

Hybrid Theories: Cognitivist Expressivism

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1 Introduction

The days are long gone when the landscape of metaethical theories could be characterized in terms of whether “moral discourse ... state[s] facts,” and “moral judgments express beliefs” as opposed to “sentiments, emotions” or other “non-truth-assessable mental state[s]” (Miller 2013: 2, 24, 39, 88). Once self-avowed “non-cognitivist[s]” (Gibbard 1990: 8) now find themselves happy to “allow that normative claims are true or false,” that “normative convictions ... count as beliefs,” and that such “beliefs are to fit the world in its normative aspects” (Gibbard 2012: 232–233). What is at issue is what such claims amount to and how they are to be explained. Critical issues include:

- What explains the semantic properties of normative concepts and uses of language?
- Is a basic function of normative concepts to represent the world? Do normative uses of language represent the world as a matter of conventional meaning?

I will understand *expressivism* as providing an answer to the former question: Semantic properties of items are to be explained in terms of properties of states of mind expressed by using those items. I will understand *cognitivism* as offering an affirmative answer to the latter questions: Normative concepts and uses of language have a basic function of representing the world.¹ What would be the advantages of a “hybrid” theory that combines these views? What would such a theory be well suited to explain?

¹I use ‘world’ broadly to accommodate both naturalist and nonnaturalist views. We will refine the characterizations of expressivism and cognitivism shortly. I invite readers with different terminological predilections to suspend disbelief.

An outline of the discussion is as follows. §§2–3 clarify what is at issue in questions of expressivism and cognitivism, and reconstruct certain prominent motivations for pursuing a hybrid cognitivist-expressivist theory. §4 delineates several increasingly committal ways of integrating cognitivism with expressivist commitments. §5 raises challenges for a prominent implementation from §4 which models normative language on expressives such as pejoratives. Alternative ways of developing the view in response are critically examined. §6 recaps and takes stock of the dialectic. The goal is a refined understanding of the theoretical landscape and the place of cognitivist expressivism in it for future research.

A preliminary remark: By ‘normative use of language’ I mean a use which expresses the speaker’s endorsement of a relevant body of norms or values (alternatively, an instance of a type of use which characteristically expresses such endorsement; cf. Gibbard 1990: 33). The speakers in (1) use ‘must’ and ‘should’ to express their normative views and coordinate on what to do and what norms to accept.

- (1) *Alice*: We must take a stand against the new policy.
Bert: You’re right. What should we do?

Not all uses of expressions such as ‘must’, ‘ought’, ‘wrong’, etc. are normative in this sense. The use of ‘must’ in (2) targets a relevant body of information. In (3) the speaker uses ‘have to’ to describe what Dwayne’s parents’ rules require, as reflected in the explicitly relativized gloss.

- (2) It must be raining outside. Look at all those people with wet umbrellas.
(3) Dwayne has to be home by 10. Aren’t his parents stupid? I’d stay out if I were him.
• ≈ “According to Dwayne’s parents’ rules, Dwayne has to be home by 10.”

What is at issue in this paper are uses such as (1), characteristic of planning and inquiry into how to live, and the judgments they express. To abstract away from possible differences among normative domains (morality, rationality, etc.), we can assume that all claims are “all-things-considered.” (I will sometimes use ‘normative language’ as short for ‘normative uses of language’. I use ‘normative’ broadly to cover deontic notions (‘must’, ‘permissible’) and evaluative notions (‘good’, ‘beautiful’).)

2 Expressivism

Expressivism, as I will understand it, is centrally a view about explanatory priority in accounting for normative language and thought.² On the language side, expressivists can be understood as accepting the following requirement on explanations.³

THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM

Semantic properties of sentences (e.g., inconsistencies, entailments) are to be explained in terms of properties of attitudes conventionally expressed by uses of those sentences.

On a classic truth-conditional semantics, the meaning of a sentence is given by providing the conditions under which the sentence is true. To a first approximation, what explains the inconsistency of ‘Fido is a dog’ and ‘Fido is not a dog’ is that, according to the conventions of the language, the former sentence is true iff Fido is a dog and the latter sentence is true iff it’s not the case that Fido is a dog, and these conditions are incompatible. Expressivists take a different tack. Semantic properties of sentences are explained by states of mind, the states of mind that uses of those sentences conventionally express. Suppose uttering ‘Fido is a dog’ conventionally expresses a belief that Fido is a dog. In explaining the meaning of ‘Fido is a dog’, one might explain how we come to represent features of the world and explain what it is to represent that Fido is a dog in a state of belief (cf. [Gibbard 1990](#): ch. 6). What explains the inconsistency of ‘Fido is a dog’ and ‘Fido is not a dog’ is that the attitudes conventionally expressed in using them — believing that Fido is a dog and believing that it’s not the case that Fido is a dog — are incoherent. Contents or truth conditions, even if assigned to sentences, don’t play an explanatory role.

THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM is neutral on the nature of the attitudes expressed. Traditional expressivism gets its teeth by denying that the same type of attitude is conventionally expressed in uses of all declarative sentences. An *expressivist* about an expression \mathcal{E} supplements the claim about semantic explanation with a claim that uses of simple \mathcal{E} -sentences express nonrepresentational states of mind:⁴

²Gibbard is especially clear on this (e.g., [2003](#): 20, 62–63, 74, 82, 179–196; [2012](#): ch. 10, Appendix 2). See also [Blackburn 1984](#): 219–220, [1993](#): 3–7, 184–185. For alternative approaches, see [Silk 2013](#), [Charlow 2014](#). The following exposition draws on [Silk 2015a](#).

³See also [Rosen 1998](#): 391–392, [Unwin 2001](#): 62, 72, [Schroeder 2008b](#): 576, 586, [Dreier 2009](#): 97.

⁴Characterizing the claim is complicated by the possibility of deflationism about semantic notions. For our purposes I assume there is some way of distinguishing the types of attitudes (here labeled “representational” vs. “nonrepresentational”). I talk of the attitudes’ “basic function” and

NONREPRESENTATIONALITY

Uses of simple declarative \mathcal{E} -sentences conventionally express attitudes whose basic function is not to represent how things are.

The attitudes expressed by simple \mathcal{E} -sentences are not fundamentally understood as representational. Even if we come to legitimately speak of these attitudes as representing “‘fact[s] out there in the world’,” “this seeming representation is not to be explained in the way that representing naturalistic qualities is most obviously explained” (Gibbard 2012: 232, 238). (Here and throughout, talk of attitudes expressed by sentences can be understood as short for talk of attitudes conventionally expressed by uses of those sentences. Assume, unless indicated otherwise, that all the sentences are declaratives.)

