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THE MANY FACES OF BESIRE THEORY

by

GARY V. EDWARDS

Under the Direction of George Rainbolt

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I analyze the concept of a besire. I argue that distinguishing between different types and interpretations of besires is a critical tool for adequately assessing besire theories of moral judgment. I argue for this by applying the results of this conceptual analysis of a besire to David Brink's version of the moral problem and to objections against besire theories made by Michael Smith, Simon Blackburn, and Nick Zangwill.

INDEX WORDS: Besire, Moral judgment, Moral motivation

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THE MANY FACES OF BESIRE THEORY

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iv
Introduction 1
A Formulation of the Moral Problem 2
Types of Besires 3
The Fundamental Criteria of a Besire 4
Four Types of Besires 10
The Types of Besires Applied to the Moral Problem 14
Moral Judgments Express Beliefs 15
Motivation Involves a Desire or Pro-attitude 16
There is No Necessary Connection Between Any Belief and Any Desire or Pro-attitude 18
Moral Judgments Entail Motivation 19
Section Summary 22
A Besire Theory Map 23
Critiquing Critiques of Besire Theory 24
Smith's Critique of Besire Theory 24
Blackburn's Critique of Besire Theory 28
Zangwill's Critique of Besire Theory 32
Conclusion 35
Bibliography 37

Introduction

Besires and cognitive internalism are often paired together. Besires are conceptually understood to be unitary mental states of some belief and desire configuration and are typically defined in terms of beliefs and desires.[1] Cognitive internalism is a combination of two theses. The first is that moral judgments are beliefs (cognitivism), and the second is that moral judgments are necessarily motivating (internalism). The assumption supporting the pairing of besires with cognitive internalism is that the acceptance of one requires the acceptance of the other, and sometimes vice versa. This assumption, in its strongest variety, takes the following form: if besires exist, then cognitive internalism is true; if cognitive internalism is true, then besires exist. By separating the biconditional, we can formulate the weaker versions. The second conditional (if cognitive internalism is true, then besires exist) seems rather implausible for there are several varieties of cognitive internalism that do not posit besires to defend their positions. Here, I have in mind the two different varieties of cognitive internalism endorsed by Michael Smith and Christine Korsgaard.[2] Smith, in fact, is explicitly critical of besire theories. The truth of the first conditional (if besires exist, then cognitive internalism is true) is perhaps more difficult to challenge. In this paper, I present a challenge to this conditional by formulating a besire theory that is committed to neither cognitivism nor internalism. Just as cognitive internalism has developed allowing for differing varieties and types to emerge, our understanding of besire theory is in need of the same development; just as there are varieties of cognitive internalism to be considered, there are also varieties of besires to be considered. The ability to make distinctions between different types of besires is a useful and powerful tool. In this paper, I argue that distinguishing

[1] The term "besire" was coined by J. E. J. Altham in "The Legacy of Emotivism," in *Fact, Science and Morality: Essays on A. J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic*, eds. Graham Macdonald and Crispin Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 284.

[2] Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

between different types and interpretations of besires is a critical tool for adequately assessing besire theories. I support this claim by showing how different conceptions of besire can 1) render incomplete David Brink's way of mapping metaethical positions, and 2) help defend besire theories from objections made by Smith, Simon Blackburn and Nick Zangwill. My aim is not to argue that besires exist or to provide a general defense of besire theories of moral judgment. Rather, my aim is to argue that the analysis of besire theory, in order to be effective, must be nuanced enough to accommodate the different types of besires.

In the first section, I present the moral problem and the resulting position map as formulated by Brink. In the second section, I sketch the possible conceptions of besire. In the third section, I show what the conceptions of besire sketched in the second section do to the moral problem map outlined in the first section. This section highlights the incompleteness of Brink's position map and helps to develop the conceptions of a besire. In the fourth section, I present my suggestions for amending Brink's position map. In the fifth section, I examine objections to besire theory made by Smith, Blackburn and Zangwill, and I show how different formulations of besires can be used to foil these objections. In conclusion, I offer some thoughts on the direction of future besire inquiry and formulate my challenge to the conditional claim that if besires exist, then cognitive internalism is true.

A Formulation of the Moral Problem

The moral problem is framed in terms of incompatible theses. Argument over the acceptability of these theses has served as a popular framework for metaethical inquiry in general. Typically, metaethical positions are mapped according to whether the position denies a particular claim of the moral problem. I argue here that the formulation of the moral problem as given by Brink is incomplete because, in its current formulation, it fails to provide for an adequate assessment of besire theories of moral judgment.

The driving force behind Brink's formulation of the moral problem is that one cannot coherently hold all four of the below theses as they are. Typically, the response is to deny or at least substantially modify one of the theses so as to present a coherent theory of moral judgment. In his own words, Brink's version of the moral problem includes the following four theses:

1. Moral judgments express beliefs.
2. Moral judgments entail motivation.
3. Motivation involves a desire or pro-attitude.
4. There is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude.[3]

For Brink, the acceptance of the first thesis defines cognitivism, and the denial of the first thesis defines non-cognitivism. The acceptance of the second thesis defines motivational internalism, and the denial of the second thesis defines motivational externalism. The denial of the third thesis defines rationalism with a commitment to the claim that beliefs motivate by themselves. The denial of the fourth thesis defines rationalism with a commitment to the claim that there is a necessary connection between desires and beliefs and that this accounts for the motivation of moral judgments.

Types of Besires

In this section, I construct a framework from which to analyze Brink's version of the moral problem. I do this by outlining four types of besires. These types each allow distinctions to be made between different varieties of besire theory. First, I provide a general conception of a besire. Second, I examine and illustrate four types of besires.

[3] David Brink, "Moral Motivation," *Ethics* 108 (1997): 6.

The Fundamental Criteria of a Besire

Before examining the definition of a besire, it may be helpful to reflect on the need for the concept of a besire.[4] Why do we need the concept of a besire? Ultimately, we may not need one. In some sense, the need for the concept of a besire arises from and depends on the deficiencies of standard belief-based and desire-based accounts of moral judgment. However, independent of this, the concept of a besire would provide a way to resolve the above moral problem. And as such, for example, Smith and Blackburn use the concept of a besire to bolster their own theories of moral judgment by arguing that besires do not exist.[5] The need for the concept of a besire may also arise from empirical evidence that suggests there are such besire-like states in our mental economy, and this is something I will comment on in the conclusion of this paper. As I am concerned with addressing Smith's, Blackburn's and Zangwill's arguments against besire theory and the need for a more developed framework from which to understand the concept of a besire, I do not consider the deficiencies of belief-based or desire-based accounts of moral judgment. Although showing the deficiencies of belief-based and desire-based accounts of moral judgment would be a necessary part of persuasively arguing for besire theory, my aim here is more modest. I take the presence of the concept of a besire in the literature as sufficient to sustain this inquiry.

So, what is a besire? Besires are posited in order to explain moral judgment. A moral judgment is a kind of mental state. The question is: what kind of mental state? The typical mental state candidates are beliefs and desires. A belief is a mental state that represents the world as being a certain way. Beliefs are mental states that represent states of affairs in the world and are propositional attitudes: that is, beliefs are capable of being true or false. In this sense, beliefs are capable of providing some measure of objectivity. In other words, beliefs can be mind-independent in that the

[4] Margret Olivia Little, "Virtue as Knowledge: Objections from the Philosophy of Mind." *Nous* 31 (1997): 59-79. Here, Little presents a fairly comprehensive summary of the use of the concept of a besire.

