ON LEAVING ROOM FOR DOUBT:
USING FREGE-GEACH TO ILLUMINATE EXPRESSIVISM'S PROBLEM WITH OBJECTIVITY

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> [The Frege-Geach] problem itself, while possibly a devastating objection to expressivism, is in a certain way a fluke – it does not, I think, answer to the deeper worries some of us have about expressivism. If God whispers in the ears of all the cognitivists that the Frege-Geach problem can be very neatly solved, I do not foresee a trend of conversion to expressivism. – David Enoch, *Taking Morality Seriously*

Expressivism holds that normative thought and language express non-cognitive attitudes. In the literature, the central objection to the view has been the Frege-Geach problem: roughly, the charge that expressivist semantics cannot accommodate the fact that normative claims match ordinary descriptive claims in their logical behavior. Yet as David Enoch suggests above, it seems few cognitivists are cognitivists *because* of this problem. Why, then, have they spent so much time on it, and comparatively little time laying out their "deeper worries?"

I suspect part of the explanation is that cognitivists understand these deeper worries to be primarily metaphysical. For instance, many cognitivists doubt that expressivism can accommodate their sense that normative truth must be *objective.* It seems to them that expressivists have "to believe that morality somehow depends on us, that the ultimate explanation of why it is that certain moral claims are true has something to do with us and our feelings and attitudes" (Enoch 2011, 36).

Yet no matter how obvious this might seem, expressivism is not a metaphysical view, at least not straightforwardly, but rather a view about normative thought and language. And many expressivists—in particular, quasi-realists[1]—claim they can ultimately accommodate all of cognitivists' (or at least the folk's) metaphysical talk. Not only is there normative truth, they maintain, but it is *objective,* it reflects normative *facts,* and it concerns normative *properties.*[2]

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[1] Most notably, Simon Blackburn (e.g., 1998) and Alan Gibbard (e.g., 2003).

[2] This has not come without its own costs, as some worry that this "creeping minimalism" does *too* good a job of breaking down the barriers between expressivists and cognitivists, failing to distinguish the views. See especially Dreier (2004).

Cognitivists might still worry that expressivists are failing to capture the *spirit* of such talk. But these are difficult charges to make stick.

In hopes of making these charges stick, I propose a shift in strategy. Rather than trying to directly draw out the metaphysical commitments of expressivist views, cognitivists should draw out the *semantic* commitments of their own. They can then ask whether expressivist semantics are compatible with those commitments.

This paper showcases the proposed strategy with respect to intuitions concerning objectivity. In what follows, I introduce two claims about thought and language that, I suggest, represent these intuitions. I then argue that popular expressivist views cannot accommodate the claims in question if they are to solve "the negation problem"—part of Frege-Geach. If successful, this shows that many prominent versions of expressivism really *do* have a problem with objectivity. But, significantly, it does so without requiring any assumptions about what expressivist metaphysics look like (if there even is such a thing). As an added bonus, Frege-Geach turns out to be relevant to some of cognitivists' "deeper worries" after all.

The bulk of the paper is a defense of the thesis that popular expressivist solutions to the negation problem require rejection of a particular claim about normative predicates (introduced below). First, however, I explain why I take this claim to represent "deeper worries" about objectivity. I also consider the extent to which expressivists themselves should find my arguments troubling.

1. Leaving Room for Doubt

> **Room for Doubt**   It is conceptually possible that there are no true substantive normative claims.

Room for Doubt (from here, simply **Doubt**) tells us that it is coherent to wonder whether anything is good or bad, right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, what we ought (not) do, what we have normative reason to (not) do, etc.[3] Somewhat more simply, **Doubt** tells us that it is coherent to doubt whether there is any truth about *what to do,* any answer to our deliberative questions—for substantive normative claims provide answers (or at least entail that there are answers[4]) to such

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[3] On some views, I could simply say that substantive normative claims are those that entail the existence of normative reasons. I don't frame things this way in part because I don't wish to give the false impression that my arguments depend on any sort of reasons primacy. Nevertheless, since such views are fairly popular at the moment, mentioning this may help some gain a clearer picture of what I'm talking about.

[4] When combined with non-normative facts about the actual world. This is why "lying is wrong" is a substantive normative claim even though there are possible worlds where it is impossible to lie, and thus where the claim provides no guidance.

questions.[5] Standard examples of substantive normative claims are "lying is wrong," "pleasure is good," and "courage is virtuous." Normative claims that are *not* substantive are claims that employ normative terms but do not entail that there is an answer to the question of *what to do* (let alone what that answer might be). Uncontroversial examples of non-substantive normative claims are more difficult to find, but possibilities include "nothing is wrong," "desires are non-normative," and "one ought to promote the good."[6] (Given its relationship with nihilistic doubt, a useful test for the substantiveness of a normative claim is whether it is a claim that a normative nihilist—here, someone who believes that all substantive normative claims are necessarily false—could coherently accept. Arguably, each of the examples just mentioned passes this test.)

Some expressivists seem perfectly happy to deny **Doubt**. Perhaps most famously, R. M. Hare (1972) argues against the coherence of worrying that "nothing matters."[7] Simplifying a bit, for Hare there is no sense in which things might matter other than one grounded in their mattering *to* someone. And things clearly matter to people.[8]

Cognitivists are typically unimpressed by Hare's remarks.[9] As Derek Parfit (2006) tells us, there seems to be a sense of "matters" that Hare is failing to acknowledge. This is the sense in which something's mattering is an *objective* fact about value or normative reasons—one that is not ultimately grounded in our attitudes towards it (or at least *may* not be, so far as our concepts are concerned).

