵ On the view I am sympathetic with then, phenomenology both puts to rest Strict Dispositionalism about Desires as well as helps us explain how we have privileged access to some of our desires. In other words, phenomenology helps explain why (1) above is false, but it also helps resolve a different puzzle—viz. how we possess privileged access to some of our desires. It is the burden of future work to demonstrate the merits of such a solution.

⁴⁴ See Peterson (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ Several philosophers in the cognitive phenomenology debate have argued that we can only have privileged access to certain intentional states if these intentional states are phenomenal states. See Goldman (1993) and Pitt (2004) for two such defenses.

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