[5] Smith, *The Moral Problem*, 118; Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 101-104.

content of a belief is either true or false if it is about the non-mental world; that is, for example, the poverty of a developing country or the passing statistics of your favorite team's quarterback. Beliefs can be mind-independent in a way that desires cannot. So, if our moral judgments are beliefs, then our moral judgments are capable of being objective to some degree. A desire is a mental state that motivates. Desires are states that motivate and are pro-attitudes that are capable of leading us to action. In this sense, desires are said to be capable of providing motivational force. So, if our moral judgments are desires, then our moral judgments can be motivating to some degree.

Also, beliefs and desires are unitary mental states. A unitary mental state is a mental state unit that is, in some sense, indivisible and/or whole. A besire is supposed to be a unitary mental state. As such, Zangwill characterizes besire-like unitary mental states as the following: "[b]esires are not supposed to be gerrymandered mereological sums of two states – a belief plus a desire – each of which could occur without the other."[6] In this sense, a besire-like unitary mental state is not merely a random collection of mental states. With these criteria, there could be some controversy about what counts as a unitary state. One could argue that a unitary state can still have distinguishable components if the connection between the components is substantial enough to satisfy the above unitary state criteria. For example, a besire-like unitary state that is conceived as a conjunction of belief and desire under conditions of complete information, full rationality, or virtuous character. The analysis and conceptual framework in this paper is compatible with these possible interpretations. Also, Brink's moral problem and Smith's, Blackburn's, and Zangwill's arguments against the existence of besires all assume that a besire and the mental state expressed by a moral judgment are both *single* unitary states. While there may be some reservations about this,[7] here, for the sake of the analysis, I simply assume it as does Brink in his moral problem position map and as does Smith, Blackburn, and Zangwill in their arguments against

[6] Nick Zangwill, "Besires and the Motivation Debate," *Theoria* 74 (2008): 51.
[7] Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006), 57.

the existence of besires. It is worth noting that if this assumption is a problem for the besire theorist, then it is also a problem for Brink, Smith, Blackburn, and Zangwill.

If we assume that our moral judgments are expressions of only a single unitary mental state, then according to our standard mental state economy, we are forced to choose between a belief and a desire. Choosing one over the other creates both benefits and burdens. What specifically is at stake here? If moral judgments are beliefs, then we have a straight forward way to explain why and how our moral judgments are objective. Moral judgments are just like the beliefs that the Earth is round or that the Earth circles the Sun. If moral judgments are desires, then we have a straight forward way to explain why and how our moral judgments motivate. Moral judgments are just like the desires to go have a cold beer on a hot summer day or have a warm cup of coffee on a cool fall day. However, choosing between a belief and a desire costs something. The burden facing belief-based accounts of moral judgment is their apparent inability to account for the motivation of our moral judgments. Beliefs are not a type of mental state thought to be motivating. The burden facing desire-based accounts of moral judgment is their apparent inability to account for the objectivity of our moral judgments. Desires are not a type of mental state thought to be objective. A besire is posited and designed to take advantage of this situation. It is designed to capitalize on the ease and straightforwardness of a belief's capability to explain objectivity and a desire's capability to explain motivation, and it might be able to do so while avoiding the explanatory burdens.

There are two definitional approaches to the conceptual design of a besire that take advantage of this situation. The first approach attempts to define a besire by reference to types of mental states: a belief and a desire. Belief and desire mental state components have been fairly prevalent in the definitions and formulations of a besire. A possible reason for this is due to the presence of belief and desire mental states in the above background problem that besires are formulated to solve. The second approach attempts to define a besire by reference to characteristics of belief and desire. The second

approach is less specific than the first approach. There is a difference between arguing that a mental state is a desire and arguing that a mental state has the characteristics of a desire. Arguing that a mental state has the characteristics of a desire is a potentially broader criterion than arguing that a mental state is a desire. A broader criterion allows for more options, and it creates the conceptual space to propose relevant characteristics of the type of mental state in question. Determining what the relevant characteristics are is an important question for besire theories. Here, I offer a potential interpretation of these characteristics. I think we can stay within the conceptual confines of a besire and expand the range of potential types of besire-like mental states by adopting the second approach. So, determining the relevant characteristic of a belief, a desire, and in turn a besire is a matter of determining what explanatory role each needs to play.

More specifically, the first approach defines a besire as a belief and a desire, and analysis of this concept of a besire is framed in terms of the definition of a belief and a desire. So, according to the first approach, a besire:

1. represents a state of affairs in the world and
2. is motivating.

The second approach defines a besire as being composed of characteristics of belief and desire. These characteristics can be established by the explanatory criteria such characteristics are suppose to satisfy. So, according to the second approach, a besire is a type of mental state that:

1. accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments and
2. accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments.

In terms of belief, if we compare the first approach with the second approach, there does not seem to be too much gained. Represents-a-state-of-affairs-in-the-world already has a certain amount of flexibility built into the concept; it is broad enough to account for different objectivity pictures of our moral judgments. For example, it is still an open question whether represents-a-state-of-affairs-in-the-

world and is-to-account-for-the-objectivity-of-our-moral-judgments are to be determined by subjective criteria, cultural criteria, or universal and absolute criteria. In contrast, in terms of desire, if we compare the first approach with the second approach, there does seem to be something gained. Is-motivating lacks explanatory flexibility; it is not broad enough to account for different motivation pictures of our moral judgments. Specifically, what this gain amounts to is the capacity to account for a wider spectrum of motivational theories; that is, not only those that require that moral judgments necessarily motivate, but also those that can accommodate that moral judgments contingently motivate. A more detailed defense of this will have to wait until later. The important point now is that framing the conception of a besire from the second approach with explanatory criteria allows us to gain flexibility.

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Both limit what a besire can possibly be. The first approach allows us to get a better grasp of what a besire is. It defines a besire by specific and familiar mental states: that of a belief and a desire. However, it is restrictive. I think that it is too restrictive, because it does not allow us to ask what a besire could be. The second approach allows us to create conceptions of a besire that are beyond or something other than that of a combination of belief and desire. However, it is not as concrete as the first approach about what a besire is.

My task here is to formulate a fundamental conception of a besire, and the second approach will allow that to happen in its broadest sense. It is important to establish what a besire is, but it is also important to establish a comprehensive framework from which to construct the concept of a besire. According to the second approach and in its broadest sense, a besire is a unitary mental state that is capable of accounting for the objectivity of our moral judgments and is capable of accounting for the motivation of our moral judgments. Satisfying the explanatory criteria with specific mental states helps to contribute some precision to the possible definitions. This leaves us with the following four definitional categories:

- belief,

- desire,
- some mental state (not beliefs) that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments, and
- some mental state (not desires) that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments.

Combining them creates eight distinct types of potential mental states. Below, I use "mere" to help distinguish the difference between belief as a category for formulating a definition of besire and belief (in the mere-sense) as a non-besire type of mental state. The same convention applies to the use of mere desire. A moral judgment could be:

a. a mere belief,

b. a mere desire,

c. a mental state that is both a belief and a desire,

d. a desire that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments (a special type of desire),

e. a belief that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments (a special type of belief),

f. a mental state that only accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments but is not a belief or a desire,

g. a mental state that only accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments but is not a desire or a belief,

h. a mental state that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments and that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments but is not a belief or a desire.