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[5] My project relies heavily on the intuitive idea that some normative standards, such as (most think) moral ones, answer the question of *what to do* in a way that others, such as the rules of games, do not. There are some, even among cognitivists, who deny the coherence of this distinction. See, e.g., Baker (m.s.), Copp (1997) and Tiffany (2007). Unfortunately, I cannot address their arguments here, though for a sophisticated (and frankly just cool) attempt to meet the challenge head on, defining substantive normativity in contrast to its non-authoritative cousins, see McPherson (m.s.).

[6] This last supposing (controversially!) there is some relevant analytic connection between the evaluative and the normative.

[7] Hare was arguably not an expressivist per se. Regardless, expressivism is a sufficiently close intellectual descendent of Hare's prescriptivism to make his views relevant here.

[8] An anonymous reviewer points out that this is actually consistent with **Doubt**, since it is *conceptually* possible that no one cares about anything. That's true, but if we take it as given that people care about things, Hare's view is inconsistent with the *epistemic* possibility of nihilism, which is related to **Doubt** (but which I don't include in the official statement of **Doubt** since my focus here is thought and language, not knowledge).

[9] Though even a few cognitivists have tried (wildly unsuccessfully, in my view) to argue for nihilism's incoherence (though not in those terms). For presentation and criticism of such arguments, see, e.g., Dworkin (1996), Olson (2010), Pigden (2007), Sinnott-Armstrong (2006), and Tännsjö (2009).

What matters here is that *if* Parfit and others are right that our concepts make room for objective normative truth, surely it is coherent to wonder whether such truth really is "out there" after all. We should be able to entertain doubt about normative truth just as we can about other (potentially) objective domains, such as when we ask our undergraduates to consider Cartesian doubt about the external world. We do not ask them to *accept* skepticism or nihilism about the external world, only to recognize that such views are coherent, given that there is a potential gap between what *seems* to be the case and what *is.* This is the sense in which **Doubt** represents intuitions about normative objectivity.

Doubt strikes me as clearly and obviously true. I suspect many will share this view. And I think those with relevant intuitions about objectivity *should* share this view. Of course, intuitions about what is conceptually possible are fallible. Some people believe that there can be true contradictions; others think this conceptually impossible. *Someone's* views here are failing to line up with the truth.[10] So while I think that it should at *least* count as a significant theoretical burden to rule out as conceptually incoherent something as apparently common as nihilistic doubt about normativity, Hare's view might still carry the day.

But I also suspect that not all expressivists will be so quick to reject **Doubt**. As mentioned above, contemporary expressivists seem generally less willing than their mid-century counterparts to explain away or dismiss as confused apparent features of normative discourse. I submit that **Doubt** represents such a feature. If any expressivists agree—or find **Doubt** independently plausible—then my arguments here should worry, or at least interest, them. I will say no more, though, about who should or will wish to embrace **Doubt**. My thesis is not that expressivism *must* accommodate it, only that common forms of expressivism *cannot* do so. This is because **Doubt** supports a further claim about normative semantics which they also cannot accommodate.

2. The No Normative Exhaustion Thesis

Again, substantive normative claims answer (or at least entail that there is an answer to) the question of *what to do.* Such claims typically employ normative predicates (or concepts) like 'is good'[11], 'is bad', 'is a normative reason', etc. One

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[10] Well, assuming this isn't a true contradiction…

[11] Again, I'm assuming here a tight connection between the evaluative and the normative. Perhaps this is a mistake. For instance, it might be conceptually possible that while certain things are good, there's nothing I ought to do about it. (Indeed, this might be true even if it is conceptually necessary that one ought to promote the good. Suppose, for instance, that ought implies can and that we are simply incapable of promoting any of the things that are good.) Nevertheless, this possibility seems precious enough not to interfere with our discussion here.

way to think about what makes a normative claim substantive is that it does not merely use or mention one of these predicates, but entails that something *is so predicated.* Following this thought, I will characterize *substantive normative predicates* as follows:

> **Substantive Normative Predicate** P is a substantive normative predicate iff any claim that entails $\exists x(Px)$ (where x is non-normative[12]) is a substantive normative claim.[13]

Now, take a set of predicates, S: $\{P_1, P_2, \ldots P_n\}$. Suppose S exhausts conceptual space such that, as a matter of conceptual necessity, for every subject X, X is predicated by some member of set S (X is P_1 or X is P_2 or ... or X is P_n). Call sets of predicates that meet these conditions *exhaustive predicate sets.*

I want to suggest that if **Doubt** is true, we should further accept:

> **The No Normative Exhaustion Thesis** No exhaustive predicate set is composed entirely of substantively normative predicates.

To see the basic idea, suppose that two predicates, 'matters positively' and 'matters negatively', constitute an exhaustive predicate set. As a matter of conceptual necessity, everything matters either positively or negatively. If that were the case, then *of course* it would be incoherent to wonder whether anything matters, for all things would matter either positively or negatively.

For **The No Normative Exhaustion Thesis** (from here, simply **Not Exhaustive**) to follow from **Doubt**, we need two assumptions. First, **Not Exhaustive** must be a claim about 'conceptual predicates', not just linguistic ones. Otherwise, **Doubt** fails to support **Not Exhaustive** insofar as it is possible that there are coherent nihilistic doubts (a fact about normative thought), but the right semantic theory entails that the terms necessary to express it don't exist in any language (a fact about normative language). This narrows the target of my arguments to forms of expressivism that are about normative thought, as well as language. My impression is that most actual expressivists have such ambitions.[14]

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[12] This is to accommodate the fact that, e.g., "one ought promote the good" is arguably non-substantive.

[13] Note that this accords well with the fact that "pleasure is good; pain is bad" is a substantive normative claim, while "nothing is good; nothing is bad" is not.

