
EMOTIVISM AND DEFLATIONARY TRUTH

BY

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Abstract: The paper investigates different ways to understand the claim that non-cognitivist theories of morality are incoherent. According to the claim, this is so because, on one theory of truth, non-cognitivists are not able to deny objective truth to moral judgments without taking a substantive normative position. I argue that emotivism is not self-defeating in this way. The charge of incoherence actually only amounts to a claim that emotivism is incompatible with deflationary truth, but this claim is based upon a mistake. It relies upon a problematic understanding of both emotivism and the deflationary theory of truth.

Philosophers concerned to resist any of the varieties of non-cognitivist moral theories have typically relied heavily upon the embeddedness problem, which Peter Geach has articulated.¹ According to these theories, normative claims do not express genuine propositions. However, this cannot explain, and, is at odds with, the way people talk. Moral claims, for example, display the same syntax as non-moral claims, which do express genuine propositions. So moral claims are uttered as if they are about facts, but emotivism denies that they are factual. This is a problem for non-cognitivist theories because it seems to follow that they must be committed to rejecting the validity of instances of *modus ponens* that include as one of the components a normative claim.

An alternative to this traditional way for philosophers to resist non-cognitivism has been advanced by Paul Boghossian and, even more recently, Ronald Dworkin. It relies upon a putative tension between non-cognitivism and the deflationary theory of truth.² At the heart of Dworkin's argument is the claim that there is a kind of incoherence involved in the idea that a theorist is able, as Dworkin says, "to stand outside a whole body of belief, and to judge it as a whole from premises or attitudes that owe nothing to it."³ Theories that purport to do this Dworkin calls 'archimedean.' Thus the area of philosophy covered by

meta-ethics professes to be archimedean about morality. If a meta-ethical theory professes an external skepticism about morality, it denies objective truth to moral judgments, and it does so without taking any substantive moral position. One way to do this is to deny that to make a moral judgment is to make an assertion,⁴ that to make such a judgment is to express a proposition that is either true or false.

One version of non-cognitivism has it that to make a moral judgment is not to make a claim that even aspires to objective truth. It is merely to express one's emotions. Emotivism is archimedean as it purports to stand outside the domain of evaluative discourse and be only a theory *about* moral judgments. That is, the theory criticizes the domain of evaluative discourse but not by denying the ascription of a moral predicate to some act, event, or person and ascribing a different positive moral predicate. It offers no claim that is on the same level or competitive with the judgment, for example, that abortion is wrong because, as a theory, it says nothing at all about the rightness or wrongness of abortion. Instead, it involves a claim *about* the judgment that abortion is wrong. That judgment, the theory says, is neither true nor false; rather it is the expression of someone's moral disapproval of the intentional termination of a pregnancy.

Dworkin is arguing, in a sense, that emotivism argues against itself: "even this selective form of archimedean skepticism is misconceived. Any successful – really, any intelligible – argument that evaluative propositions are neither true nor false must be internal to the evaluative domain rather than archimedean about it."⁵ The emotivist conception of moral discourse, claims Dworkin, necessarily throws emotivists into the realm of making substantive normative claims. For example, to make the judgment that abortion is wrong certainly is to make a substantive normative judgment. But to deny this, as Dworkin says an emotivist does, is to make a substantive normative judgment as well. I want to argue against this charge that emotivism is self-defeating. Dworkin's argument for it seems to be based upon a mistake. His argument that the emotivist claim must be internal to the evaluative domain and must therefore be a substantive moral judgment seems to rely on a problematic take on both emotivism and the deflationary theory of truth.

According to this theory of truth, the function of the truth-predicate, for example, in the sentence, "'the cat is on the mat' is true' or in the sentence, 'the proposition that the cat is on the mat is true' is not to describe the sentence's subject. Truth is not a substantive property. An adequate notion of truth is captured in a simple equivalence schema: for any meaningful declarative sentence *p* there is an equivalent sentence 'The proposition *that p* is true.'⁶ If this is right, then it is true *that p* if and only if *p*. In what follows, section 1 will show how Dworkin's argument that the external skeptic's position is self-defeating incorporates this

deflationary theory of truth. Section 2 will suggest that Dworkin's argument seems to mirror Boghossian's. Boghossian concluded that A. J. Ayer's⁷ endorsement of both an emotivist conception of moral discourse and a deflationary theory of truth is strictly speaking incoherent. Finally, section 3 will argue that external, archimedean skepticism about morality is not incoherent in the way Dworkin and Boghossian suggest.