Any type of mental state that is something other than a) a mere belief, b) a mere desire, f) a mental state that only accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments but is not a belief or a desire, and g) a mental state that only accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments but is not a desire or a belief should, according to this framework, tend to be considered a besire. Fundamentally, the following are besire-like mental states:

1. a mental state that is both a belief and a desire [c. above],

2. a desire that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments (a special type of desire) [d. above],

3. a belief that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments (a special type of belief) [e. above],

4. a mental state that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments and that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments but is not a belief or a desire [h. above].

According to the first type of besire-like mental state, if besires are conceived in terms of belief and desire, then besires are conceived of as some third type of mental state that is both a belief and desire. In contrast, sometimes the composition of a besire is defined according to a belief or desire and some characteristic of beliefs and desires. According to the second and third types of besire-like mental states, if besires are formulated in terms of a combination of belief and the complementary explanatory characteristic of a desire, or in terms of a combination of desire and the complementary explanatory characteristic of a belief, then besires can be conceived of as a special type or sub-type of belief or desire respectively. For example, the second type of besire-like mental state is a belief that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments, and the third type of besire-like mental state is a desire that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments. There is also another possibility that qualifies as a besire according to the fundamental conception of a besire. That is, according to the fourth type of besire-like mental state, a besire is not a belief or a desire, but rather a besire is a different sort of mental state that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments and that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments. Below, I examine each of these four types in more detail.

Four Types of Besires

Considering the belief and desire type configuration of a besire, a definition of a besire could logically have four forms. According to the first form, a besire is both a belief and a desire. I will refer to this thesis as the besire-as-both conception of besire. The besire-as-both theorist conceives of besires as hybrid states that are somehow a combination of both belief and desire. The besire-as-both state has

been referred to as a Janus-like state[8] or a hermaphrodite state.[9] On this view, the moral judgment that "I ought to give money to Oxfam" is the expression of a mental state that is most accurately characterized as both a belief and a desire. The besire-as-both mental state represents a state of affairs in the world: for example, perceiving the effects of poverty, recognizing that one has more money than one needs, and understanding the institutional function of Oxfam. The besire-as-both mental state is also motivating: that is, it is a desire to give money to Oxfam. In this case, expressing the besire-as-both mental state is similar to expressing that "I want to give money to Oxfam." Presumably, a besire-as-both is motivating in the same way that a desire is motivating. That is, both the desire and the besire-as-both are necessarily motivating. According to Smith, a central burden facing this type of besire theory is to show that a unitary mental state of a belief and desire (a besire-as-both) is coherent.[10]

According to the second form, a besire is a type of belief and not a desire. I will refer to this thesis as the besire-as-belief conception of besire. The besire-as-belief theorist conceives of besires as belief states that account for the motivation of our moral judgments by themselves and without an accompanying desire. In this case, besires are special types of beliefs. So, a besire-as-belief is not a hybrid state like a besire-as-both. However, though a besire-as-belief is a type of belief, it is distinguishable from a mere belief because of its motivating capacity. So, the moral judgment that "I ought to give money to Oxfam" is the expression of a mental state most accurately characterized as a belief. The besire-as-belief mental state represents a state of affairs in the world: for example, perceiving the effects of poverty, recognizing that one has more money than one needs, and understanding the institutional function of Oxfam. The besire-as-belief mental state also accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments: that is, it is a special type of belief that can motivate one to give

[8] David McNaughton, *Moral Vision* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 109.
[9] Zangwill, 51.
[10] Smith, *The Moral Problem*, 118.

money to Oxfam. In this case, expressing the besire-as-belief mental state could be similar to expressing that "I want to give money to Oxfam," but it does not have to be.

A besire-as-belief does not have to be motivating in the same way that a desire is motivating. There is no conceptual expectation that the besire-as-belief will be necessarily motivating. In this case, this sort of besire might solve the moral problem by embracing externalism and denying that motivation entails a desire that necessarily motivates. It may be that a besire-as-belief does necessarily motivate, but that is a separate matter to be determined by the specifics of the besire theory. According to this conception of besire, motivation must be accounted for in some way without a desire. A central burden facing this type of besire theory is to show that a belief can provide motivation.[11]

According to the third form, a besire is a type of desire and not a belief. I will refer to this thesis as the besire-as-desire conception of besire. The besire-as-desire theorist conceives of besires as desire states that represent a state of affairs in the world by themselves and without an accompanying belief. In this case, besires are special types of desires. So, a besire-as-desire is not a hybrid state like a besire-as-both. However, though a besire-as-desire is a type of desire, it is distinguishable from a mere desire because of its representational capacity. So, the moral judgment that "I ought to give money to Oxfam" is the expression of a mental state most accurately characterized as a desire. The besire-as-desire mental state is motivating: that is, it is a desire that motivates one to give money to Oxfam. In this case, expressing the besire-as-desire mental state is similar to expressing that "I want to give money to Oxfam." The besire-as-desire mental state also represents a state of affairs in the world: for example, perceiving the effects of poverty, recognizing that one has more money than one needs, and understanding the institutional function of Oxfam.

A besire-as-desire does not have to represent a state of affairs in the world exactly as a belief does. According to this conception of besire, representation must be accounted for in some other way

[11] Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). Here, Nagel provides a cognitive account of moral motivation.

besides a belief. In this case, this sort of besire might solve the moral problem by embracing non-cognitivism and denying that moral judgments express beliefs. It may be that a besire-as-desire does represent the world exactly like belief, but that is a separate matter to be determined by the besire theory. A central burden facing this type of besire theory is to show that our desires can have representational content.[12]

According to the fourth form, a besire is not a belief and not a desire. I will refer to this thesis as the besire-as-neither conception of besire. The besire-as-neither theorist conceives of a besire as something that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments and that accounts for the objectivity of our moral judgments but is not a belief or a desire. This is by far the loosest and broadest category of possible besire conceptions. While it does offer a positive definition of a besire, it is framed by negative definitional components that do not specify what a besire is. Rather, it tells what a besire is not. The negative part of the definition of a besire-as-neither is that a besire is not a belief and not a desire. The positive part of the definition of a besire-as-neither is that a besire is something that accounts for the motivation and the objectivity of our moral judgments. As an example of this, I offer Linda Zagzebski's analysis of an emotion and argue that it has the potential to be considered a besire-as-neither type of mental state. In "Emotion and Moral Judgment", Zagzebski writes:

> To take a moral example, a situation has the descriptive feature of being one in which a person with whom I do not identify is suffering. (We might also need to add that I find the sufferer beneath me in status.) My awareness of this descriptive feature, together with my emotional dispositions, leads me to be in the distinctive emotional state of feeling pity for the sufferer whom I see as pitiful. I may express my emotion by simply saying, "She is pitiful." This judgment expresses an intrinsically motivating state since it expresses the emotion of pity; it is propositional in form, with a truth value, and I am asserting that proposition when I say "She is pitiful."[13]

Here is an example of a mental state that seems to satisfy the fundamental conception of a besire of the besire-as-neither type. As presented by Zagzebski, this mental state represents a state of affairs in the

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[12] Mark Platts, *Ways of Meaning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Mark Platts, "Moral Reality and the End of Desire," in Mark Platts ed., *Reference, Truth and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1980). Here, Platts provides a non-cognitive account of representational moral judgment.

[13] Linda Zagzebski, "Emotion and Moral Judgment," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66 (2003): 118.

world through the descriptive features of the sufferer, and it accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments due to its status as an emotion. It seems to have the right mixture of parts to be a besire.