There are various reasons one might be drawn to expressivism. One might have general qualms about giving content or truth a basic explanatory role and prefer the expressivist’s order of explanation. More common is to appeal to considerations specific to particular domains. In the metaethical case, expressivism promises an illuminating naturalistic, non-debunking account of the nature and practicality of normative language.⁵ Here is Gibbard:

“[T]he explanation of what ‘ought’ means ... say[s] what state of mind amounts to meaning OUGHT by a word. Second, the theory elucidates the point of having normative concepts. Their point is to enable us to reason

how they are “fundamentally” explained, but this is inessential. See Dreier 2004, Gibbard 2012: ch. 10 for relevant discussion.

A question has arisen in the literature as to whether expressivism is best understood as a semantic thesis about what the meanings of expressions are, or a metasemantic thesis about what makes it the case that expressions have the meanings they do (e.g., Chrisman 2011, Ridge 2014b: ch. 4). I find this way of framing the issues to be confused. Gibbard (2012) is clear that his expressivism is neutral on what metasemantics, in the previous sense, is correct. (One could accept that sentences S and $\neg S$ are inconsistent because of properties of the attitudes expressed, and that S means what it does because of the totality of usage facts, or what God commands, etc.) The core commitments of expressivism also needn’t be understood as views about formal semantics. One way of understanding these commitments is instead as constraints on a proper interpretation of the formalism. Suppose the semantic value of some normative sentence is F (e.g., some set of world-norm pairs). Given NONREPRESENTATIONALITY, using a sentence with a semantic value of F is to be understood as an expression of a nonrepresentational attitude. THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM requires that explanations of semantic properties proceed at the level of such psychological attitudes associated with the formalism, per the given interpretation. We will return to this in §3.2.

⁵Hereafter I will focus on metaethical expressivism and the instance of NONREPRESENTATIONALITY about normative language. For developments of expressivism outside metaethics, see Field 2009, Yalcin 2012, Moss 2013.

our ways to action — to immediate intentions and to other plan-governed states like beliefs and attitudes... Lastly, the theory says why normative concepts are legitimate. They amount to plans and restrictions on plans, and it is at least as legitimate to think what to do as to ponder how things stand naturalistically.”

“What is conceptually distinctive about ought claims, I say, is their ties to action. The point of normative claims is to tie in conceptually with action. Normative concepts are legitimate in that they tie in with action in the way that plans do; this tie is much like the tie of empirical concepts to experience.” (Gibbard 2012: 223–224, 227)

Perhaps normative uses express planning states (Gibbard 2003, 2012), or a generic positive attitude (Schroeder 2008a,b), or preference states (Dreier 2006, Silk 2015a). Suppose normative uses express plans, and using (4) expresses a state of planning to help Timmy. One cannot, then, on pain of conceptual inconsistency, accept (4) and not plan to help Timmy.⁶

(4) I must help Timmy.

In contrast, accepting ‘My helping Timmy is the only way for him not to drown to death’ while having no intention to help Timmy might make me a monster, but it needn’t be inconsistent. Normative claims are, on this view, practical by nature.

3 Cognitivist motivations

3.1 Surface syntax?

Despite such features, expressivism has had relatively few unqualified proponents. Concerns about the details of expressivists’ semantic explanations have led many to pursue cognitivist or non-expressivist accounts. Before turning to these concerns I would like to dismiss a common presumption against NONREPRESENTATIONALITY.

Appeals to expressivism’s virtues sometimes come across like an atonement, compensating for a sin of denying the surface features of language. Miller (2013) situates Blackburn’s expressivism as a response to the worry, put thus:

“[T]he surface form of moral discourse is *propositional* or *cognitive*: ‘Murder is wrong’, ‘Euthanasia is permissible’ and so on, are *declarative sentences*; ‘wrong’, ‘permissible’ and so on, are *predicates*; and ‘Jim believes

⁶See Silk 2015b, 2022 for relevant discussion and qualifications that would be needed for different expressions.

that murder is wrong', 'John believes that abortion is permissible' are *syntactically well-formed*. All of this suggests that moral sentences represent states of affairs, moral predicates denote properties and moral judgements express beliefs.” (Miller 2013: 55)

Schroeter and Schroeter go so far as to treat “traditional context-invariant realism” as “the preferred default semantic interpretation” (2014: 23; cf. Enoch 2018: 31):

“[R]ealist assumptions are central to our normative thought and talk... Of course, all metaethicists agree that normative talk exhibits the surface syntax characteristic of paradigmatic representational discourse.”

(Schroeter and Schroeter 2014: 22)

I agree that normative and “paradigmatic representational” language cannot be distinguished syntactically. I deny that this bears on debates about expressivism or cognitivism.

As far as surface syntax goes, there is significant commonality among paradigmatic representational expressions and all manner of normative, evaluative, and epistemic expressions. Consider ‘barked’, ‘mammalian’, ‘electric’, ‘wrong’, ‘fabulous’, ‘icky’, ‘likely’. All can be used as predicates in declarative sentences; such sentences can be assertively uttered; and such utterances can be targeted by particles signaling agreement or disagreement (‘yes’, ‘no’). In uttering ‘Fido barked’ I express my belief that Fido barked and exert conversational pressure on you to go along with adopting my state of mind for purposes of the conversation. Likewise with ‘Kicking Fido is wrong’, ‘Fido is icky’, and so on. At the outset, ‘cotton’, say, can no more be assumed representative than ‘icky’. I suspect the assumption to the contrary stems from a familiarity bias. If Frege had started elsewhere, perhaps we would be defending noncognitivism about ‘mammalian’ due to its syntactic commonalities with ‘icky’.

We should dispense with the idea that being usable as the main predicate in a declarative sentence is evidence of being representational. More likely is that the syntax is neutral on the matters of philosophical concern.

3.2 Frege–Geach

A more pressing concern is that combining THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM with NON-REPRESENTATIONALITY engenders intractable problems with explaining the meanings of complex sentences. Given THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM, the expressivist must associate attitudes with sentences in such a way that properties of the attitudes explain the semantic properties of the corresponding sentences that express them. The worry is that, given NONREPRESENTATIONALITY, one cannot do so in a way

that is empirically and explanatorily adequate. This is the (so-called) Frege–Geach problem. I will briefly survey one prominent instance of the problem, concerning wide-scope negation (“the negation problem”),⁷ to motivate why introducing a cognitivist commitment might seem attractive.

Consider (5) and its negation (6).

(5) Alice must help Timmy.

(6) It’s not as if Alice must help Timmy. (/Alice doesn’t have to help Timmy.)

To fix ideas, suppose that (5), abbreviated *Must(help)*, expresses an attitude of requiring Alice to help Timmy. Per THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM, the attitude expressed by (6) $\neg Must(help)$, whatever it is, must be related to the attitude of requiring Alice to help Timmy in a way that reflects the logical inconsistency between the sentences. What is this attitude expressed by $\neg Must(help)$?