I.

Dworkin denies that external skepticism about morality can make plausible distinctions among the following claims:

- (1) Abortion is wrong.
- (2) 'Abortion is wrong' is true.
- (3) The judgment that abortion is wrong is one that is true.

External skeptics would like to say that saying (1) involves one in making a substantive moral judgment, while saying (2) and (3) do not. Rather, (2) and (3) are external, meta-ethical statements about the status of the normative judgment in (1). Therefore, external skepticism about morality could allow (1) (although (1) would not express a proposition), but would be skeptical about (2) and (3) (just because (1) does not express a proposition). So, for example, an emotivist can make judgments in the moral realm just like anybody else. But he would go on to say:

- (4) Statement (1) is not the kind of statement which it makes sense to evaluate as being either true or false. This is because statement (1) does not express a genuine proposition.

And:

- (5) Moral concepts like "wrongness" are rather unanalyzable ejaculations, expressions of feeling.

Dworkin rejects this sort of distinction because he thinks that (2) and (3) "can only be understood as baroque repetitions of the simpler claim" that abortion is wrong.⁸ They are, if not redundant, then simply clarifications on the original substantive moral judgment. It is implausible, says Dworkin, to allow (1), but to be skeptical about (2) and (3). The heart of the disagreement then consists in whether or not it is possible to make a distinction between a meta-ethical position and a substantive normative position. Dworkin argues that it is not. If (2) and (3) are simply more elaborate forms of, and continuous with, (1) and external skepticism

about morality is skeptical about the statements in (2) and (3), then external skepticism is not really an *external* skepticism; that is, it is not a genuinely *meta*-ethical position. Rather, it is a substantive normative one. According to Dworkin:

If the further claim [from the claim that abortion is wrong] that abortion is really or objectively wrong means that it is wrong even when and where people do not think it wrong, and the archimedean denies that further claim, he is endorsing the negative moral judgment that there is no moral objection to abortion in societies in which it is approved.⁹

If the external skeptic really does this, then it would defeat his claim that he stands outside the realm of evaluative discourse and is only making claims *about* moral claims. But has Dworkin in fact given us good reason to suppose that (2) and (3) are simply continuous with, or just elaborate restatements of, (1)?

As I have said, Dworkin's argument incorporates something like a deflationary theory of truth. External skepticism about morality, says Dworkin, "relies, for example, on the argument that there is no objective moral reality 'out there' for moral beliefs to match, and that the idea of objective truth about morality is an illusion for that reason."¹⁰ Dworkin says that external skeptics about morality are skeptical about the further claims of (2) and (3) because these further claims read as if moral concepts "'correspond to' or 'represent' or 'match' some moral state of affairs."¹¹ But, according to Dworkin, this is unnecessary and, in fact, not the most natural reading of the further claims. Instead, a theorist might employ the equivalence schema of the deflationary theory of truth: "by itself the claim that moral convictions correspond to reality is just redundant. The proposition that 'Abortion is wrong corresponds to a fact' can be understood as just a wordy way of saying that abortion is wrong."¹² And this seems to give Dworkin exactly what he is looking for. To Dworkin, the most natural reading of (2), "'Abortion is wrong' is true" suggests nothing stronger than (1), 'Abortion is wrong.' The same goes for (3). 'The judgment that abortion is wrong is one that is true' is simply a wordier way of saying (1). Because of this (2) and (3) are, to Dworkin, nothing more than elaboration or clarification of (1). Since the deflationary theory's requirement for truth conditions is so thin, external skepticism must be mistaken. Sentence (2) (and (3)) is continuous with (1) and the emotivist position in (4) denies (2) (and (3)). Therefore, (4) is not an external, meta-ethical claim about the status of the normative claim in (1). It is itself a substantive normative position. And so the same must be true of (2) and (3). Given the redundancy or equivalence schema, Dworkin argues that it is impossible to maintain an external skepticism about morality.

2.