So, for this type of besire, the moral judgment that "I ought to give money to Oxfam" is the expression of a mental state most accurately characterized as a besire-as-neither. In the Zagzebski case, perhaps something like an emotion. The besire-as-neither mental state accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments: that is, it is a mental state that can motivate one to give money to Oxfam. In this case, expressing the besire-as-neither mental state could be similar to expressing that "I want to give money to Oxfam," but it does not have to be. The besire-as-neither mental state also represents a state of affairs in the world: for example, perceiving the effects of poverty, recognizing that one has more money than one needs, and understanding the institutional function of Oxfam. However, a besire-as-neither does not have to represent a state of affairs in the world exactly as a belief does, nor does it have to motivate exactly like a desire. Indeed, a besire-as-neither cannot represent like a belief and motivate like a desire or else it would be a besire-as-both. A central burden facing this type of besire theory is to explain in positive terms what a besire-as-neither is.

The Types of Besires Applied to the Moral Problem

Following Brink's version of the moral problem, one can formulate both acceptance claims and denial claims to each thesis of the moral problem and still hold a besire theory depending on which type of besire is accepted. To illustrate this I will examine each of Brink's theses. My aim here is to facilitate the development of the concept of a besire. In order to do that I assume that besire theory is plausible and independently motivated as a theory of moral judgment outside of its dependency on the moral problem. This section is merely an exercise to help us understand the concept of a besire. First, I will examine the following theses: that moral judgments express beliefs, that motivation involves a desire or pro-attitude, and that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-

attitude. I will deal with the thesis that moral judgments entail motivation last as it requires special attention.

Moral Judgments Express Beliefs

Can a besire theorist deny the claim that moral judgments express beliefs? The answer is that it depends on the conception of besire assumed by the besire theorist. If a theorist accepts the besire-as-desire, besire-as-neither (and possibly the besire-as-both) formulations of besires, then she can deny that moral judgments express beliefs. So, for example, imagine Debbie is a besire-as-desire theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are desires and contain propositional content by themselves (a besire-as-desire). According to Debbie, besires are not beliefs, but rather, besires are a special type of desire: one that is capable of being true or false. It is the pairing of the desire and propositional content that distinguishes by degree a besire-as-desire from a mere desire. However, for Debbie, the pairing of a desire and propositional content distinguishes by type a besire-as-desire from a belief. Therefore, Debbie must deny that moral judgments express beliefs because moral judgments are expressions of besires and, according to Debbie, besires are a special type of desire.

However, if a theorist accepts the besire-as-belief (and possibly besire-as-both) formulation(s) of besires, then she must hold that moral judgments are beliefs. So, for example, imagine Betty is a besire-as-belief theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are beliefs and are capable of motivating by themselves (a besire-as-belief). According to Betty, besires are not desires, but rather, besires are a special type of belief: one that is capable of motivating. It is the pairing of the belief and motivational force that distinguishes a besire-as-belief from a mere belief. This also distinguishes by type a besire-as-belief from a desire. Betty must hold that moral judgments express beliefs because moral judgments are expressions of besires and, according to Betty, besires are a special type of belief.

So, what type of besire theorist one is will determine whether one is a cognitivist or a non-cognitivist about moral judgments. This means that arguments directed against cognitivist conceptions of besire theory might be unable to address a portion of theoretically possible besire theories. If an argument against besire theories is aimed at cognitivist forms of besires and claims to aim at all besire theories, then that argument against besire theory might be unsuccessful because a cognitivist restriction to the conception of a besire is too narrow to represent the full domain of possible besire theories. This same problem applies to arguments directed against non-cognitivist conceptions of besire that claim to target all besire theories. That is, arguments aimed at Betty's conception of besire theory might not affect Debbie's besire theory, and arguments aimed at Debbie's conception of besire theory might not affect Betty's besire theory because Debbie and Betty have different conceptions of besires.

Motivation Involves a Desire or Pro-attitude

Can a besire theorist deny the claim that motivation involves a desire or pro-attitude? The answer is that it depends on the conception of besire assumed by the besire theorist. Before examining this thesis, it is worth noting that Brink's formulation of this thesis is somewhat vague. Specifically, by "involves," I interpret Brink to mean that motivation necessarily requires a desire or pro-attitude. So, if a theorist accepts the besire-as-belief or besire-as-neither formulation of besires, then she can deny that motivation necessarily requires a desire or pro-attitude. For example, recall Betty who is a besire-as-belief theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are beliefs that account for the motivation of our moral judgments (a besire-as-belief). According to Betty, besires are not desires and do not necessarily require desires or pro-attitudes, but rather, besires are a special type of belief: one that accounts for the motivation of our moral judgments without a non-cognitive counterpart like a desire or pro-attitude. It is the pairing of the belief with motivation that distinguishes by degree a besire-as-belief from a mere belief. That is, both a besire-as-belief and a mere belief are types of belief. For Betty, the pairing of a belief and motivation distinguishes by type a besire-

as-belief from a desire. That is, a besire-as-belief is a different type of mental state than a desire. Therefore, Betty must deny that moral judgments necessarily require desires or pro-attitudes.

However, if a theorist accepts the besire-as-desire or besire-as-both formulation(s) of besires, then she must accept that motivation necessarily requires a desire or pro-attitude. So, for example, recall Debbie who is a besire-as-desire theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are desires and contain propositional content by themselves (a besire-as-desire). According to Debbie, besires are not beliefs, but rather, besires are a special type of desire: one that contains propositional content. It is the pairing of the desire and propositional content that distinguishes by degree a besire-as-desire from a mere desire. Therefore, Debbie must hold that moral judgments necessarily require desires because moral judgments are expressions of besires and, according to Debbie, besires are a special type of desire.

So, what type of besire theorist one is will determine whether one can accept that motivation necessarily requires a desire or pro-attitude. This means that arguments directed against conceptions of besire theory committed to the thesis that motivation requires a desire or pro-attitude might be unable to address a portion of possible besire theories. If an argument against besire theory is aimed at motivation-necessarily-requires-a-desire-or-pro-attitude forms of besires and claims to aim at the existence of all besire theories, then that argument against that besire theory might be unsuccessful because a motivation-necessarily-requires-a-desire-or-pro-attitude restriction to the conception of a besire is too narrow to represent the full domain of possible besires theories. This same problem applies to arguments directed against the conceptions of besire theory that deny that motivation necessarily requires a desire or pro-attitude and claim to target all besire theories. That is, arguments aimed at Betty's conception of besire theory might not affect Debbie's besire theory, and arguments aimed at Debbie's conception of besire theory might not affect Betty's besire theory because Debbie and Betty have different conceptions of besires.

There is No Necessary Connection Between Any Belief and Any Desire or Pro-attitude

Can a besire theorist deny the claim that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude? The answer is that it depends on the conception of besire assumed by the besire theorist. If a theorist accepts the besire-as-both and perhaps the besire-as-neither conceptions of besire, then a theorist can potentially deny that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude. That is, for example, a besire-as-both conception of besire theory is capable of accounting for some sort of necessary connection. It could be argued that some sort of necessary connection claim is what is responsible for the claim that a besire is both a belief and a desire. For example, imagine that Beth is a besire-as-both theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are both beliefs and desires (a besire-as-both). According to Beth, besires can be understood to require a necessary connection between a belief and a desire. So, Beth can deny the claim that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude.