One idea is that $\neg Must(help)$ expresses the requiring attitude toward Alice not helping Timmy. Both requiring p and requiring $\neg p$ might be incompatible in a way that captures the inconsistency between a sentence and its negation. However, the attitude of requiring Alice not to help Timmy is the attitude expressed by (7) *Must(¬help)*; and *Must(¬help)* and $\neg Must(help)$ don’t have the same meaning.

(7) Alice must not help Timmy.

A second idea is that $\neg Must(help)$ expresses an attitude of failing to require Alice to help Timmy. Both requiring p and failing to require p might be incompatible in a way that captures the inconsistency between a sentence and its negation. Yet this idea also can’t be right. The attitude of failing to require Alice to help Timmy is the attitude ascribed in (8); but the attitude we need to explain is (roughly) the attitude ascribed in (9). (8), but not (9), is true if Bert has no views on whether Alice must help Timmy.

(8) Bert doesn’t think that Alice must help Timmy.

(9) Bert thinks that Alice doesn’t have to help Timmy.

A third idea is that $\neg Must(help)$ expresses an attitude like permitting Alice not to help Timmy. This does seem like an intuitively correct description of the attitude expressed. However, what we need to explain is how the sentences *Must(help)* and $\neg Must(help)$ are logically inconsistent. We could stipulate that the attitudes of

⁷See Unwin 1999, 2001, Gibbard 2003, 2012, Dreier 2006, 2009, Schroeder 2008a,b, Silk 2015a.

requiring p and permitting $\neg p$ are inconsistent; but that would mirror what we're trying to explain. So, it seems that either we capture the logical inconsistency between normative $Must(S)$ and $\neg Must(S)$ but get the attitudes expressed wrong, or we get the attitudes expressed right but leave the inconsistency unexplained.⁸

There are various moves expressivists have made in response. For instance, Gibbard (2003, 2012) treats the attitude corresponding to wide-scope negation as a basic attitude of *disagreeing*, and argues that the inconsistency between an attitude A and an attitude of disagreeing with A is sufficiently understood to explain the logical inconsistency of sentences. Schroeder (2008a,b) develops — though ultimately rejects — a view which treats normative and nonnormative sentences as expressing the same type of nonrepresentational attitude (*being for*), and explains semantic properties in terms of logical properties of the contents of that attitude. Silk (2015a), following ideas from Dreier (2006), treats the basic practical attitude expressed with normative language as an attitude of conditional preference, and explains semantic properties in terms of coherence constraints on beliefs and preferences.

The prospects for such accounts remain to be seen. It can be difficult in isolation to adjudicate whether a basic notion is sufficiently explanatory, as with Gibbard's appeal to disagreeing with a state of mind. Careful comparison of specific theories is needed (see Gibbard 2012: Appendix 2, Baker and Woods 2015). Schroeder (2008a) argues in detail that the “biforcated attitude” account he develops fails for various complex constructions. The approach has not been resurrected. Silk (2015a) provides a general recipe for interpreting outputs of the formal semantics in terms of belief and preference states, and applies the account to normative uses of modal verbs in a range of recalcitrant constructions. Extending the account in detail to other expressions and environments is left for future research.

For purposes of this chapter I put traditional expressivist accounts to the side. An alternative approach supplements THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM with a claim — call it *cognitivism* — that normative uses conventionally express attitudes that are explained as representational beliefs. Observe that cognitivism is compatible with THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM. It's consistent to say that semantic properties are explained in terms of properties of psychological attitudes, and that there are attitudes expressed by normative uses that are explained as representing how things are. The hope is then to address the Frege–Geach problem through the logic of belief.

⁸The challenge isn't to construct a formal semantics. Per THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM, any formal objects assigned as semantic values must be associated with psychological attitudes whose features explain the semantic properties in question. The worry pressed in the negation problem is that any way of doing so will be incorrect or unexplanatory.

4 Adding cognitivism

4.1 Cognitivism + the expressivism program

There are various ways of developing a cognitivist view that accepts THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM. First, one might deny NONREPRESENTATIONALITY and say that normative uses of simple sentences such as (5) *Must(help)* conventionally express only representational beliefs. Such a view might be appealing to someone attracted to traditional cognitivism in metaethics along with a broadly functionalist theory of meaning. To give the meaning of *Must(help)*, one specifies what it is to represent the posited feature of the world and believe that Alice must help Timmy. The task of explaining logical relations among normative and nonnormative sentences is subsumed under a task of explaining logical relations among beliefs. Whether the view improves on traditional non-expressivist cognitivist theories will depend on the specific accounts of belief and representation. (A nonnaturalist would need to ensure that whatever substantive explanation is given of coherence constraints on beliefs generalizes to representations of nonnatural sui generis realms.)

More prominent in the literature has been to adopt a hybrid *cognitivist expressivist* theory that accepts cognitivism along with expressivism's commitments about the distinctiveness of normative claims. NONREPRESENTATIONALITY says that normative uses express nonrepresentational attitudes. Cognitivism adds that normative uses also express attitudes that are representational.⁹ Cognitivist expressivist views promise to retain virtues of expressivism while avoiding the Frege–Geach problem. The motivational character of the nonrepresentational attitude explains the practicality of normative uses, and the logic of the representational attitude explains sentences' semantic properties. Or so the thought goes.

4.2 Cognitivist expressivism, Take 1: Basic normative uses

Accepting that normative uses express non-belief-like attitudes raises potential hazards for the semantics. For instance, we must tread carefully with inferences such as (10) in which normative 'must' occurs in the conclusion but not the premises.

⁹One could treat normative uses as expressing two attitudes, or understand the attitude expressed as a complex that is partly representational and partly nonrepresentational. I will continue to speak in the former way. See [Stevenson 1944](#) for an early precedent. I put aside views that treat either attitude as expressed nonconventionally, not as a matter of conventional meaning. For accounts that seek to derive the nonrepresentational attitude as a conversational implicature, see [Finlay 2005](#), [Strandberg 2012](#), [Ridge 2014a](#); for critical discussion, see [Silk 2017a](#). The view developed in [Horgan and Timmons's \(2006\)](#) "Cognitivist Expressivism" appears to reject cognitivism in the present sense.

- (10) (P1) Fido is a dog.
(C1) \therefore Fido is a dog or Alice must help Timmy.

If the second disjunct of (C1) constrains the state of mind expressed by (C1), then the conclusion places a constraint not found in the premises.