Dworkin's argument seems to mirror one made by Paul Boghossian in "The Status of Content." Boghossian's main concern here is the application of irrealist models in the philosophy of mind, but the arguments run parallel and can be generalized. As he says, "the irrealist conclusion itself is demonstrably unacceptable: at least as traditionally formulated, an irrealism about content is not merely implausible, it is incoherent."¹³

One such version of this irrealism, what I have here referred to as emotivism, Boghossian refers to as one version of non-factualism:

According to this view, although F's declarative sentences [where F is equal to the set of fragments of all evaluative discourse] appear to express genuine predicative judgments, that appearance is wholly illusory. In actual fact, a non-factualist alleges, F's predicates do not denote properties; nor, as a result, do its declarative sentences express genuine predicative judgments, equipped with truth conditions: seeing as such sentences would be making no claim about the world, so nothing about the world could render them true or false.¹⁴

According to emotivism (where F consists of all moral discourse), the semantic function of these declarative sentences in F is not to describe anything. Their function is to express a feeling or attitude. Boghossian attributes this theory to Ayer.¹⁵

However, Boghossian argues that from the deflationary theory of truth, which he also attributes to Ayer,¹⁶ "any such non-factualistic view is bound to appear unintelligible."¹⁷ There is no such thing as the property of truth; rather, according to a representative version of deflationism, the ascription of truth is simply a way to indicate one's willingness to affirm a sentence. But if this is right, then use of the truth-predicate is not strictly necessary. Instead of saying '*p* is true' one could indicate one's willingness to affirm *p* by simply saying '*p*.' There is nothing more to 'It is true that the cat is on the mat' than 'The cat is on the mat.' And the fact that there is nothing more to adding the predicate 'true' is what generates the problem for non-factualism. That is, it seems that as long as a sentence meets the requirements of being one that is both meaningful and declarative, that sentence should be considered truth-apt, and, as such, the expression of a genuine proposition, according to the deflationary theory. Yet this is precisely what non-factualism, which Dworkin referred to as external skepticism, explicitly denies with regard to certain realms of discourse, the realm of moral discourse being one of them.

Boghossian has then reached virtually the same conclusion as Dworkin. As Boghossian writes:

A non-factualism about any subject matter presupposes a conception of truth richer than the deflationary: it is committed to holding that the predicate 'true' stands for some sort of

real, language independent property, eligibility for which will not be certified solely by the fact that a sentence is declarative and significant. Otherwise, there will be no understanding its claim that a significant sentence, declarative in form, fails to possess truth conditions.¹⁸

I suppose then that even on Boghossian's or Dworkin's own account it does not follow that non-factualism, or external skepticism, is strictly speaking incoherent. One could simply give up deflationism and endorse a more robust theory of truth. However, Dworkin's response is that in the realm of moral discourse this would be a pretty odd view. Dworkin says that it would be to endorse a "moral-field" thesis.¹⁹ According to this view, one must suppose that moral beliefs have warrant only when they are directly caused by the proper observation or appropriate impact of moral particles, which Dworkin aptly calls "morons."²⁰ But if the existence of these particles is all that archimedean skeptics are skeptical about, then external skepticism about morality amounts to a rather weak claim. It is in no way particular to external skeptics to deny the existence of morons.²¹ The putative problems enter when the external skepticism, or non-factualism, is accompanied by a deflationary theory of truth.

3.

This charge of incoherence, made by both Boghossian and Dworkin, is very powerful. The argument is an internal critique. That is, it purports to grant everything that a non-cognitivist theory should want and attempts to implode the system. It is interesting that neither Dworkin nor Boghossian make use of the more traditional method of resisting non-cognitivism. It is true that if Dworkin and Boghossian's internal criticism goes through, then they will not need Geach's objection from the embeddedness of normative claims. However, if their arguments go through, it seems to follow that this objection would not be available to them anymore.

In a review essay of Allan Gibbard's *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Paul Horwich shows why this should be so. He argues that too much is made of the embeddedness problem.²² This is so, he argues, because on a "more liberal" deflationary theory of truth "normative claims are taken to be fact-stating in just the way that naturalistic claims are. . . . Every possible object of belief, assertion, conjecture, and so on will be a candidate for truth. . . ."²³ This is the same move that both Dworkin and Boghossian make and is the insight that generates the charge that emotivism is self-defeating. However, Horwich goes on from this to offer a recharacterization of Gibbard's expressivism. In it, he denies the claim that normative judgments fail to express genuine propositions, that they are not truth-apt. To answer Geach's problem, he claims that moral predicates function

just like normal predicates in discourse. As Horwich says, “insofar as such deflationary accounts of truth, fact, and property capture our actual notions, it is wrong to say that normative claims do not concern facts, are not true, and do not attribute properties. Norm-expressivism has no need for these theses and would be better off without them.”²⁴