However, if a theorist accepts the besire-as-belief or the besire-as-desire formulation(s) of besire, then a theorist can accept that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude. That is, for example, a besire-as-belief theorist can say that there is no connection needed between a belief and a desire because a besire-as-belief conception of besire does not require a desire. For example, recall Betty who is a besire-as-belief theorist. She believes that moral judgments are expressions of unitary mental states that are beliefs that account for the motivation of our moral judgments (a besire-as-belief). According to Betty, besires do not require desires to account for the motivation of our moral judgments. Therefore, Betty can deny that besires require a necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude.

So, what type of besire theorist one is will determine whether one can deny that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude. This means that arguments

directed against conceptions of besire theory committed to the thesis that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude might be unable to address a portion of possible besire theories. If an argument against besire theory is aimed at there-is-no-necessary-connection-between-any-belief-and-any-desire-or-pro-attitude forms of besire theory, then that argument might be unsuccessful because the there-is-no-necessary-connection-between-any-belief-and-any-desire-or-pro-attitude restriction to the conception of a besire is too narrow to represent the full domain of possible besire theories. This same problem applies to arguments that claim to target all besire theories and are directed against conceptions of besire theory that accept that there is no necessary connection between any belief and any desire or pro-attitude. That is, arguments aimed at Beth's conception of besire theory might not affect Betty's besire theory, and arguments aimed at Betty's conception of besire theory might not affect Beth's besire theory because Betty and Beth have different conceptions of besires.

Moral Judgments Entail Motivation

Can a besire theorist deny the claim that moral judgments entail motivation? Before examining this thesis, it will be useful to formulate the debate between internalism and externalism. Internalism is the position that moral judgments are necessarily motivating, and externalism is the denial of this claim.[14] Both positions are concerned about accounting for motivation. Internalism can be formulated in stronger and weaker versions. Stronger versions hold that moral judgments are necessarily motivating and deny that anything else can impede one from acting on a moral judgment. Weaker versions hold that moral judgments are necessarily motivating and accept that something can impede one from acting on a moral judgment. Externalists can claim that indirectly moral judgments, at best, contingently motivate. Different varieties of externalism are formulated according to what accounts for

[14] A traditional problem for this internalistic explanation of motivation is to account for the existence of amoralists. Amoralists are people who seem to make a moral judgment yet have no motivation attached to that moral judgment.

this contingent motivation. The usual formulation is to account for motivation by referring to some desire that accompanies the moral judgment, such as, when the moral judgment is considered to be a belief and when the desire is not necessarily connected to the moral judgment.

How does the internalism/externalism debate relate to besires? Fundamentally, a besire is a unitary mental state that is capable of accounting for the objectivity of our moral judgments and is capable of accounting for the motivation of our moral judgments. This basic conception of a besire is sometimes classified in terms of belief and desire. So, a besire-as-both is a mental state of some belief and desire composition. Typically, beliefs are considered to be capable of being objective insofar as beliefs are capable of being true or false, and so, desires are considered to be the key to explaining motivation. Desires are mental states that necessarily motivate. Couple this with the claim that beliefs are mental states that are not able to motivate and desires become very important to besire-as-both theories of motivation. So, if desires necessarily motivate, then a theory of moral judgment that relies on desires to explain motivation is committed to moral judgments being necessarily motivating.

One way to avoid this commitment to internalism is to formulate a theory of moral judgment that is not committed to desires and is able to account for the motivational expectations we have of moral judgments. To do this, it is helpful to think in terms of the capability to account for our motivational expectations and to remember that what our motivational expectations are is a separate matter. If we expect that moral judgments are contingently motivating, then all the concept of a besire has to be able to account for is a mental state that has the capacity to motivate but may not always motivate. If we expect that moral judgments are necessarily motivating, then the concept of a besire has to be able to account for why moral judgments always motivate. The framework above that generated our possible conceptions of a besire is flexible enough to account for both internalistic and externalistic expectations. More specifically, the besire-as-both and besire-as-desire conceptions both compositionally require a desire, and so, both can account for internalistic expectations of moral

judgments. The besire-as-belief and besire-as-neither conceptions both do not compositionally require a desire, as such, both can account for externalistic expectations of moral judgments. This is not to say these are explanatorily adequate options, but it is to say that these two conceptions are the most likely options from which to develop an adequate theory. Both the besire-as-belief and besire-as-neither conceptions are viable because both are conceptions of besire that can account for motivation without relying on a desire. Consequently, both are able to provide explanations of motivation that are not internalistic. There is nothing about the conception of a besire-as-belief or a besire-as-neither that makes besire theories that rely on those conceptions of besire necessarily incompatible with an externalist explanation of motivation.

The existence of besires that are compatible with externalism might not be an attractive option to some externalists. If besires exist, then our economy of mental states becomes more complex. One could argue it is simpler to say that there are no besires at all. However, this appeal to simplicity has to be qualified by a theory's ability to adequately explain the phenomena in question. If one accepts the general amoralist objection to internalism and seeks to provide some account for why, more times than not, our moral judgments do seem to motivate, then a besire type of mental state could provide a possible explanation. Establishing its plausibility as an adequate theory of moral judgment is another matter. The point is that the concept of a besire is not inextricably bound to internalism, and it could be useful in framing a motivational theory that explains how the intuition that moral judgments do seem to motivate might be made compatible with the intuition that in some cases moral judgments do not seem to motivate.

If a theorist determines that an adequate theory of moral motivation is best explained by the claim that moral judgments contingently motivate, then she can deny that moral judgments entail motivation. Likewise, if a theorist determines that an adequate theory of moral motivation is best explained by the claim that moral judgments necessarily motivate, then she can accept that moral

judgments entail motivation. Specifically, theories of moral motivation are presented in terms of internalism and externalism. Internalism is distinguished from externalism by reference to the thesis that moral judgments entail motivation. So, what type of besire theorist one is will determine whether one can accept that moral judgments entail motivation. This means that arguments directed against conceptions of besires committed to internalism might be unable to address a portion of possible besire theories. If an argument against besire theory is aimed at internalistic forms of besire theory and claims to aim at the existence of all besire theories, then that argument against that besire theory might be unsuccessful because an internalism restriction to the conception of a besire is too narrow to represent the full domain of possible besire theories. This same problem applies to arguments directed against the externalistic forms of besire theory that claim to target all besire theories.

Section Summary

Denial of one of the moral problem theses should place the denier into a specific camp. But, besires, depending on their type formulation and interpretation, seem to allow us to at least choose a variety of sub-positions under each thesis depending on the type and interpretation of besire chosen. These sub-positions are not clearly outlined by the four theses, and so they can easily be overlooked.

There is a good reason to think that the incompleteness of Brink's mapping is the issue. The issue is not the incoherence of position distinctions implicit in each thesis, or the incoherence of the conception of a besire. There are no logical problems with formulating, for example, a cognitivism and non-cognitivism divide: non-cognitivism being the denial of cognitivism. There also are no logical problems with the possible formulations of a conception of besire. A besire-as-both, a besire-as-belief, a besire-as-desire, and a besire-as-neither represent the complete domain from which to formulate a definition of besire. It is important to note, so far there has been no claim made about whether cognitivism is true or false, or whether besires exist or do not exist. The matter here is simply one of presenting the possible metaethical positions, and the claim at issue is whether Brink's version of the

moral problem is a complete assessment of the relevant metaethical positions. I have argued that it is not nuanced enough to help facilitate a detailed and therefore complete understanding of besire theory.