First, one response is to deny the usual assumption among expressivists that the constraint on the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by a normative use of a simple sentence *N* necessarily figures in determining the meanings of complex sentences that include *N* as a constituent (cf. [Schroeder 2008b](#): 574–575, [2010](#): 47–49). The fact that certain canonical uses of a word δ conventionally express a non-representational attitude is part of what it is to mean what δ means. A word *MOD* in another language cannot correctly translate normative ‘must’ if using *MOD(S)* doesn’t express, say, a planning state. However, it’s open, in principle, to say that only the representational belief plays a role in explaining semantic properties of complex sentences and arguments. This sort of view is arguably the view taken in [Horwich 2005](#). For instance, *Must(S)* and $\neg Must(S)$ are inconsistent, the thought goes, because of the incoherence of the combination of beliefs expressed by their use, given the meaning of negation and the belief expressed by *Must(S)*.

A challenge for such a view is to provide a systematic account of when the nonrepresentational attitude that would be expressed by a simple sentence does affect the meaning of a larger construction. Uttering the conjunction in (12) or relevance conditional in (13) expresses the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by an utterance of (11).

- (11) I must go help Timmy.
(12) You can stay here, but I must go help Timmy.
(13) If you can hear me, I must go help Timmy.

If a speaker followed (12) with ‘Also, I have no intention whatsoever of doing so’, you would balk no less than with (11). The attitude ascription in (14) ascribes to Alice, perhaps among other things, the nonrepresentational attitude that she would express in uttering (11).

- (14) Alice thinks that she must go help Timmy.

Derivations of the practical implications of normative language are needed.

4.3 Cognitivist expressivism, Take 2: Conative meanings

A natural way of proceeding — the dominant one among hybrid theorists — is to treat normative language as making a systematic contribution to whatever nonrepresentational attitude may be expressed by the sentence. Call the contribution of an expression to what representational attitude is conventionally expressed by a use of a sentence the expression's *descriptive meaning*, and call the contribution to what nonrepresentational attitude is conventionally expressed an expression's *conative meaning*.

Many hybrid theories have appealed to pejoratives as a precedent for expressions with both descriptive and conative meanings.¹⁰ Uttering (15) describes Al as a communist and expresses a negative attitude toward communists. Pejoratives can also be used in complex sentences, which stand in logical relations to other sentences. (15)–(16) are inconsistent, much as (5)–(6), reproduced below.

(15) Al is a commie.

(16) It's not as if Al is a commie. (¬Al is not a commie.)

(5) Alice must help Timmy.

(6) It's not as if Alice must help Timmy. (¬Alice doesn't have to help Timmy.)

Pejoratives ostensibly provide hybrid theorists with a license for optimism:

“[P]ejoratives have a ‘hybrid’ meaning... Given that the language includes pejoratives, it seemed to me, there should be no difficulty developing a theory according to which moral predicates similarly take properties as their semantic values but are also used to express conative attitudes in virtue of conventions governing their use.” (Copp 2014: 53)

A strategy would be to apply our best semantics for pejoratives to normative language in responding to the Frege–Geach problem.

First, as with the previous hybrid accounts, inconsistency among sentences is explained in terms of the descriptive meanings and coherence constraints on beliefs. Reconsider (5)–(6). By hypothesis, (5) expresses a belief that Alice helping Timmy has some property D_{must} — say, of following from the principle of utility, or God's commands, or the norms accepted by the speaker, etc., given the circumstances (cf. Kratzer 2012). Imagine that D_{must} = being commanded by God. The incoher-

¹⁰See Copp 2001, 2009, 2014, Boisvert 2008, Hay 2011; contrast Ridge 2006, 2014b. For critical discussion see Schroeder 2009, 2010: ch. 10, 2014, Silk 2017a. All occurrences of pejoratives here are mentioned, not used.

ence of believing that God commands that Alice help Timmy and believing that God does not command that Alice help Timmy predicts that (5)–(6) are inconsistent.

More needs to be said for commitments incurred by entailment.¹¹ Consider (17).

- (17) (P1) Betty is lying or Alice must help Timmy.
(P2) Betty is not lying.
(C1) ∴ Alice must help Timmy.

Accepting (P1)–(P2) plausibly commits one to accepting (C1), a normative conclusion. Yet the representational beliefs expressed by (P1)–(P2) needn't commit one to a nonrepresentational attitude. (Or, if they do, then expressivism needn't have a comparative advantage in explaining the practicality of normative judgment (cf. [Smith 1994](#).) What is needed, on the face of it, is a way of deriving the commitment to the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by (C1) from the attitudes expressed by (P1)–(P2). It might seem that we've landed back at the Frege–Geach problem. However, the acceptance of cognitivism affords a new strategy.

Enter the analogy with pejoratives. Consider (18), with 'commie'.

- (18) (P1) Betty is lying or Al is a commie.
(P2) Betty is not lying.
(C1) ∴ Al is a commie.

The representational beliefs expressed by (P1)–(P2) — that Al is a communist or Betty is lying, and that Betty is not lying — commit one to the representational belief expressed by (C1) — that Al is a communist. What commits one to the negative attitude toward communists expressed by the use of 'commie' in (C1)? There is only one option: the acceptance of (P1). Indeed, one would typically take someone who utters the disjunction (P1) to have something against communists. Continuing as in (19a) would be anomalous (indicated by '#').

- (19) Al is a commie or Betty is lying.
a. #... And communists are wonderful.
b. ... And Al is a capitalist.

The conative meaning of pejoratives is a well-studied kind of *projective* implication — an implication that tends to be regarded as a commitment of the speaker even when

¹¹Cf. [Schroeder 2009](#): 266, [2010](#): 109–110 on the supposed “inference-licensing property” of valid arguments. For critical discussion see [Copp 2014](#): 60–69, [Silk 2017a](#): 201–203, also below.

the expression is embedded in certain entailment-canceling environments.¹² Uttering the “Family-of-Sentences” variants of ‘Al is a commie’ in (20) would typically commit one to the negative attitude, though not to the belief that Al is a communist (cf. Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 2000, Tonhauser et al. 2013).

- (20) a. It’s not as if Al is a commie.
b. Maybe Al is a commie.
c. Is Al a commie?

So, the negative attitude expressed by (C1) in (18) is itself included among the attitudes expressed by (P1)–(P2). Given the properties of the representational beliefs, accepting (P1)–(P2) commits one to accepting (C1).

The uses of ‘commie’ in the simple and complex sentences in (18)–(20) express the same general negative attitude. Suppose the nonrepresentational attitude expressed with normative ‘must’ is also a general attitude — say, a preference for things commanded by God (i.e., D_{must} -things);¹³ and suppose this attitude is also expressed in uses of complex sentences such as the disjunction in (17). The account of (17) can mirror the account of (18): Accepting (P1)–(P2) in (17) commits one to accepting (C1) insofar as (i) the representational beliefs expressed by (P1)–(P2) — that Betty is lying or God commands that Alice help Timmy, and that Betty is not lying — commit one to the representational belief expressed by (C1) — that God commands that Alice help Timmy; and (ii) the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by (C1) — a preference for things commanded by God — is also expressed by (P1).

