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# Learning from acquired desires: opacity and exploration

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## Résumé

Human agents acquire a majority of their intrinsic desires by experience and often token occurrent desires for targets of opportunity in their immediate environment. Desires acquired in these ways are often opaque. Their bearers do not quite know, without further effort, what it is they want about the ostensible object of their desires. I argue that a careful study of these phenomena supports two revisions to theories of desire and human motivation. First, I argue that the opacity is made possible by the complex structure of desire. Philosophers have often acknowledge that a desire seems to come both with a disposition to act and with a disposition to be satisfied with or to take pleasure in something. But most theories of desire either discount one aspect or seek to closely integrate both of them together. I argue instead that desires are complex attitudes whose two aspects, their motivational profile and their response profile, sometimes lack coordination. A desire acquired by experience or an opportunistic desire often present an opaque response profile. Although their bearers know what their desires motivate, they do not quite know what would satisfy them. Second, I argue that the most satisfactory explanation of the efforts agents make to overcome the opacity of their desires postulates a local balance between exploitation and exploration that is a function of, first, a metacognitive evaluation of the opacity of the desire and, second, the agent's lassitude with what the desire motivates.

**Mots-Clés:** desire, motivation, exploitation and exploration, epistemology of desire

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