A Besire Theory Map

One way to approach besire theory and outline the possible forms of besire is by strategizing on how to escape the following dilemma:

Premise 1: If moral judgments are only beliefs, then we are unable to account for the motivation of moral judgments.

Premise 2: If moral judgments are only desires, then we are unable to account for the objectivity of moral judgments.

Premise 3: Moral judgments are either beliefs or desires.

Conclusion: So, either we are unable to account for the motivation of moral judgments, or we are unable to account for the objectivity of moral judgments.

Besire theory is attractive because it allows us to escape this dilemma by denying one of the premises. Denying Premise 1 commits us to the claim that beliefs by themselves are able to account for the motivational force of our moral judgments. This is the basic assumption of the besire-as-belief conception of besire. Denying Premise 2 commits us to the claim that desires by themselves are able to account for the objectivity of our moral judgments. This is the basic assumption of the besire-as-desire conception of besire. Denying Premise 3 commits us to the claim that moral judgments express something other than beliefs or desires. This is the basic assumption of the besire-as-both and besire-as-neither conceptions of besire. The conclusion, that both objectivity and motivation matter to an adequate account of moral judgment, I take to be understood in its most trivial sense. This statement makes no claim as to whether internalism or externalism is true, or whether the strong or weak variety of either is adequate. It also makes no claim about what sense of true or false is adequate for a theory of moral judgment. Whether true or false are determined by subjective criteria, cultural criteria, or

universal and absolute criteria is important to determine, but it is beside the point for the purpose of this paper.

Critiquing Critiques of Besire Theory

The conceptual analysis of a besire has a significant effect on some recent objections to besire theory. Below, I analyze three arguments designed to critique besire theory as a whole. I argue that their attempts fail insofar as certain types and interpretations of besire theory can be defended from their arguments. I do not provide an exhaustive analysis of each argument because showing that at least one type or interpretation of besire theory is defensible is enough to show the error in their arguments. I have chosen what I take to be the most damaging types and interpretations for each argument's analysis. First, I analyze an argument by Smith on the conceptual incoherence of besires. Second, I analyze two arguments on the explanatory failure of besire theory: the first by Blackburn on moral criticism, and the second by Zangwill on motivational variability.

Smith's Critique of Besire Theory

In *The Moral Problem*, Smith uses the metaphor of a direction of fit as a framework from which to assess the coherence of a besire. According to Smith, the idea that a mental state could have both a belief and desire direction of fit is incoherent. To have a belief direction of fit means that when mental state p is exposed to fact not-p, then the agent should possess mental state not-p. That is, state p would extinguish. And, to have a desire direction of fit means that when mental state p is exposed to fact not-p, then the agent should strive to possess fact p while retaining mental state p. That is, state p would persist. This means, according to Smith's characterization of a besire theory of moral judgment that an agent would have to possess a state that both ceases to exist in the presence of fact p and endures in the presence of fact p. That is, the agent would have to hold a state that is both suppose to extinguish

and persist.[15] Therefore, Smith concludes that it is not possible for there to be such a thing as a besire state. The argument can be streamlined and constructed as follows:

1. If besires exist, then it is possible for someone to be in a mental state with direction of fit p and not-p at time t.

2. It is not possible for someone to be in a mental state with direction of fit p and not-p at time t.

3. Therefore, besires do not exist.[16]

Below, I reformulate Smith's argument using the besire-as-desire conception. By examining the besire-as-desire formulation of Smith's objection, I will argue that the besire-as-desire conception of besire theory can be defended from Smith's argument.

Reformulating Smith's argument according to the besire-as-desire conception of besire results in the following:

1. If besires-as-desires exist, then it is possible for someone to be in a mental state with direction of fit p and not-p at time t.

2. It is not possible for someone to be in a mental state with direction of fit p and not-p at time t.

3. Therefore, besires-as-desires do not exist.

Smith argues that a besire is the combination of two separate and incompatible mental states. This results in a logically impossible concept. For Smith, besires are like round squares. Smith's argument is formulated for the besire-as-both conception of besire, and Smith's direction of fit analysis is supposed to establish that a besire is conceptually incoherent because a besire is a state that tends to extinguish and persist at the same time. However, a besire-as-desire is different from a besire-as-both. In a sense, the besire-as-desire theorist is proposing a unitary state that is unable to be conceptually divided in to two separate unitary states (a belief and a desire). A besire-as-desire is a special type of desire and not a conglomerate of two states. This may seem like a relatively minor point, but it highlights the importance of considering other possible conceptions of besire. Smith's response could be to defend the following:

[15] Smith, *The Moral Problem*, 111-112.
[16] Ibid., 118.

besires are unitary mental states, and besires are composed of two opposing directions of fit. So, if a besire is a desire, then there is no separate belief state. But there are two opposing directions of fit. Smith can simply modify his conception and retain the force of his direction of fit analysis by arguing that unitary mental states with opposing directions of fit are logically impossible.

Smith's direction of fit argument implies that not only are unitary mental states with opposing directions of fit incoherent, but that all unitary states with opposing directions of fit are incoherent. That is, any unitary state that both tends to x and tends to not-x is incoherent. However, consider the following example: imagine a football team and consider the roles different parts of a football team have. The offense of a football team scores points and the defense of a football team prevents points from being scored. In terms of direction of fit analysis, the offense tends to score points and the defense tends to prevent points from being scored. The offense tends to move the football toward the opposing team's end zone while the defense tends to stop the football from being moved toward their end zone. So far, we have a unitary state (football team) with two opposing directions of fit and no conceptual incoherence.

Smith may object that this example is a poor one because both the offense and the defense are not on the field at the same time, and the concept of a besire requires that a moral judgment have both directions of fit at a specific time. Although it seems that a football team does provide a counter example to Smith's claim, assume his objection is sound. A besire-as-desire theorist can concede this point without worry because the besire conception favored by the besire-as-desire theorist does not require that a besire be composed of two separate states. It only requires that a besire be understood as a desire with objective content. So, it only requires that it is possible to conceive of a unitary state with two opposing directions of fit. This is not as strange as it may seem. To illustrate this, consider just the offensive side of the football team. During a football game an offense functions defensively. It remains the offensive side of the football team yet fulfills the defensive responsibilities: it tends to stop

the football from being moved toward their end zone. It does this by functioning as the offense and keeping possession of the ball away from the opposing team. Under special conditions, an offense may have to act defensively. Suppose the offense fumbles or throws an interception. The offense then has a defensive job. So, when the offense is on the field, it has both directions of fit; it has both the disposition to score points and to prevent points from being scored. The offense is a unitary state with two opposing directions of fit at the same time.

Smith's argument does not work against all types of besires because the besire-as-desire state does not need to be conceived of as having a separable belief state component of the type that the argument specifies. Smith's argument seems to presuppose that a besire has to be formulated as a combination of two unitary states. But this is precisely what the besire-as-desire theorist denies because a besire-as-desire is not a combination of two unitary states. For Smith's objection to work, there needs to be conflict that renders the mental state logically impossible, so any besire theory that can be formulated as a unitary state without such conflict is immune to Smith's argument. If Smith's objection is understood solely in terms of the logical impossibility of a unitary state with two opposing directions of fit, then it is unsuccessful because there are unitary states with two opposing directions of fit as the above example of the concept of a football team illustrates. While a football team is not a mental state, conceptually a football team is logically possible and does have two opposing directions of fit. So, Smith has to explain what it is specifically about a besire-like mental state that makes it incoherent without relying solely on his general objection about the incoherence of unitary states with opposing directions of fit. If Smith's objection is reformulated around this response and set solely in terms of mental states without relying on his general objection against the coherence of unitary states with opposing directions of fit, then it is unsuccessful because Smith has not established what specifically it is about the mental status of the besire state that makes it necessarily incoherent. In fact, when the players and coaches of the offensive side of the football team design plays and make decisions

about the game, it seems they do have a mental state with two opposing directions of fit, namely, that of a football team.