The cognitivist commitments are essential to this account of (17). The commitment to the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by (C1) is derived trivially: the same attitude is expressed by (P1). What distinguishes (P1) and (C1) semantically is the representational beliefs they express, and they express different representational beliefs due to the descriptive meaning of the constituent ‘Alice must help Timmy’. This response is unavailable to a traditional expressivist who denies that ‘Alice must help Timmy’ has a descriptive meaning.

Inferring (C1) from (P1) in (10) (reproduced below) won’t in general be licensed. Believing that Fido is a dog doesn’t commit one to the nonrepresentational attitude which, by hypothesis, projects out of the disjunction in (C1).

¹²I use ‘implication’ broadly to cover entailments, presuppositions, implicatures, etc. Note that a meaning can be “projective” in the given sense yet not project in certain uses. We will return to this.

¹³What representational attitudes and what nonrepresentational attitudes are expressed by normative uses may depend on context. Barker (2000) and Ridge (2006, 2014b) treat both as context-dependent. Boisvert (2008) treats both as context-independent. Eriksson (2009) treats only what representational belief is expressed as context-dependent.

- (10) (P1) Fido is a dog.
 (C1) ∴ Fido is a dog or Alice must help Timmy.

Yet this is as it should be if normative language is to be modeled after pejoratives. Inferring (C1) in (21) needn't be warranted either. Having representational beliefs doesn't in general commit one to being prejudiced.

- (21) (P1) Fido is a dog.
 (C1) ∴ Fido is a dog or Al is a commie.

Such inferences will still be licensed in contexts in which any projecting implications are satisfied. The inferences are — to adapt a notion from [von Fintel 1999](#) — *Strawson-acceptance-preserving*: accepting (P1), . . . , (Pn) and any implications projecting from (C) commits one to accepting (C). In (10), having a belief that Fido is a dog, along with a preference for D_{must} -things, commits one to that same preference and a belief that Fido is a dog or ____.¹⁴

So, pejoratives provide the hybrid theorist with a model for a response to the Frege–Geach problem. Inconsistency among sentences is explained via the sentences' descriptive meanings and coherence constraints on belief. To explain normative commitments incurred by entailment, we add that the conative meaning of normative language is a general attitude and that it projects in certain complex sentences. For instance, on the toy model above, normative uses of *Must(S)* are treated as expressing (i) a belief that the embedded claim has such-and-such property D_{must} (say, of following from what God commands) and (ii) a preference for D_{must} -things. It is posited that the latter nonrepresentational attitude is also expressed in uses of complex sentences such as the negation in (6) and disjunction (P1) in (17).

5 Challenges and developments: Projection and local effect

5.1 In search of a precedent

The existence of expressions with dual descriptive+conative meanings is compatible with THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM. What is at issue, however, is basic normative uses specifically — uses expressing “thin” concepts of, say, what we have reason to do or what must or may be done, all things considered. Evidence supporting a cognitivist-expressivist-friendly model of such uses would be desirable. Such evidence is unlikely to be found in pejoratives.

¹⁴I'm assuming a classical semantics for 'or' (though see, e.g., [Zimmerman 2000](#)).

There are relevant linguistic differences between pejoratives and normative language. For instance, the conative meaning of pejoratives such as ‘commie’ has *non-obligatory local effect*: it needn’t contribute to the meanings of embedded clauses, such as the complement of ‘think’ in (22). Here, the negative attitude associated with ‘commie’ isn’t ascribed to Betty. It only projects as a commitment of the speaker.

- (22) [Context: We hate communists, though Betty has nothing against them. We want to know Al’s political leanings. You step away to call Betty, who is friends with Al. When you come back, you say:]
Betty thinks Al is a commie. (Isn’t it messed up that she’s friends with him?)

In contrast, it’s hard to hear a belief ascription with normative ‘must’ as committing anyone other than the subject to a nonrepresentational (preference, planning, requiring) attitude. Utterances such as (23) are generally anomalous.

- (23) #That whole community thinks that they must rescue their children, but they couldn’t care less.

The conative meaning of normative language has local effect under attitude verbs.

The local effect of the conative meaning arguably bears on the treatment of normative thought (cf. Boisvert 2008, Schroeder 2009: 302–304, 2014: 282–284).¹⁵ (24) conventionally ascribes to Alice not only a representational belief; it also ascribes a nonrepresentational attitude, given the local effect of the conative meaning.

- (24) Alice thinks she must help Timmy.

So, if (24) is true—i.e., if Alice thinks she must help Timmy—then Alice has (roughly) the nonrepresentational attitude that she would express by a normative use of ‘I must help Timmy’. There is, in this sense, something definitional in the claim of a connection between normative judgment and motivation.

So, if the hybrid theorist wants a precedent for normative language as conceived by the theory, pejoratives won’t fit the bill. Instead:

¹⁵Copp’s hybrid theory denies that there is a necessary connection between moral judgment and motivation, granting that “it is *possible* for a person with a moral belief to lack the relevant conative attitude” (2014: 59; cf. 2001: 38). Suppose Alice has such a non-motivationally-laden moral belief that she (morally) must help Timmy, and Bert does too. Assuming it’s possible for Bert to felicitously describe Alice’s state of mind by saying (24), Copp’s account implies that the conative meaning is both conventional and cancellable. (In Bert’s use of (24), the conative meaning would neither project nor have local effect.) Yet non-cancellability is typically taken to be a hallmark of conventional meanings.

“What the hybrid theorist really needs is a family of constructions which [(i)] always commit the speaker to the same thing even when they are embedded under negation and in conditionals and disjunctions, but for which [(ii)] that commitment is transferred to the subject of an attitude report.” (Schroeder 2009: 307)

Feature (i) is needed to capture entailments such as in (17). Feature (ii) is needed for empirical reasons and to capture a conceptual connection between normative judgment and motivation.

There has been rich linguistic work on varieties of projective meanings and broadly expressive language.¹⁶ Roberts (2011) and Tonhauser et al. (2013) delineate a class of *backgrounded projective meanings* that may provide a more promising model. This class includes the prejacent implication of exclusives (*only S ⇒ S*), the polar implication of approximatives (*barely S ⇒ S*), the complement implication of factive attitude predicates (*know S ⇒ S*), and the prestate implication of change-of-state predicates (*stop S ⇒ used to S*).¹⁷ For instance, first, the prestate implication of (25) that Bert used to smoke, unlike the implication that Bert doesn’t now smoke, tends to project in uses of (26).