[14] Perhaps some will find "merely semantic" expressivism promising (some have implied that they would, in discussion). For my own part, I fail to see the appeal. If normative thought encourages us to take seriously something our semantics obfuscates, that just looks to me like an excellent reason to change our language. If merely semantic expressivism is true, let us be revolutionary cognitivists! In any case, I continue to speak primarily in linguistic terms, rather than conceptual ones, because I am engaging with the Frege-Geach literature, which is typically

To see the second assumption required to get from **Doubt** to **Not Exhaustive**, consider the predicate set {'is wrong', 'is not wrong'}. I take this to be an exhaustive predicate set. But suppose one takes the view that, conceptually, wrongness can only apply to actions, and thus that if X is not an action—say, if it's the number 2—the question of wrongness simply doesn't apply. Thus, it is neither the case that 2 is wrong, nor that 2 is not wrong. Or suppose that X is 'what the present King of France just did'. Again, perhaps it is neither the case that X is wrong nor that X is not wrong. Thus, while intuitively {'is wrong', 'is not wrong'} seems like an exhaustive predicate set, the existence of phenomena like category error and presupposition failure may suggest that there *are* no true exhaustive predicate sets.

Given this, the definition of 'exhaustive predicate set' will need to be amended to make room for things like category error and presupposition failure—presumably, limiting the scope of possible values for x in certain relevant ways. This should not be difficult (though I won't make good on that claim here). But once accomplished, a problem remains. If nihilistic doubt *itself* involves such phenomena, **Doubt** would fail to support **Not Exhaustive**. Suppose, for instance, that nihilism is best understood as the view that all substantive normative claims involve presupposition failure. In that case, 'is wrong' and 'is not wrong' could both be substantive normative predicates, and this would pose no threat to the possibility of nihilistic doubt.

Above, I defined nihilism as the view that all substantive normative claims are necessarily false, which rules out the suggestion that nihilism involves presupposition failure.[15] But this is not a problem that can be solved by definitional fiat. To meet the challenge, I would need to show that the sort of commonplace nihilistic doubt supported by intuitions about normative objectivity involves first-order denial of substantive normative claims, rather than something like presupposition failure. This is too large a task to be completed here. However, two things should be noted. First, in order for my argument to go through, it does not have to be the case that *all* nihilistic doubt is as I've described, only that *some* is. And it is quite plausible that the sort of doubt experienced by, say, angsty teenagers accords with my definition. Second, even if I am wrong, this would complicate matters, but not necessarily eliminate the relevant challenge to expressivism.

In any case, I continue on the presumption that **Doubt** supports **Not Exhaustive**. In what remains, I argue that popular forms of expressivism cannot accommodate **Not Exhaustive** if they are to solve the negation problem. If I'm

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framed in linguistic terms. My thanks to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and two anonymous reviewers for pointing out the value in addressing these issues.

[15] Assuming presupposition failure renders claims neither true nor false.

right that intuitions about normative objectivity support **Doubt**, and that **Doubt** supports **Not Exhaustive**, this illuminates a tension between those intuitions and expressivism. I will not prove that *no* forms of expressivism can accommodate **Not Exhaustive**.[16] Nevertheless, I believe my arguments clarify some of cognitivists' deeper worries about the view. Any expressivists who share or wish to address such worries, or who agree that **Doubt** and **Not Exhaustive** are independently plausible, should be motivated to search for forms of expressivism that fare better.

3. The Negation Problem

Consider the claims:

> S1. Murdering is wrong.
> S2. Murdering is not wrong.

I contend that prominent forms of expressivism cannot both (a) explain why S1 and S2 are inconsistent and (b) maintain that exactly one of 'is wrong' and 'is not wrong' is a substantive normative predicate.[17] Accomplishing (a) is necessary for solving the Frege-Geach problem. Accomplishing (b) is necessary for accommodating **Not Exhaustive**, since 'is wrong' and 'is not wrong' form an exhaustive predicate set.[18]

I proceed as follows. First, drawing on Mark Schroeder's (2008) discussion, I consider two generalized expressivist strategies for explaining the inconsistency of S1 and S2.[19] Schroeder pursues one of these, rejecting the other for reasons I recount below. In §4.1 and §5.1, I consider what I take to be the only plausible strategies available to the Schroeder-style expressivist for accommodating **Not**

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[16] For one thing, my arguments depend on the claim that expressivists *need* a special semantics. Some hold, by contrast, that expressivism can be a purely metasemantic theory. See, e.g., Silk (2014) and Sinclair (2011). Whether "metasemantic expressivism" runs afoul of intuitions about objectivity must be left for consideration elsewhere.

[17] This particular example is somewhat problematic, given that some take murdering to be wrong by definition. I use this example because it is the one employed by Mark Schroeder (2008). Since I rely on Schroeder's discussion of relevant issues further on in the paper, I use his example for consistency. It should be obvious that nothing significant turns on this choice.

[18] Denying this won't avoid the problem, just force a move to whatever predicates are such that nihilists can coherently assert "X is P_1" and thereby contradict some substantive normative claim "X is P_2."

[19] Schroeder draws on Unwin (1999) and (2001) in his presentation of the problem. Schroeder discusses alternative proposed solutions from Blackburn (1988), Dreier (2006), Gibbard (2003), and Horgan and Timmons (2006). According to Schroeder, most of these proposals fail for the same reason, to be discussed shortly. Though I will not discuss any specific proposals, the relevant discussion below applies indirectly to those mentioned here.

Exhaustive. I argue that these strategies are overwhelmingly likely to fail. In §4.2 and §5.2, I consider whether expressivists taking the line Schroeder rejects fare any better with respect to accommodating **Not Exhaustive**. I conclude that they do not.