There are problems with this kind of non-cognitivism,²⁵ but it is not my specific intent here to evaluate it. Rather, it is to raise the question of the moral of deflationism for ethics. For Dworkin and Boghossian, it was to show that non-cognitivism is self-defeating. For Horwich, deflationism provides us with two options. Either “the import of the deflationary theory of truth for meta-normative discussion is best conceived of as an undermining of the received conflict between realists and expressivists, exposing a false, shared presupposition, and suggesting a third, ‘mixed’ alternative,” or it shows us “that expressivism should be reformulated, not denied.”²⁶

I rather think that deflationism in ethics does none of these. It neither helps formulate a version of non-cognitivism that avoids the Geach problem, as Horwich thinks, nor does it render non-cognitivism self-defeating, as Dworkin and Boghossian say. The only way deflationism could do either of these would be if the theory were sorely misconstrued.

The way that these writers seem to misconstrue deflationism is to treat it simply as a syntactical thesis. The view seems to be that if a sentence is meaningful and declarative in form, then it must be truth-apt. Therefore any meaningful and declarative normative sentence must be truth-apt. Any non-cognitivist theory that denies that moral sentences are truth-apt must be mistaken, and would therefore need to be reformulated as Horwich suggests, when it is accompanied by this view about syntax. This syntactic thesis should be called a deflationary theory of *truth-aptitude* or perhaps a deflationary theory of ‘true.’²⁷ So, for example, according to these writers, if one is a non-cognitivist about the use of ‘Abortion is wrong’ and a deflationist about ‘true,’ then one would also think that (2) and (3) must receive the same non-cognitivist analysis that (1) does, rather than (2) and (3) being read as meta-claims that express propositions.

However, this syntactic thesis should be separated from a genuinely semantic thesis – a deflationary theory of *truth*. According to this theory, for example, ‘It is true that the cat is on the mat if and only if the cat is on the mat.’ This biconditional is true because of the meaning of the two simple statements, not simply because the compound has the appropriate syntax. The biconditional is true because of the information that the two simple statements convey. But according to emotivism, moral claims are different than descriptive claims about, for example, a cat and a mat and where the one is in relation to the other. The theory says that a moral claim, such as statement (1), conveys no information. Moral predicates have no meaning or information to convey. As Ayer writes:

Thus if I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, "You stole that money," in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence.²⁸

Emotivism, as Boghossian conceives of it, is a view that says moral sentences are not truth-apt. That is, they are the sort of sentences that lack truth values. But a deflationary theory of truth-aptitude (not of *truth*, but of *truth-aptitude*) holds that any sentence that can feature without grammatical mistake into an instance of the schema, *p* is true if and only if *p*, is truth-apt. Since moral sentences like (1) clearly can so feature, they are truth-apt in the deflationary sense. According to Boghossian, a deflationist about 'true,' one who holds this deflationary theory of truth-aptitude, may not consistently be an emotivist – one who denies truth-aptitude to moral sentences.

The structure of Dworkin's argument was similar. Emotivism, insofar as it is a meta-ethical position, aspires to be archimedean. An emotivist attempts to talk about moral claims without himself making any moral claims. Yet an emotivist, Dworkin argues, cannot maintain this archimedean standpoint. He ends up taking a stand on particular moral issues. Dworkin has the emotivist claiming, for example, that (2) is false. And the emotivist claims this not because of his view about abortion, but because of his emotivism. The claim that (2) (and (3)) is false is part of a statement of his emotivist position. It is false because it provides (1) with a cognitivist characterization and an emotivist must deny this characterization. An emotivist has his own characterization of what someone who utters (1) is doing, and this characterization is a non-cognitivist one.

But Dworkin claims that the emotivist cannot do this without also claiming that (1) is false. And to say that (1) is false is to make a first-order normative claim and abandon the archimedean standpoint. An emotivist, claims Dworkin, cannot be an archimedean, and this is to abandon much of what it means to be an emotivist.

So far I have argued that distinguishing between a deflationary conception of truth and a deflationary conception of truth-aptitude defuses Boghossian and Dworkin's argument against emotivism in much the same way. Since it is the deflationary conception of truth-aptitude that is operative in the argument and not the deflationary conception of truth, the latter poses no threat to emotivism.