- (25) Bert stopped smoking.
- (26) a. It’s not as if Bert stopped smoking.
b. Maybe Bert stopped smoking.
c. Did Bert stop smoking?

Second, the prestate implication has obligatory local effect in the belief ascription in (27). Continuing with the second conjunct seems to imply that Alice is inconsistent.

- (27) #Alice thinks that Bert stopped smoking and that he never used to smoke.

There are independent examples of projective meanings that have obligatory local effect in attitude ascriptions.

¹⁶See, e.g., Hunston and Thompson 1999, Potts 2005, McCready 2010, Tonhauser et al. 2013, Gutzmann 2015.

¹⁷Anaphoric presuppositions such as the existence implication of pronouns also have obligatory local effect. Schroeder (2014) considers the contrastive implication of ‘but’; its status is controversial (see Toosarvandani 2014).

5.2 Projection failures

Can the hybrid theorist rest easy in modeling the conative meaning of normative uses on backgrounded meanings like the prestate implication of ‘stop’? Not necessarily.

The account of the normative commitment incurred in (17) relied on the assumption that the conative meaning generally projects out of disjunctions (§4.3). Parallel assumptions would be needed for other entailments. Accepting the conditional (P1) and its antecedent (P2) in (28) commits one to accepting (C1).

- (28) (P1) If Bert is away, then Alice must help Timmy.
(P2) Bert is away.
(C1) ∴ Alice must help Timmy.

One might worry that the backgrounded implications from §5.1 don’t invariably project in environments such as disjunctions or conditionals. The prestate implication of ‘stop’ in (29) is accepted only under the supposition, as reflected in the informal gloss. The lack of speaker commitment is possible with Family-of-Sentences variants as well. The speaker in (30) doesn’t know whether Bert has been a smoker.

- (29) I don’t know if Bert used to smoke. But if he did, he has stopped.
• ≈ “If Bert used to smoke, then he used to smoke and no longer smokes.”
- (30) [Context: Bert is looking to volunteer at an addiction treatment center. They only accept volunteers who are themselves in recovery from an addiction. Bert asks if he can help with the smokers group. The staff member says:]
Have you stopped smoking? If you have stopped smoking, you can volunteer.

The worry is that if such implications don’t invariably project in disjunctions, conditionals, etc., then taking them as a model for normative language leaves us without an explanation for entailments with disjunctions, conditionals, etc.

In response, one might attempt to explain away the lack of projection in examples such as (29)–(30). It has been observed that implications that typically project may fail to do so when they are at issue in the context (Simons et al. 2010, Roberts 2011). The existence implication of ‘the king of France’, that France has a king, needn’t project in (31) where it’s at issue whether France has a king.

- (31) A: Does France have a king?
B: The king of France wasn’t at the royal gala. (So, maybe not.)

Likewise, in (30), the speaker intends to address Bert’s question by raising the issue of whether Bert has been a smoker, which is directly relevant. Such failures of

projection can occur even with pejoratives, hybrid theorists' favored projective expressions. Bo's application of modus tollens in (32) doesn't commit Bo to a negative attitude toward communists. Indeed, Bo might use (32) en route to a conclusion (in an updated context) that "no one is a commie" since being a communist doesn't itself make someone worthy of derision.

- (32) [Context: Bo says 'I don't know if there's anything fundamentally problematic or contemptible about being a communist. But ...]
- (P1) If Al is a commie, then Betty is a commie.
(P2) And Betty is *not* a commie.
(C1) So, Al is not a commie.

The lack of projection in (29)–(32) is for principled reasons, due to specific features of the context.

Does the fact that projective meanings sometimes fail to project threaten the idea that normative commitments may be incurred as a matter of logic? Not necessarily. We are evaluating sentences in a given fixed context. In context, accepting (P1)–(P2) in (32) commits Bo to (C1) due to features of the representational beliefs expressed. Capturing Bo's commitment doesn't depend on finding a nonrepresentational attitude expressed by (C1) among (P1)–(P2), since there isn't one. In a different context, accepting (P1)–(P2) may commit one to (C1) partly due to the nonrepresentational attitude there expressed by (P1)–(C1). Analogous points could be made for normative language.

5.3 Local readings

Now for a hitch. Coupled with the fact that projective meanings may fail to project is that they can have local effect: they can interact with at-issue meanings and appear to be targeted by operators. In the attitude ascription in (27), the prestate implication of 'stop' that Bert used to smoke is satisfied in the context of Alice's beliefs. In (29)–(30) the prestate implication is targeted by the conditional and question. The speaker in (30) is asking whether Bert used to smoke and no longer does.

Tendencies for such "local readings" vary among projective meanings and across contexts. For instance, whereas the local effect of the prestate implication of 'stop' is obligatory under attitude verbs, it is non-obligatory under negation. If I said (33) and then did no coding at all, you would not normally take me to have satisfied my promise. The implication, in the context of the promise, that I have done coding during the competition isn't targeted by the negation.

(33) I promise not to stop coding during the competition.

Or consider the projective implication of ‘too’ that there is a salient alternative true proposition. In (34) this implication is ascribed to my parents and has local effect. In (35) it only projects as a commitment of the speaker.

(34) [Context: We’re cousins, out at a party.]

My parents think you’re home in bed. They think I’m in bed too.

(local effect)

(35) [Context: My parents don’t know anything about you. You say you’re home in bed. I say:]

My parents think I’m in bed too.

(no local effect)

Varying tendencies for local readings can be observed with conative meanings as well. In the context in (22) we saw the negative attitude associated with ‘commie’ project under ‘think’. In (36) the negative attitude is instead ascribed to the subject.

(36) I don’t have anything against communists. But Cal, who does, thinks Al is the worst commie he knows. (cf. [Schlenker 2003](#): ex. 109b)

In the context in (32) the conative meaning has local effect under negation and in the antecedent and consequent of a conditional. In using (P2) Bo is rejecting the idea of making Betty the object of a negative attitude toward communists. Like examples can be constructed with normative language. A budding skeptic’s utterances of (37)–(38) needn’t be infelicitous. (One can substitute ‘not maximizing happiness’ with whatever would convey the descriptive meaning of ‘wrong’.)

(37) I’m not sure if anything is right or wrong. But if anything is wrong, it’s killing. Is killing wrong?

(38) I don’t know if not maximizing happiness is always to be disapproved of. But if kicking Fido is wrong, then kicking Toto is wrong. Is kicking Toto wrong?