3.1 Inconsistency for Expressivists

S1 and S2 are inconsistent. It is natural to think that this is because their *contents* are inconsistent. It is also natural to think that if I were to assert both S1 and S2, *I* would be inconsistent (in the sense that I would be rationally criticizable in a certain way). Finally, it seems clear that if I assert S1 and you assert S2, we thereby disagree.[20]

Unlike the cognitivist, the expressivist cannot accept that S1 and S2 are inconsistent because they have inconsistent propositional contents ('murdering is wrong' and 'murdering is not wrong', respectively). This is because, for the expressivist, S1 doesn't *have* propositional content in the way it does for the cognitivist.[21] Rather, for the expressivist, S1 and S2 must be inconsistent because *the attitudes they express* are inconsistent (Schroeder 2008, 39–41).[22]

Return now to the wrongness of murdering. As Schroeder (2008, 44–45) points out, there are a number of relevant conditions you might be in with respect to the proposition that murdering is wrong, differing only[23] in where, if anywhere, we place a "not." It might be that:

> S3. You judge that murdering is wrong.
> S4. You do not judge that murdering is wrong.
> S5. You judge that murdering is not wrong.
> S6. You judge that not murdering is wrong.

Cognitivists have no trouble making sense of these different conditions; they just take "judge" to mean "believe." What of the expressivist? Following Schroeder, consider an expressivist who holds that to judge something wrong is to DISAPPROVE of it, where DISAPPROVAL is a particular non-cognitive attitude.[24] Now the expressivist tries to translate each of the states you might be in:

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[20] All assertions presumed sincere and non-equivocating.

[21] Many expressivists will accept that S1 and S2 express propositions understood in a minimalist sense, but it is widely agreed that this cannot do the relevant explanatory work it does for the cognitivist.

[22] At least for "semantic expressivists." See note 16.

[23] Modulo the grammatically necessary "do" in S4.

[24] Throughout, I use small capital letters to denote "special" non-cognitive attitudes. These attitudes are not necessarily those that we associate with the names given them. Thus, DISAPPROVAL may not be the attitude commonly referred to as "disapproval." Rather, it is a stand-in for some expressivist-friendly wrongness-connoting non-cognitive attitude.

3E. You DISAPPROVE of murdering.
4E. You do not DISAPPROVE of murdering.
5E. You...???
6E. You DISAPPROVE of not murdering.

Apparently, the expressivist has no way of differentiating between merely not thinking that murdering is wrong (S4) and thinking that murdering is not wrong (S5). The reason is simple. For the cognitivist, in each case one bears or does not bear a particular cognitive attitude (belief) towards a predicative proposition, which has both a subject (murdering) and a predicate ('is wrong'). But for the expressivist, the *non*-cognitive attitude (DISAPPROVAL) is borne simply towards an action—murdering. And so the expressivist has one less "slot for the not."

At this point, Schroeder (2008, 45–48) argues, the expressivist has two options. First, she can introduce a new attitude. She can say that the translation includes:

5E. You TOLERATE murdering.

But in order to go this route, Schroeder argues, the DA-expressivist (for "distinct attitudes") must maintain that DISAPPROVAL and TOLERANCE are distinct, primitive, non-cognitive attitudes that are nevertheless (and it might seem, inexplicably) inconsistent. For Schroeder, this is a deal-breaker. (More on this later.)

The other option for the expressivist is Schroeder's (2008, 58–61) route, which involves *making* another slot for the not. The way to do this is to follow the cognitivist's example by introducing a general non-cognitive attitude that can be borne towards something with two "slots," rather than simply towards an action. Schroeder calls this umbrella attitude BEING FOR, and it allows the expressivist to understand S3-S6 as follows:

3F. You are FOR blaming for murdering.
4F. You are not FOR blaming for murdering.
5F. You are FOR not blaming for murdering.
6F. You are FOR blaming for not murdering.

If Schroeder is right, expressivists will need to extend this BEING FOR solution as a view about the semantics of *all* declarative sentences. After all, it is perfectly acceptable to make claims that involve both normative and non-normative predicates, such as "The sky is blue and murdering is wrong." And, as Schroeder (2008, chap. 7) argues, the only way to understand such sentences in a way that will

maintain their logical form is to understand belief in terms of BEING FOR.[25] (The importance of this point will become clear shortly.)

So, according to what Schroeder calls "biforcated [sic.; it's a pun] attitude semantics" (BAS), the semantic value of any predicate is a relation[26] (e.g., 'is wrong' means 'blaming for'), and judging that something is so predicated means committing oneself to bearing the relevant relation towards it (e.g., judging something wrong means committing oneself to blaming for it). Thus, in brief, "we interpret the property associated with each [declarative] sentence, 'P', as telling us what someone who [judges] that P is thereby *committed to doing*" (Schroeder 2012, emphasis added).

4. Accommodating <u>Not Exhaustive</u>: Strategy One

4.1 BAS-Expressivism

According to BAS-expressivism (as presented by Schroeder), when one claims that murdering is wrong, one expresses BEING FOR blaming for murdering. When one claims that murdering is *not* wrong, one expresses BEING FOR not blaming for murdering. The former is a substantive normative judgment (SNJ)—i.e., a judgement that something non-normative is substantively normatively predicated. According to **Not Exhaustive**, since S1 is an SNJ, S2 cannot be (again, because 'is wrong' and 'is not wrong' constitute an exhaustive predicate set). Obviously, for this to be the case, BEING FOR something cannot always be an SNJ.

The BAS-expressivist seems to have no problem here. After all, she holds that *all* judgements involve BEING FOR. Since presumably not all judgments are SNJs, BEING FOR something is not always an SNJ. But this does raise an important question: If normative and non-normative judgments aren't distinguished by the attitudes they express, what *does* distinguish them?