However, someone may argue that all advocates of the deflationary theory of truth should logically be forced to be advocates of the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude. I do not think we should be persuaded by any such argument. They are compatible with each other, but they are

views about two different things. The deflationary theory of truth is a theory about the significance and function of the truth-predicate; the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude is a theory about what sentences have truth values. So one could argue that we have an adequate conception of what it means for a proposition to be true in the simple equivalence schema, p is true if and only if p . And that same person could argue that only sentences that fit into that schema have truth values. If this is the case then only exclamatory sentences, imperative sentences, and questions are not truth-apt. But someone else who advocated the deflationary conception of truth could argue that it takes more than a sentence having correct syntax to be considered truth-apt. For example, he may argue that a sentence must be descriptive rather than evaluative in order to be truth-apt. In this case, while he advocates a deflationary theory of truth, his theory of truth-aptitude is of a more inflationary sort. Incidentally, someone else may advocate a more inflationary conception of truth (e.g. a correspondence or coherence theory) yet advocate a deflationary theory of truth-aptitude. So there does not seem to be any necessary sort of connection between the semantic and syntactic theses.

There may be another worry. Perhaps I have been mistaken to equate Dworkin's argument with Boghossian's. The latter was straightforwardly one for the incompatibility of emotivism and the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude.²⁹ However, if my presentation of Dworkin's argument is correct, then it might seem that it is a deflationary theory of *truth* that is operative in it. What suggests this is that it is a deflationary theory of *truth* that explains the equivalence of (1) and (2) (and (3)). And, according to Dworkin, it is this equivalence that dislodges the emotivist from his archimedean standpoint. The view, says Dworkin, commits the emotivist to denying (2), but since (1) and (2) are equivalent, he backs into taking a first order normative judgment.

But (1) and (2) are equivalent on *every* theory of truth: deflationary, correspondence, coherence, and all the rest. The equivalence of (1) and (2) simply follows from the T-schema, and all theories of truth endorse the T-schema. So if this is Dworkin's argument, then he would say, "pick a theory of truth, *any* theory of truth: emotivism cannot maintain its archimedean standpoint." His is an argument against emotivism's compatibility with any theory of truth. As such, it is an argument against emotivism full stop.

But notice how Dworkin characterizes the view. In Dworkin's words the emotivist:

agrees with most people that genocide and slavery are wrong, for example. He only denies that these practices are *really* wrong, or that their wrongness is "out there" in reality. He insists, rather, that the wrongness is "in here," in our own breasts, that we have "projected" moral quality onto reality, that events are not, in themselves, right or wrong good or bad,

apart from our emotions or projects or conventions, that our moral convictions are not, after all, true or false or part of what we do or do not know, but are only, in complex ways, products of our invention or manufacture.³⁰

Dworkin's argument seems to go like this:

- (a) According to emotivism, it is not the case that p is either true or false, where p is some moral claim.
- (b) Therefore, the emotivist is committed to saying that it is not the case that p is true.
- (c) Therefore, the emotivist is committed to saying that p is false.
- (d) To say that p is false is to make a substantive normative claim.
- (e) Emotivism is committed to making some substantive normative claims.
- (f) Therefore, the emotivist cannot maintain his archimedean standpoint.

I understand the problem with it to arise in (a)–(c). The inferences there are valid, however, (a) is simply false. That is, Dworkin is working with an erroneous characterization of emotivism. He takes the view to say that moral sentences are not truth-apt, but rather are expressions of emotion. And this is by no means an infrequent characterization of the view. But it puts forward a false dilemma. In making a moral judgment, I can express an emotion and at the same time produce a sentence that is (at least deflationarily) truth-apt. All it takes for a sentence to be deflationarily truth-apt is for it to be a well-formed declarative sentence, and I may easily express emotions with such sentences.

But remember how the emotivist, Ayer, set out the view. He did not characterize it as a semantic thesis about the truth-aptitude of a certain class of sentences. He did not describe it as a view that holds that moral claims are not truth-apt. Rather, he expressed emotivism in more pragmatic terms – as a view about what people do when they utter moral claims.³¹ Recall my quotation of Ayer above. He provides a perfect characterization of emotivism without once mentioning truth or falsity. Instead, he writes about what people do when they use moral language: they do not make assertions, they express their emotions. Many moral utterances may look like assertions, but they are not. They are expressions of approval, or pleasure, or disgust, or adoration, etc. If we follow Ayer in characterizing emotivism in this more pragmatic way, then Dworkin's argument loses its force.