The previous discussion barely scratches the surface of phenomena with projection and local readings.¹⁸ What is the upshot? First, if a hybrid theory needs to posit that normative language has a conative meaning that “always” projects “under negation and in conditionals and disjunctions, but” has local effect only

¹⁸See also [Silk 2021](#) for discussion of shifted and unshifted interpretations more broadly.

under attitude verbs (Schroeder 2009: 307), then that is a significant cost.¹⁹ I am not aware of independent evidence for a projective meaning with such tidy properties.

Rather, we should expect an account to explain how the conative meaning of normative language can contribute to the meanings of a range of constructions, in different contexts. We have found ourselves again at the Frege–Geach problem. That isn’t to say that the problem can’t be solved. For instance, one might attempt to give an expressivist interpretation to apparatus in our best formal semantics of the phenomena. Such an approach is available to non-hybrid expressivists as well. Indeed it has been employed for years (Gibbard 1990, 2003, Silk 2015a).

5.4 Projectivity revisited

The previous sections have examined the prospects for modeling a hybrid account of normative language on certain independently attested triggers of projective implications. Though some hybrid theorists have appealed to pejoratives (§4.3), I suggested that a more promising model would be expressions such as ‘only’, approximatives, certain factive attitude predicates, and change-of-state predicates, which trigger backgrounded implications that have obligatory local effect in attitude ascriptions (§5.1). However, I argued that even if normative language is to be countenanced among this class, it won’t afford hybrid theories a dialectical advantage (§5.3). Any expressivist account—hybrid or not—that wishes to explain semantic properties of complex sentences with normative language (at least partly) in terms of nonrepresentational attitudes will need to explain how the posited conative meaning can contribute to the attitude expressed by a disjunction, conditional, attitude ascription, etc., without projecting as a commitment of the speaker.

Projective implications of an expression \mathcal{E} , recall, are implications that tend to be understood as commitments of the speaker in uses of Family-of-Sentences variants of simple \mathcal{E} -sentences (§4.3). The discussion has assumed for the sake of argument that normative language has a projective conative meaning. Drawing on the comparison with pejoratives, we assumed that this conative meaning is a general nonrepresentational attitude. For instance, if following from God’s commands was the descriptive meaning of normative ‘must’, the nonrepresentational attitude expressed by (5) (reproduced below) might be a general preference for things, whatever they are, that follow from God’s commands.

¹⁹Ridge (2006, 2014b) doesn’t appeal to a comparison with pejoratives, but the upshot is similar. For complex sentences with normative language in nonintensional contexts, it is stipulated that the nonrepresentational attitude (for Ridge, a “normative perspective”) invariably projects (in my terminology; see 2014b: 144–145).

(5) Alice must help Timmy.

What is directly at issue in normative discourse is normally what attitude to have toward particular matters of concern, not what general policy to adopt. Treating the conative meaning of (5) as (e.g.) a preference that Alice help Timmy would, for this reason, be a nonstarter. The particular attitude doesn't project. Uttering (39) doesn't commit one to a preference that Alice help Timmy.

- (39) a. It's not as if Alice must help Timmy.
b. If Alice must help Timmy, Bob must help Tommy.
c. Must Alice help Timmy?

In a skeptical context where what is at issue is whether to “go in for normativity,” the general nonrepresentational attitude may fail to be expressed too, as in (37)–(38) (cf. (31)–(32)). But in ordinary practical and deliberative contexts, a commitment to the general attitude can plausibly be taken for granted.

Yet there are reasons to question whether the general nonrepresentational attitude is a projective meaning of specific expressions. Consider a contextualist implementation according to which normative uses of *Must*(*S*) express a representational belief that the embedded claim $\llbracket S \rrbracket^c$ follows from N_c , where N_c is the body of (all-things-considered) norms determined by the context c (cf. Silk 2017b). The general nonrepresentational attitude might be, say, a plan to conform one's behavior to N_c given the information in c . It is common in work on imperatives and other jussives to posit a commitment to such an attitude as a conventional discourse principle (see Portner 2004, 2007, Condoravdi and Lauer 2012, Lauer 2013). Positing a general nonrepresentational attitude associated with normative ‘must’ — or proliferating such a meaning around the lexicon — would be otiose. No wonder the commitment to the attitude seems to “project” when ‘must’ is used in entailing-canceling environments. It isn't triggered by ‘must’ at all. It's a normal background assumption of conversation.

The contextualist implementation above is inessential. Suppose hybrid theorists are correct that normative uses of language have a conventionalized practical meaning. Then if normative *Must*(*S*) is accepted, $\llbracket S \rrbracket^c$ will follow from the norms determined by the context.

We began §4.3 with the idea that semantic properties of normative language are to be explained partly in terms of certain expressions' “conative meaning,” or contribution to whatever nonrepresentational attitude may be expressed by a sentence. Observe that we have ended up with something approximating the Horwich-style view from §4.2, here about normative ‘must’. First, we have a view about normative

uses of simple sentences $Must(S)$, that they imply (among other things) that $\llbracket S \rrbracket^c$ follows from the norms N_c determined by the context. Second, we have a view about explanations of semantic properties of complex sentences embedding $Must(S)$, that such explanations proceed from the previous point and the contribution of $Must(S)$ to what representational belief is expressed. Now, third, we add a view about the nature of discourse, that language users are generally implicitly committed to a practical nonrepresentational attitude toward N_c . This commitment explains the nonrepresentational attitudes conventionally expressed by normative uses of simple sentences $Must(S)$ (given the first claim above), and whatever nonrepresentational attitudes may be expressed by uses of complex sentences (given the second claim).

Is the result a “hybrid” theory? I don’t wish to adjudicate a terminological question. But note that, on the given view, normative uses have only descriptive meanings, and NONREPRESENTATIONALITY is derived, not basic.²⁰

6 Taking stock

6.1 Recap

The dialectic has taken a number of twists and turns. Let’s recap.

THE EXPRESSIVIST PROGRAM says that sentences’ semantic properties are to be explained in terms of properties of states of mind conventionally expressed by uses of those sentences. Notions of truth or content don’t play a basic explanatory role. Metaethical expressivists supplement these claims about explanatory priority with a NONREPRESENTATIONALITY claim that normative uses conventionally express nonrepresentational attitudes, attitudes not explained, in the first instance, as representing how things are. Normative uses express states of, say, preference or planning, whose basic function is practical, to orient action, motivation, choice.