This question illuminates a potential problem for BAS-expressivism. Part of what's supposed to be appealing about expressivism is its ability to vindicate our sense that SNJ has a special connection with action. When I judge that something is right, wrong, good, bad, etc., it seems that I thereby commit (and perhaps am even motivated) to (not) *doing* something. On a cognitivist view, this is surprising given wide acceptance of the idea that beliefs alone can't lead us to act; we need a desire,

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[25] Or the other way around, but of course that's not an option for expressivists. Presumably, expressivists who take the TOLERANCE route won't have to extend their view in this way. Rather, they will have the more familiar problem of having to figure out what attitude is expressed by such "hybrid" claims.

[26] Actually, it's a pair of relations (hence the bi-). But this is irrelevant for our purposes.

or something like it, for that.[27] If SNJs are more like desires anyway, the puzzle evaporates. But according to BAS, *all* judgements express BEING FOR, and what someone is FOR tells us what he is "committed to doing." One might thus worry that BAS-expressivists can't account for SNJ's distinctive connection with action not because they treat SNJs as too belief-like—the worry for cognitivists—but because they treat *non*-normative judgements as too desire-like!

I think BAS-expressivists have a plausible response here. On Schroeder's model, ordinary descriptive beliefs involve (roughly) BEING FOR *proceeding as if* what one believed were the case. For instance, believing that grass is green is (roughly) BEING FOR proceeding as if grass is green. Arguably, there *is* nothing that, alone, counts as proceeding as if grass is green. Believing that grass is green doesn't commit one to doing anything *particular* until one's other attitudes come into play (e.g., one has a desire to have a green area in front of one's home).

Call a relation *discriminating* if merely bearing that relation to some object commits one to doing something particular (which may be disjunctive, but rules out some options). 'Proceeding as if' seems to be a *non*-discriminating relation. This motivates a plausible way of drawing the distinction between normative and non-normative judgements that captures the former's distinctive connection with action: the former are instances of BEING FOR discriminating relations; the latter are instances of BEING FOR non-discriminating ones.

Unfortunately, this solution exacerbates worries about BAS-expressivist accommodation of **Not Exhaustive**, since BEING FOR not blaming clearly *does* commit one in a particular way (i.e., to not blaming), and thus would fall on the discriminating, and therefore normative, side of this divide.

Of course, our discussion isn't really about blame (or murder, for that matter). 'Blame' is just a stand-in for whatever relation one commits to bearing towards something one judges to be wrong. So let us abstract away and say that judging that X is wrong is BEING FOR Φ-ing X and judging that X is not wrong is BEING FOR not Φ-ing X.[28] The question, then, is whether there are any suitable candidates for Φ such that BEING FOR Φ-ing X entails making an SNJ while BEING FOR *not* Φ-ing X does not. This seems unlikely, if not impossible. The trouble is that if Φ discriminates, *not* Φ does, too. If committing to Φ-ing commits one to doing something or other, committing to *not* Φ-ing commits one to doing *no* such thing.

Of course, BAS-expressivists might propose some other way of accommodating SNJ's distinctive connection with action that also accommodates **Not Exhaustive**, though I cannot think of one. And there still remains the

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[27] Of course, not everyone accepts this, but among those who do, it is often taken to speak in favor of expressivism.

[28] Of course, BEING FOR is just a placeholder, too.

possibility that it is not the nature of Φ itself, but rather the combination of BEING FOR and Φ that distinguishes SNJ (in a way that the combination of BEING FOR and *not* Φ does not). And, to be fair, very little has been said about what BEING FOR is like, so perhaps once we understand what kind of commitment the expressivist is talking about, it will turn out that being committed in this way to Φ-ing X (for some Φ) entails judging that X is wrong. But it is at least as hard to see what kind of commitment that could be as it is to imagine what Φ could be in the first place.[29]

The only other out here, so far as I can see, would be to claim that Φ is an "inherently normative relation." Return briefly to blame. Roughly, the idea would be that blaming for non-wrong things is a category error. One commits to not blaming for things that aren't wrong not in the same "moralized" sense that one commits to blaming for things that *are* wrong, but just in the sense that blaming for non-wrong things is incoherent. Perhaps even nihilists are rationally committed to not blaming for anything, if blame is only appropriate where there is (apparent) wrongness, just in virtue of the kind of relation it is.[30]

I am resistant to this kind of line in general. But what matters here is not whether it is independently plausible, but only that it is very hard to see how BAS-expressivists could make use of it. The natural way to cash all this out, after all, is to suggest that 'blaming for' entails 'judging wrong'. Where else would one locate a rational error in blaming for non-wrong things? But the BAS-expressivist cannot say this, on pain of circularity. Having just defined 'judging wrong' partly in terms of blame, surely she cannot also understand blame itself in terms of judging wrong. Yet without this, it is hard to see how she could maintain that blame (indeed, that almost *any* relation) is such that committing to bearing that relation towards something entails making an SNJ.

Let's recap: Schroeder has offered the expressivist a recipe for developing a semantic theory that can explain the inconsistency of S1 and S2. According to that recipe, SNJ involves BEING FOR—being, in some sense, committed to—bearing certain relations (the ones that constitute the semantic values of normative predicates) to objects of judgement. Thus, judging that murdering is wrong is 'BEING FOR Φ-ing murdering'. And judging that murdering is not wrong is 'BEING FOR not Φ-ing murdering'. If **Not Exhaustive** is true, then BAS-expressivists need to be able to explain how it can be that 'BEING FOR Φ-ing' is an SNJ while 'BEING FOR not Φ-ing' is not. This raises two problems. First, given that all judgements

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[29] And, remember, the nature of Φ itself must play a significant enough role in making BEING FOR Φ-ing X an SNJ such that BEING FOR Φ-ing X is in some relevant way different from, say, BEING FOR proceeding as if P, which is apparently not an SNJ.