In summary, Smith's argument is designed to address the conceptual incoherence of a besire. This conceptual incoherence is derived from Smith's direction of fit analysis. The discovery of a unitary state with two opposing directions of fit undermines Smith's argument. The concepts of a football team and an offensive side of a football team seem to be actual examples of unitary states with two opposing directions of fit. If besires are logically impossible because besires are unitary states with two opposing directions of fit, then Smith's argument against besire theory is unsuccessful because unitary states with opposing directions of fit are possible, in fact, they are actual. Whether besires are actual is another matter. So, Smith needs to provide something beyond the direction of fit analysis to establish that besires do not exist.

Blackburn's Critique of Besire Theory

In *Ruling Passions*, Blackburn offers an argument against besire theory. Before looking at the argument, it is necessary to examine the conceptual framework Blackburn uses to analyze moral judgments. Blackburn adopts a functionalistic stance for his inquiry by using the following analogy: moral agents are like devices that take input and deliver output. According to Blackburn, the input to the moral agent is a representation of the facts of the case. It is the properties of the action, event, case, etc. in question. The output of the moral agent is the attitude resulting from the input. It is the favoring or disfavoring, acceptance or withdrawal, like or dislike, etc. toward the input in question.[17] With that said, Blackburn offers the following argument:

1. If besires exist, then we cannot separate input from output properly.
2. If we cannot separate input from output properly, then we cannot make moral criticisms.
3. If besires exist, then we cannot make moral criticisms.

[17] Blackburn, 5.

4. We can make moral criticisms.
5. Therefore, besires do not exist.[18]

Blackburn argues that there is something about a besire such that if a moral agent actually had one, it would short circuit our ability to morally criticize that moral agent or, following Blackburn's analogy, the moral device. The collapse of the divide between input and output renders moral criticism impossible, and that is simply too high a price to pay for Blackburn.

Blackburn illustrates this point with the example of boys at a boarding school teasing a newcomer. According to Blackburn, our ability to morally judge the boys depends on our ability to separate what the boys perceive about the newcomer from the boys' attitude toward the newcomer. According to Blackburn, the besire theorist can only argue that if the boys fail to treat the newcomer well, it is because the boys lack the "full amalgam state" that constitutes the besire.[19] That is the best a besire theorist can do in forming their moral critique of the boys' behavior toward the newcomer, and it is insufficient. Blackburn's point is that the criteria necessary to establish moral criticism is determined by input matching proper output rather than with the possession of a besire state.

For Blackburn, if the concept of a besire impedes our ability to make moral judgments, then besires do not exist. The crucial idea is that existence of a besire state limits the scope of our moral criticism to criticism of perception. No longer can what the boys perceived (their input) be distinguished from their attitude (their output) toward the newcomer. If the boys possessed the besire resulting in teasing the newcomer, then what they saw cannot be distinguished from what they did (tease the newcomer) in any way. That is, the results of the boys' should-he-be-teased test as applied to the newcomer cannot be identified apart from the teasing of the newcomer, and the blending of the boys' cognitive and conative states, that a besire requires, eliminates the ability to properly blame the

[18] Blackburn, 101-102.
[19] Ibid., 100.

boys for teasing the newcomer. All the besire theorist seems able to say, according to Blackburn, is that the boys simply saw the shyness and sensitivity of the newcomer differently than the boys who did not tease the newcomer. The boys' perceptions seamlessly result in the newcomer being teased, and the concept of a besire renders useless the analytic tools crucial to moral criticism: specifically, those concepts that allow us to distinguish input from output. Below, I reformulate Blackburn's argument using the besire-as-both conception of besire. By examining the besire-as-both formulation of Blackburn's argument, I will argue that the besire-as-both conception of besire is immune to Blackburn's argument.

Reformulating Blackburn's argument according to the besire-as-both conception of besire results in the following:

1. If besires-as-both exist, then we cannot separate input from output properly.
2. If we cannot separate input from output properly, then we cannot make moral criticisms.
3. If besires-as-both exist, then we cannot make moral criticisms.
4. We can make moral criticisms.
5. Therefore, besires-as-both do not exist.

Blackburn's argument against the besire-as-both conceptions of besire theory fails to eliminate the possibility of moral criticism. If the composite besire-as-both is identifiable as a belief and a desire, then it is possible that each part of the composite can be distinguished from the other. For a similar example, imagine a football team practicing by scrimmaging against itself. The offense is on the field running plays against the defense. There is one football team on the field, but that single team can be identified in terms of offensive players and defensive players. The concept of a football team includes the idea of offensive and defensive players, and the coaches would have a hard time evaluating the scrimmage without that distinction. The ability to distinguish between offensive and defensive players allows the coaches to praise or criticize the football team. Likewise, the concept besire-as-both, by definition,

includes the distinction necessary for moral criticism, because the concept is composed of a distinguishable belief and desire. It is possible that the belief part of the unitary state can be distinguished from the desire part and vice versa just like the concept of a football team allows for offensive players to be distinguished from defensive players. If the belief and the desire components are distinguishable as the concept of besire-as-both implies, then moral criticism can be directed toward each separate component.

In reference to Blackburn's example of the boys teasing the newcomer, conceptually, in this case, there is nothing about the mixture, fusion, or blending of a belief and a desire that would necessarily result in the elimination of our ability to distinguish input (the boys' perceptions) from output (the boys' attitude to tease). Adding another person to Blackburn's example will help to illustrate this point. Imagine there is a teacher, Susan, in the vicinity of the boys as they tease the newcomer. Susan witnesses the incident and approaches the boys. When she arrives in front of the boys she asks them why they are teasing the newcomer. Susan receives a list of answers including the following: the newcomer looks down when approached by others, blushes easily, and is quiet. These descriptions are the boys' beliefs. She then proceeds to discuss with the boys the attitudes they have toward these mannerisms. If the boys are in possession of a besire-as-both toward the newcomer, the criticisms Susan gives may fall on deaf ears, but not because of Susan's inability to make the criticisms. If Blackburn's argument is correct, we would expect Susan's criticisms of the boys to be impossible to coherently formulate. The criticism would have to be meaningless or at least irrelevant.

However, this conception of besire does not render belief and desire criticisms untenable. If the boys have a besire-as-both, it is unclear why such a conception of besire should eliminate Susan's ability for moral criticism. If the boys' mental state, the one resulting in the teasing of the newcomer, is a besire-as-both, then their mental state can be analyzed in terms of belief and desire. If the mental state underwriting their moral judgments can be analyzed in terms of belief and desire, then moral criticism

can be addressed toward the belief components and desire components of the mental state in question. The boys may not understand or care, but the point is that Susan has access to the analytic tools to make moral criticisms of the boys just as the coaches, who understand that their football team has offensive and defensive players, have the analytic tools necessary to criticize their football team. The concept besire-as-both allows moral criticism to be fine grained enough to say more about the boys' teasing than that the boys simply saw the newcomer's mannerisms, and that seamlessly this perception resulted in the boys teasing the newcomer. The besire-as-both concept provides Susan with the ability to distinguish belief and desire, and that, as an analytic tool, is sufficient enough to render adequate moral criticism. Blackburn's argument fails against the besire-as-both conception of besire theory because the besire-as-both concept is not necessarily of an un-analyzable mental state that rules out the possibility of moral criticism. As such, the besire-as-both conception of besire theory is immune to Blackburn's objection.