Expressivism has been thought to afford a more illuminating account of the practicality of normative discourse. A prominent challenge, the Frege–Geach problem, is to provide a systematic account of the semantic properties of complex sentences. For instance, if uttering sentence S expresses some planning state, what state of mind is expressed in uttering ‘ $\neg S$ ’? Or in uttering ‘ S or T ’, if uttering T expresses a representational belief? Hybrid theories have attempted to address the challenge by supplementing the expressivist theses with the cognitivist claim that normative uses

²⁰On the connection between motivation and normative judgment, more would need to be said about the nature and specific content of the posited commitment to the nonrepresentational attitude. Depending on one’s formulation, the approach may provide a more attractive direction for hybrid theorists, such as Copp, who wish to deny that normative belief ascriptions generally imply that the subject has some practical attitude (see n. 15).

also conventionally express representational beliefs. Properties such as inconsistencies among sentences are explained in terms of the logic of belief. Still pressing, however, is to explain normative commitments incurred by entailment.

A prominent strategy among hybrid theorists has been to look to independently attested examples of expressions with both “descriptive” and “conative” meanings, conventionally used in expressing both representational and nonrepresentational attitudes. For instance, in (18), with a pejorative, accepting ‘*T* or Al is a commie’ and ‘ $\neg T$ ’ commits one to the negative attitude expressed by ‘Al is a commie’ because the very same attitude is expressed by the disjunction. One might posit that normative uses of, say, ‘must’ also express the same nonrepresentational attitude. An analogous account of examples such as (17) falls out. What commits one to the positive (planning, preference) attitude expressed by ‘Alice must help Timmy’ is that the same attitude is expressed by ‘*T* or Alice must help Timmy’, which one accepts. Such trivial derivations of the commitment to the nonrepresentational attitude are not available to a traditional expressivist.

However, there are serious challenges facing any hybrid account developed along these lines. To account for normative commitments incurred by entailment in a way that improves on traditional expressivism, the conative meaning must project out of negations, disjunctions, antecedents and consequents of conditionals, etc. For empirical reasons, and to reflect the practicality of normative judgment, the conative meaning must have obligatory local effect in attitude ascriptions. If the account is to have an advantage over traditional expressivism, the conative meaning should not have local effect in other environments (e.g., negations, disjunctions, conditionals). Yet there is no precedent for a projective meaning that always and only has local effect in attitude ascriptions. The potential contribution of projective meanings to the meanings of embedded constituents is far too dependent on linguistic and non-linguistic context. A descendent of the Frege–Geach problem is inevitable.

Further, there are preferable alternatives to positing lexically specific projective conative meanings for normative language. There are independent reasons for positing a conventionalized practical commitment to norms N_c determined by the context. The claim that simple normative sentences express a nonrepresentational attitude can be derived from the former commitment and a hypothesis that such uses carry a suitable implication about N_c . For instance, one might posit that normative uses of *Must*(*S*) imply that $\llbracket S \rrbracket^c$ follows from N_c . Derivations of any practical commitments of complex sentences will depend, as usual, on the meanings of the other expressions. Providing such derivations is nontrivial. Yet work on the formal semantics and pragmatics of imperatives provides grounds for optimism. And the

task is no less tractable than the parallel task for a hybrid theory that takes the practicality of simple normative sentences as basic (cf. [Horwich 2005](#)).

6.2 Upshots

We began the path toward hybrid theories in §3 by considering reasons for supplementing expressivism with cognitivism. The avenues pursued in §§4–5 — and their pitfalls — needn’t be inevitable. First, I haven’t argued that the Frege–Geach problem cannot be solved (see §3.2). If it can, then prominent motivations for cognitivism and hybrid theories will need to be reconsidered. Yet whether normative uses conventionally express nonrepresentational and nonrepresentational attitudes is ultimately an empirical question. Specific accounts of the meaning of normative language ought to be considered on their own terms and evaluated in light of linguistic data. Second, there are other grounds for pursuing a hybrid theory. For instance, one might be a cognitivist attracted to expressivism’s account of the practicality of normative judgment. With that in mind, it may be helpful, in closing, to briefly reconsider some of the critical issues and to what extent they hang together.

The discussion has focused much on matters of language and semantic explanation. Issues at the level of thought have also been central, historically. Consider:

- How do we come to have normative beliefs, the sort of state of mind reported by sentences such as ‘Bert thinks that Alice must help Timmy’?
- What, if anything, is distinctive about such thoughts?

One cognitivist idea is that we come to have normative beliefs by forming certain stable dispositions in response to features of our environment or psychology, whereby the beliefs represent those features. The dispositions might be sensitive to, say, maximizing overall happiness, or being in a certain psychological state, or some complex system of physiological, psychological, social conditions. They may also include dispositions to act or feel in certain ways, bearing on motivation. With normative thoughts, the immediate sense of thinking about the same topic — what [Schroeter and Schroeter \(2014\)](#) call an “appearance of *de jure* sameness” — may be systematically correlated with or dependent on certain conative states, in general or at a relevant stage of concept acquisition. It isn’t immediately clear how such a view bears on whether truth plays a basic role in explaining semantic properties, or whether normative expressions have conative meanings.

Alternatively, one might start with the idea that we come to have normative beliefs in light of being creatures with preferences, goals, plans. Normative beliefs — and the patterns of intuitions of pertaining to the same topic — must be understood

via their place in practices of deliberation and evaluation, individually and in community. What is distinctive about normative concepts is their function in facilitating decision making and action and coordinating attitudes (cf. Gibbard 1990).

Consider an analogy. Suppose there are things that provoke us to cringe, or to say ‘yuck!’. We find ourselves with goals of coordinating on what things to cringe or to say ‘yuck!’ in response to, and of tracking our own dispositions over time. Yet our language fails to generate expressions such as ‘if yuck/[*cringing*]’, ‘not yuck/[*cringing*]’, and the like. We coin adjectives ‘cringe’ and ‘yucky’. As grammatical predicates, ‘be cringe’ and ‘be yucky’ may figure in discourse (dis)agreements and logical arguments, as in (40)–(41). In (40) the speakers are coordinating their attitudes on what is cringe-worthy.

- (40) A: That video is so cringe.
B: No it isn’t. Just relax.
- (41) (P1) If this is cringe, then that is cringe.
(P2) This is cringe.
(C1) ∴ That is cringe.

It might be surprising if the step of coining variants such as ‘yucky’ or ‘cringe’ (adj.) — or the concepts they express — required acquiring some set of representational states about the subject matter. We should be cautious about attributing such states to subjects, absent significant evidence for a particular hypothesis. The subjects’ pursuit of their (non-)discourse-related goals might depend on being in some representational state, but perhaps not; and even if it did, the representations may or may not identify the meaning of their claims. The same goes for, say, normative uses of ‘must’, or ‘what it makes most sense to do’. Historically, expressivists have been skeptical (e.g., Gibbard 1990: 32–34, 112–122).

A hybrid account may be correct for some expressions or concepts. An expressivist might uncover, à la Nietzsche, that uses of ‘morally good’ in a certain community represent what eases existence among the weak. What is at issue is whether the same can be said for all normative language and judgment.

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