[30] Just to help frame the thought, this is a broadly "Strawsonian" point. Thanks to David Shoemaker for helpful discussion on this point.

involve BEING FOR, the BAS-expressivist needs to explain what distinguishes normative judgements from non-normative ones. I offered a plausible answer in terms of the distinction between discriminating and non-discriminating relations. However, I further argued that there are unlikely to be—indeed, that it may be impossible for there to be—candidates for Φ such that committing to Φ-ing is discriminating while committing to *not* Φ-ing is not. I therefore submit that the BAS-expressivist who solves the negation problem in this way will be unable to accommodate **Not Exhaustive**. At the very least, this means the onus is on the BAS-expressivist to give us some reason to think that she can construct a plausible normative psychology to fill out this BAS schema in a way that's compatible with **Not Exhaustive**.

4.2 DA-Expressivism

Schroeder maintains that the move to BAS is necessary for the expressivist to explain the inconsistency of S1 and S2. But, as already mentioned, not everyone agrees with him on this point. It is thus worth considering whether DA-expressivism (again, for "distinct attitudes") fares any better with respect to explaining the inconsistency of S1 and S2 without needing to reject **Not Exhaustive**.

Our example DA-expressivist holds that 'murdering is wrong' expresses DISAPPROVAL while 'murdering is not wrong' expresses TOLERANCE. According to **Not Exhaustive**, it follows that since DISAPPROVING of murdering is an SNJ, TOLERATING murdering is not. This is, of course, precisely analogous to **Not Exhaustive**'s entailing that, for the BAS-expressivist, since BEING FOR Φ-ing murdering is an SNJ, BEING FOR not Φ-ing murdering is not. The question is whether DA-expressivists can plausibly maintain this.

In his discussion, Schroeder distinguishes two ways in which attitudes can be inconsistent. *A-type inconsistency* results from bearing tokens of the same attitude towards inconsistent contents—e.g., believing P and believing ~P. *B-type inconsistency* results from bearing two distinct yet inconsistent attitudes towards the *same* content—e.g., for the DA-expressivist, DISAPPROVING of X and TOLERATING X. Schroeder writes:

A-type inconsistency is something that we should all recognize and be familiar with. It happens with beliefs, for example. But *B*-type inconsistency is not something that expressivists can take for granted, because there are no good examples of it. Assuming that DISAPPROVAL and TOLERANCE are inconsistent is taking for granted everything that expressivists need to explain. (Schroeder 2008, 49)

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Given this, one option for the DA-expressivist is just to bite the bullet and claim that, inexplicable as it may seem, certain pairs of attitudes are B-type inconsistent, and that's that. If the DA-expressivist takes this line, then perhaps it is not much of a leap for her to further claim that in each case at least one of the relevant attitudes doesn't constitute an SNJ.

I suspect, however, that no actual expressivists would be comfortable with such a blatantly ad hoc response. Rather, actual DA-expressivists typically believe, contra Schroeder above, that there are perfectly good examples of B-type inconsistency. If that's the case, DA-expressivists are in no worse shape than BAS-expressivists in appealing to an analogy to other cases of disagreement in attitude.

Are there other cases of B-type inconsistency? Some think so. In their defense of B-type inconsistency, for example, Baker and Woods (2015) mention the attitude pair like/dislike (among others). Arguably, I am irrational if I both like and dislike the same thing. Other possible example pairs include approval and disapproval, love and hate, or respect and disrespect. In each of these cases, the attitudes in question are distinct attitudes—love is not merely the absence of hate, for instance—yet they seem to be at odds, at least to some degree.

I don't think cases like this will get the DA-expressivist very far. I don't think, for one, that if I love chocolate ice cream and you hate it, we thereby disagree. So the kind of inconsistency here is arguably not of the right kind to help the DA-expressivist make sense of interpersonal disagreement about the normative (which she needs to). But I do not need to settle this issue here. The point here is only that DA-expressivists who deny that their view is ad hoc are going to have to either offer a brand new explanation for B-type inconsistency (something that has never been attempted, so far as I know) or appeal to the precedent set by other examples of B-type inconsistency (as Baker and Woods do). In taking this latter tack, something like the relationship between liking and disliking is probably their best ally—the question of whether it is good *enough* can be set aside.

Let us assume, then, that I am right about what the DA-expressivist strategy is going to look like. The worry is this: Suppose that the DA-expressivist appeals to an analogy with a case of apparent inconsistency between the members of distinct non-cognitive attitude pairs, examples of which, again, might include like and dislike, approval and disapproval, love and hate, or respect and disrespect. I submit that in each of these cases, the idea that the relevant attitudes are inconsistent seems acceptable because there is a sense in which the attitudes *lead one in opposing directions.* The ways in which one typically responds to something one likes seem to conflict with the ways one typically responds to something one dislikes. Something

similar can be said for each of the cases mentioned and, indeed, I think, for all plausible cases of disagreement between distinct attitudes.[31]

The complaint here mirrors the complaint against the analogous BAS move. Above, I pointed out that if Φ is a discriminating relation, such that BEING FOR Φ-ing commits one to doing something particular, and it is this that distinguishes it as an SNJ, surely BEING FOR *not* Φ-ing is likewise discriminating. Similarly, here, when a DA-expressivist says that DISAPPROVAL (at least of certain things, like murdering) constitutes an SNJ, this means that DISAPPROVAL commits one to responding to its object in certain ways. It is natural to think, on analogy with the examples of disagreement in attitude just mentioned, that if TOLERANCE is inconsistent with DISAPPROVAL, this is because TOLERANCE commits one in ways that conflict with the ways DISAPPROVAL commits one. If that's right, it's hard to see how DISAPPROVAL of something could constitute an SNJ without TOLERANCE of its doing the same.