Zangwill's Critique of Besire Theory

In "Besires and the Motivation Debate," Zangwill argues that besire theory needs to account for the motivational variability of our moral judgments, and he argues that the variability of motivation is to be understood in terms of rational indifference. By rational indifference, Zangwill has in mind the instances when we possess moral judgments that differ in motivational intensity. For example, imagine that John makes the moral judgment to donate money to Oxfam on Tuesday after he sees a billboard detailing the effects of poverty in Haiti. John is very motivated by his moral judgment. However, he does not have access to a phone at the moment because his cell phone battery is dead, so he plans on donating money on Wednesday when he has access to a phone. On Wednesday, John recalls the moral judgment to donate money and is only slightly motivated to act. Zangwill's charge is that a theory of moral judgment has to explain this variability, and it is unclear how a besire theorist could account for such phenomena since a besire theorist is committed to moral judgments being necessarily motivating.

With this challenge in mind, Zangwill argues that externalism has a simple answer to explain these phenomena. Motivation can be accounted for by the presence of a desire independent of the moral judgment to send money to Oxfam. So, the variability in motivation between Tuesday and Wednesday can be accounted for by the presence of different independent desires on each day. And so, Zangwill's argument against besire theory can be formulated as follows:

1. If rational indifference is possible, then we have a good reason to believe besires do not exist.
2. Rational indifference is possible.
3. Therefore, we have a good reason to believe besires do not exist.[20]

Zangwill's argument is different from Smith's and Blackburn's argument in that it explicitly posits besire theory as committed to cognitive internalism. So, a more general approach to Zangwill's argument is in order. Below, I reformulate Zangwill's argument using the besire-as-belief conception of besire theory. By examining the besire-as-belief formulation of Zangwill's argument, I will argue that the besire-as-belief conception of besire theory is potentially immune to Zangwill's argument.

Reformulating Zangwill's argument according to the besire-as-belief conception of besire results in the following:

1. If rational indifference is possible, then we have a good reason to believe besires-as-beliefs do not exist.
2. Rational indifference is possible.
3. Therefore, we have a good reason to believe besires-as-beliefs do not exist.

Zangwill's conception of besire is too limited to justify his conclusion. Zangwill starts by limiting his inquiry to "cognitivist forms of Internalism,"[21] and then, by the end of the article, he is making a claim "against moral besires of any sort."[22] According to Zangwill, if you are committed to the existence of besires, then you are committed to some form of motivational internalism. The success of Zangwill's

[20] Zangwill, 55-58.
[21] Ibid., 50.
[22] Ibid., 58.

objection from rational indifference against besire theory requires that all besires are moral beliefs that are necessarily motivating. A significant portion of possible besire conceptions are outside the scope of his argument such as those conceptions of besire theory that are not both belief-based and necessarily motivating. For example, the besire-as-belief conception of besire theory is not necessarily motivating. A rational indifference objection makes sense only if our moral judgments are belief-based types of besires, and if besires are desire-based and necessarily motivating. But, if a type of besire is not necessarily motivating, then why expect that the moral motivation of that type of besire is unable to vary over time? If the besire mental state is contingently motivating, then it offers the same explanatory benefit that Zangwill's preferred version of externalism offers.[23] If an externalistic theory of motivation is a viable explanation for the motivational variance of John's moral judgment to give money to Oxfam, then a mental state, such as a besire-as-belief, that is compatible with an externalistic theory of motivation is capable of explaining the motivational variance of John's moral judgment to give money to Oxfam.

According to Zangwill's explanation of rational indifference, moral beliefs remain constant over time while the motivational force varies. A besire theory of moral judgment that is not desire-based is not necessarily committed to internalism; consequently, a besire theorist can embrace the externalistic theory of motivation that Zangwill champions. Zangwill argues that the best explanation of motivational variability is the presence of another mental state distinct from the moral judgment like a desire or an emotion.[24] However, if a besire theorist is not necessarily committed to internalism, a besire theory is still a viable option to explain rational indifference and in turn our moral judgments. It would take more evidence to prove that it is the best explanatory option, but the point is a besire-as-belief is not conceptually precluded from doing so. For example, while a besire-as-both conception of besire theory seems to be open to Zangwill's argument, a besire-as-belief conception of besire theory seems able to

[23] Zangwill, 57.
[24] Ibid., 57.

avoid the charge of internalism as something other than a desire could account for the motivational force of the besire. The same applies to the concept of a besire-as-neither. Consequently, it is not clear why rational indifference should make one question the existence of all types of besires.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that distinguishing between different types and interpretations of besires is a critical tool for adequately assessing besire theory. I have attempted to support this claim by showing how a systematic analysis of the concept of a besire can be used to defend besire theories from some objections. First, I have done this by developing our conception of a besire while showing how a besire theory can be conceptually formulated to accept or deny each thesis of the moral problem and still remain a besire theory. And, second, I have done this by showing how a besire theory can be conceptually formulated to avoid both conceptual incoherence and explanatory failure objections leveled at besire theory by Smith, Blackburn, and Zangwill. The arguments by Smith, Blackburn, and Zangwill do not show that besires do not exist.

Though not conclusive, the failure of Smith's, Blackburn's and Zangwill's arguments suggests that showing whether or not besires exist may not be a matter of the philosophical analysis they each employ. That is, the question of the existence of besires might be better served by empirical analysis coupled with conceptual analysis. If besires are like round squares, then there is no reason to look for them. However, if the concept of a besire is not incoherent and is not explanatorily irrelevant, then empirical investigation in to the existence of besires could be reasonable and perhaps warranted. There might not be any besires; that is, besires may not actually exist. But, if the argument here holds, it could suggest that proving whether or not besires exist is also a matter for empirical psychology and neuroscience. If this is true, the present and further development of the concept of a besire could help us to formulate the questions for empirical investigation.

The analysis of this paper also provides the means to challenge the conditional claim that if besires exist, then cognitive internalism is true. Assuming besires will satisfy the objective and motivational expectations we have of our moral judgments whatever specifically they might be, support for this conditional can be divided in to two supporting arguments. The first supporting argument is as follows:

Premise 1: If besires exist, then moral judgments are beliefs.

Premise 2: If moral judgments are beliefs, then cognitivism is true.

Conclusion: If besires exist, then cognitivism true.

The error in this argument is that Premise 1 is false. There are types of besires that are not beliefs, so besires are not necessarily beliefs. The besire-as-desire and besire-as-neither conceptions of a besire provide counterexamples that show this premise is false. The second supporting argument is as follows:

Premise 1: If besires exist, then moral judgments are desires.

Premise 2: If moral judgments are desires, then internalism true.

Conclusion: If besires exist, then internalism true.

The error in this argument is that Premise 1 is false. There are types of besires that are not desires, so besires are not necessarily desires. The besire-as-belief and the besire-as-neither conceptions of a besire provide counterexamples that show this premise is false. And, returning to the original conditional, only one of these objections needs to be successful to cause a problem for the conditional claim that if besires exist, then cognitive internalism is true.

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