Similarly, if we follow Ayer in characterizing emotivism in this more pragmatic way, then Boghossian's argument loses its force. Remember that Boghossian's was an argument about the incompatibility of emotivism and the deflationary theory of *truth-aptitude*. But given the now preferred

pragmatic characterization of emotivism the two are perfectly compatible. The two are compatible because they are views about different things: emotivism is a view about the nature of the speech act of making a moral claim and the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude is a view about the grammatical properties of the claim I make in the course of that speech act. This means that there are two ways to avoid the conclusion of Boghossian's argument. One may opt for a more inflationary theory of truth-aptitude. But, in that case, one may remain open to Dworkin's argument. Therefore, the better way to go is to reject the semantic characterization of emotivism in favor of the pragmatic characterization.

If we do so, then an emotivist's pragmatic characterization of (2) and (3) in no way commits him to a substantive normative judgment that is competitive with (1). He will be, in good archimedean fashion, asserting his characterization of what someone who says (1) is really doing. Now, of course, none of this has been to show that he is correct in this characterization; i.e., that emotivism is true. Only that, first, it is a viable position even when combined with a deflationary theory of truth. Indeed, even when combined with a deflationary theory of truth-aptitude. The emotivist need not be so easily dislodged from his archimedean standpoint. Second, this has, I hope, shown that philosophers concerned to resist non-cognitivism do better doing so in the more traditional way.³²

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NOTES

¹ See Peter Geach (1964), "Assertion," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, pp. 449–465.

² Boghossian's argument is found in "The Status of Content," *The Philosophical Review* Vol. XCIX, No. 2 (April 1990): pp. 157–184, and Dworkin's in "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1996): pp. 87–139. But the tension had been noticed earlier. See Colin McGinn (1984). *Wittgenstein on Meaning*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 71.

³ Dworkin, p. 88.

⁴ This would be to deny that making a moral judgment involves one in the speech act of expressing a belief.

⁵ Dworkin, p. 89.

⁶ Cf. Paul Horwich (1990). *Truth*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, p. 5.

⁷ A. J. Ayer (1952). *Language, Truth and Logic*. NY: Dover, especially chs. V and VI.

⁸ Dworkin, p. 110.

⁹ Dworkin, p. 99.

¹⁰ Dworkin, p. 93.

¹¹ Dworkin, p. 103.

¹² Dworkin, p. 103.

¹³ Boghossian, p. 158.

¹⁴ Boghossian, p. 160.

¹⁵ Ayer, ch. VI.

¹⁶ Ayer, ch. V.

¹⁷ Boghossian, p. 161.

¹⁸ Boghossian, p. 165.

¹⁹ Dworkin, p. 104.

²⁰ Dworkin, p. 104. One wonders if Dworkin's choice of terminology here was meant to reflect his opinion of the moral-field thesis, in which case it would have to take one to know one.

²¹ It would follow from this that Dworkin is wrong to say that external skepticism "relies, for example, on the argument that there is no objective moral reality 'out there' for moral beliefs to match, and that the idea of objective truth about morality is an illusion for that reason" (p. 93). External skepticism could not rely on the argument that there is no objective moral reality "out there" for moral beliefs to match because, by itself, this would provide no more reason to be an external skeptic than an internal skeptic, say, a subjectivist about morality. Moreover, external skeptics of the emotivist sort do not merely deny that moral claims are true. They deny that moral claims are apt for being either true or false, that they are unanalyzable. See more on this distinction below.

²² Paul Horwich (1992). "Gibbard's Theory of Norms," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22 pp. 67–78.

²³ Horwich, pp. 72, 73.

²⁴ Horwich, p. 74.

²⁵ For starters, is difficult to articulate the theory in such a way that it remains a version of external skepticism. From everything Horwich says, the theory seems indistinguishable from Moorean non-naturalism. This seems quite a price to avoid the Geach problem. I thank David Copp for pointing this out to me.

²⁶ Horwich, p. 74.

²⁷ Daniel Stoljar ((1993) "Emotivism and Truth Conditions," *Philosophical Studies* 70, No. 1 pp. 81–101) employs a distinction between a deflationary theory of truth and a deflationary theory of truth conditions to make a similar point against Boghossian.

²⁸ Ayer, p. 107.

²⁹ Certainly Boghossian thought he was offering an argument for the incompatibility of emotivism and the deflationary theory of truth. But as we saw, it was really the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude that operative in his argument. His failure to distinguish the two resulted in the failure of his argument. However, I argue below that it is even a mistake to think that emotivism and the deflationary theory of truth-aptitude are incompatible.

³⁰ Dworkin, p. 92.

³¹ For the distinction between emotivism's semantic thesis and its pragmatic thesis, see Stoljar, p. 81.

³² I would like to thank David Copp, Loren Lomasky, and Andrew Mills for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.