As in the BAS case, this is not a proof of the impossibility of a DA-expressivist solution to this problem. Rather, it is a challenge to the DA-expressivist to give us some reason to think she can develop a plausible normative psychology. We should be suspicious of her ability to do so when we recognize how unlikely it seems that though DISAPPROVAL and TOLERANCE are similar enough to conflict— perhaps because they lead one in opposing directions—only one of the two has those features that make it an SNJ.

5. Accommodating <u>Not Exhaustive</u>: Strategy Two

5.1 BAS-Expressivism

In §4.1, I argued that BAS-expressivists cannot accommodate **Not Exhaustive** by maintaining that BEING FOR bearing a particular relation involves SNJ while BEING FOR *not* bearing that relation does not. Of course, this is only a problem for the BAS-expressivist if judging that murdering is not wrong involves BEING FOR something. Thus far, I assumed this was the case.

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[31] An anonymous reviewer worries that this is not the case for disapproval vs. tolerance, that while disapproval and *approval* lead one in opposing directions, disapproval and tolerance do not, for the latter leads one in *no* direction. That sounds wrong to me; it seems to me that to tolerate something requires one to do certain things, such as not chastising those who engage in it. Perhaps some take a more permissive view of tolerance. But notice that the more permissive one gets—e.g., if one automatically counts as tolerating all the things whose existence one is unaware of—the less plausible it is that tolerance can do the work the expressivist needs it to, that to judge it permissible to A could just be to tolerate A-ing (or, in our terms, that to TOLERATE A-ing could be to tolerate A-ing).

To see the second available strategy for attempting to accommodate **Not Exhaustive**, recall the relevant BAS interpretations (continuing to generalize from blaming to Φ-ing):

> 4F. You are not FOR Φ-ing murdering.
> 5F. You are FOR not Φ-ing murdering.
> 6F. You are FOR Φ-ing not murdering.

While (5F) and (6F) entail BEING FOR, (4F) does not. Thus, if the BAS-expressivist were to reinterpret judging that murdering is not wrong in line with (4F) (at least in certain cases, like when a nihilist is speaking), such that it is merely *not* BEING FOR Φ-ing murdering, then our earlier worries would dissipate. And, indeed, it seems quite plausible that if judging murdering wrong is BEING FOR Φ-ing murdering, one who judges that murdering is *not* wrong *would* not BE FOR Φ-ing murdering.

Unfortunately, the expressivist is not merely trying to say something about what's going on in the head of someone who judges that murdering is not wrong; she is trying to offer an account of what such a person (let's call him John) *expresses* when he asserts that murdering is not wrong. What's more, John needs to express something that is inconsistent with whatever is expressed by someone who asserts that murdering is not wrong.

There are potential problems along both lines. First, it may not be possible to directly express the absence of an attitude.[32] Arguably, when we express something we indicate what mental state(s) we are in. But while it is quite plausible that having an attitude is a particular mental state (or set thereof), it is not at all clear that lacking an attitude is.

Second, even if it *is* possible to directly express the absence of an attitude, the basic challenge to explain the inconsistency of S1 and S2 would still not be met. The problem of disagreement remains. If I believe that grass is green and you don't (perhaps you've never seen grass), we do not thereby disagree.[33] In order to take

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[32] As opposed to "indirectly" expressing it—reporting the absence or expressing other attitudes that entail or imply it. I discuss the possibility of appealing to such indirect expression shortly.

[33] An anonymous reviewer suggests that this may not be the case for credences. Suppose I, having no evidence regarding P, have credence 0.5 in P, while you, also without evidence regarding P, have credence 0.9. It might seem we thereby disagree. The reviewer anticipates my response, which is that the disagreement is located in our higher-order attitudes regarding what credences our information supports. The reviewer thinks it reasonable to resist this, to locate the disagreement in the credences themselves, and that this might be a resource for the expressivist. I'll offer two pieces of evidence for my anticipated response. First, notice that we can elicit the same intuitions about belief/lack of belief by stipulating shared evidence. If neither of us has any evidence about P, yet you believe P and I fail to, arguably we disagree. Surely, this is essentially

this line, the expressivist would therefore need to understand John's utterance as expressing an absence of BEING FOR *and* show that, in apparent contrast to all other attitudes, BEING FOR something is sufficient for disagreement with those who merely fail to BE FOR it.[34]

One possible out here would be to claim that John is expressing (4F) *indirectly*, via expressing some further attitude—call it NIHILO. It should be clear, though, that this will be of no help to the BAS-expressivist. The relevant conflict would now be between BEING FOR and NIHILO, as opposed to between BEING FOR and not BEING FOR. This would be an instance of B-type inconsistency, rejection of which is a large part of what motivated BAS in the first place.[35]

Summing up: A natural alternative to understanding John's judgement that murdering is not wrong as his BEING FOR not Φ-ing murdering is to understand him simply as not BEING FOR Φ-ing murdering. Unfortunately, this line faces a dilemma.

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the same disagreement as in the credences case: one about what attitudes our evidence supports. Second, suppose we stipulate that you and I both take an epistemically permissive view on which a range of credences (that includes both 0.5 and 0.9) is permissible. The appearance of disagreement evaporates, suggesting it stemmed from implicit assumptions about our higher-order beliefs. (It is unclear whether we can do the same thing for belief/disbelief. Do you and I disagree if you believe P, I disbelieve P, but we both think it is epistemically permissible to both belief and disbelieve P, given our shared evidence? I am genuinely uncertain what to say about this, though I suspect we still count as disagreeing in at least some relevant sense that we need not in the belief/lack of belief and 0.5/0.9 credence cases.)

[34] This move is open to the BAS-expressivist on the assumption that belief and its absence count as the same attitude-type, which they arguably do not. If they do not, then this line falls afoul of Schroeder's worries about B-type inconsistency which, again, was a primary motivation for the move to BAS in the first place.

[35] Gunnar Björnsson suggests a related alternative (in discussion, but see his (2001)): perhaps the correct expressivist semantics is even more complex than suggested by either DA or BAS versions of the view, always including both first-order attitudes (e.g., BEING FOR blaming for) and second-order attitudes of ACCEPTANCE and REJECTION. On this view, nihilists REJECT all first-order normative attitudes. This is a rather different kind of expressivist semantics from either BAS- or DA-expressivism. Perhaps it can deal with the problem I've raised here. Speaking in favor of this is its place in the dialectic. Schroeder motivates his solution to the negation problem by noting the need for added structure, in order to distinguish "not judging" from "judging not." One way to read my challenge is as illuminating the need to distinguish "judging not [internal negation]" from "judging not [external negation]." Perhaps this calls for further structure along the very lines Björnsson proposes. Of course, we still need a full account of ACCEPTANCE and REJECTION and of what makes them inconsistent (some of which Björnsson offers). But most importantly in my mind, we need to consider whether REJECTION of the relevant first-order attitudes can fail to count as an SNJ—i.e., we need to make sure this view doesn't just move the bump in the rug. I have concerns along these lines, but discussion of these will have to be left for another time.

Either John is merely expressing his lack of BEING FOR or he is expressing some further attitude as well. If the former, it is not clear why John disagrees with someone who *is* FOR the relevant thing (again, just as you and I don't disagree simply because you have a belief I lack). If the latter, it seems the BAS-expressivist would have to appeal to B-type inconsistency, rejection of which is what led her to BAS in the first place.[36]

5.2 DA-Expressivism

As before, the DA-expressivist has a second strategy analogous to the BAS-expressivist's. Recall the DA-expressivist's interpretations:

> 4E. You do not DISAPPROVE of murdering.
> 5E. You TOLERATE murdering.
> 6E. You DISAPPROVE of not murdering.

Just like the BAS-expressivist, in order to avoid the challenge of explaining why DISAPPROVAL involves SNJ while TOLERANCE does not, the DA-expressivist might look to (4E) and suggest that judging that murdering is not wrong is simply *not* DISAPPROVING of murdering.

First, we might again question whether it is possible to directly express the absence of an attitude. Second, and again as in the BAS case, this view requires the DA-expressivist to maintain that if I DISAPPROVE of murdering and you do not, we thereby disagree. Of course, a DA-expressivist might be able to maintain this (and, indeed, given her apparently permissive attitude towards inconsistency, perhaps she is better situated to do so than the BAS-expressivist), but this would surely be a rather large bullet to bite.

The final move here would be, once again as in the BAS case, to suggest that there is some further attitude (NIHILO) the having of which implies or entails a lack of DISAPPROVAL. Unlike the BAS-expressivist, the DA-expressivist may be comfortable maintaining that NIHILO is inconsistent with DISAPPROVAL without explaining why (presumably to the same extent that she is comfortable doing so in the case of DISAPPROVAL and TOLERANCE). Of course, there will be the question of

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[36] There are, of course, other, more radical reinterpretations I haven't discussed. For example, the expressivist could hold that John (supposing he is a nihilist) is expressing his BEING FOR not BEING FOR any discriminating relations. First, this has certain bizarre implications. For instance, for this to be a general solution to the problem, it would presumably have to turn out that all negated normative claims ("murdering is not wrong," "pain is not bad," "lying is not vicious") are semantically equivalent (at least for the nihilist). I also suspect that such radical reinterpretations would run up against other arguments made in this paper, though I do not have the space to explore this issue further here.

how to distinguish between cases where someone is expressing TOLERANCE and cases where he is expressing this new attitude; but that might not seem so worrisome.

What *is* worrisome, however, is that this move completely undermines the shift away from the proposal explored in §4.2. In that section, I argued that DA-expressivists are unlikely to be able to develop a plausible normative psychology that makes sense of there being two distinct, primitive attitudes—DISAPPROVAL and TOLERANCE—that are inconsistent, yet only one of which involves SNJ. Every concern raised there will reapply *mutatis mutandis* to this solution—i.e., to the plausibility of claiming that DISAPPROVAL and NIHILO are inconsistent, though only one involves SNJ.[37]

6. Conclusion

Doubt and **Not Exhaustive** seem to me independently plausible claims about normative thought and language. What's more, I believe that those with relevant intuitions about normative objectivity should endorse them. If I'm right, however, expressivists in the DA and BAS camps cannot both solve the negation problem and accommodate these claims.

This may or may not extend to all forms of expressivism. If it does, then even if the quasi-realist can vindicate quasi-objectivity, quasi-objectivity may not be objective enough. But even if my arguments do not generalize in this way, I hope to have narrowed the field of expressivist views that can accommodate certain intuitions about objectivity. If my strategy can be developed more broadly, exploring the semantic implications of other relevant intuitions, perhaps we can move closer to a dialectic which bears more directly on the "deeper worries" that keep so many of us firmly entrenched in the cognitivist camp.

Acknowledgements

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[37] Or, more properly, to the plausibility of claiming that there *is* some attitude NIHILO that involves an absence of DISAPPROVAL *and* is inconsistent with DISAPPROVAL in the sense required, though, unlike DISAPPROVAL, it does not involve SNJ.

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