EXPRESSIVE-ASSERTIVISM*

BY

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Abstract: Hybrid metaethical theories attempt to incorporate essential elements of expressivism and cognitivism, and thereby to accrue the benefits of both. Hybrid theories are often defended in part by appeals to slurs and other pejoratives, which have both expressive and cognitivist features. This paper takes far more seriously the analogy between pejoratives and moral predicates. It explains how pejoratives work, identifies the features that allow pejoratives to do that work, and models a theory of moral predicates on those features. The result is an expressivist theory that, among other advantages, is immune to embedding difficulties and avoids an overlooked difficulty concerning attitude ascriptions that is lethal to most other hybrid theories.

1. Introduction

A fundamental feature of morality is the apparent action-guiding or practical nature of sincere moral judgments.[1] To use a now familiar example of Michael Smith's,[2] consider a person who claims to have been sincerely convinced, after some debate of the pros and cons, that she ought to donate money to World Vision to help relieve famine, yet refuses to donate even a small amount when volunteers for World Vision come knocking on the door several minutes later. Many of us would find her refusal puzzling, for she has only minutes earlier claimed that she has come to believe that she ought to donate money to World Vision. Perhaps, we might think, this person is in the grip of some kind of weakness of will, or has a stronger reason or desire to do something else with her money, or the like. But, absent some such explanation, we may come to think instead that she did not *really* believe that she ought to donate money to World Vision. Thus, it appears that a person who makes a sincere moral judgment of the form 'ϕ-ing is right' or 'I ought to ϕ' is, at least to some extent, motivated to act accordingly. Following Smith, I will call this fundamental

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feature of morality the 'practicality of moral judgment' or, sometimes, just 'Practicality.' A criterion of adequacy for any metaethical theory is to account for Practicality without, in turn, raising other significant difficulties.

Expressivism is a general kind of metaethical theory that provides a direct, neat, and clean account of Practicality; however, it appears to raise serious difficulties, especially difficulties in the philosophy of language. Expressivism's distinguishing feature is its thesis that sincere moral judgments of the form 'ϕ-ing is right' or 'I ought to ϕ' express (in a sense to be explained below) desire-like pro- or con-attitudes, such as approval, disapproval, acceptance, contempt, and so on, rather than, or in addition to, belief-like attitudes that are 'cognitive,' 'descriptive,' or 'representational' in character. Since, on most plausible accounts of motivation, having a positive or negative attitude towards a thing, in the presence of other appropriate beliefs, is sufficient to be motivated to some extent to perform some action, expressivism provides a direct, ready account of the practicality of moral judgment. However, by accounting for Practicality in this unique way, expressivist theories face serious challenges, especially challenges arising from the embeddability of moral sentences in a variety of quite distinct linguistic contexts, such as (a) and (b), which do not appear to be expressive of any attitude.

(a) If donating to World Vision is right, then I will donate at the next opportunity.
(b) Is donating to World Vision the right thing to do?

Despite the substantial challenges, many of which will be explained in due course, I believe that an expressivist story is the right kind of metaethical story to tell. In what follows, I propose an expressivist theory I call 'Expressive-Assertivism,' which, in addition to avoiding these problems, possesses a number of other significant virtues. The theory is a refined improvement of the 'dual-use' expressivist theories traditionally associated with C. L. Stevenson's emotivism[3] and R. M. Hare's prescriptivism,[4] and of similar dual-use theories that have recently arrived on the metaethical scene. I have in mind Stephen Barker's implicature theory of value content,[5] Michael Ridge's ecumenical expressivism,[6] and Kyle Swan's suggested improvement on John Hare's prescriptive realism.[7,8] Part One of the paper explains the central features of Expressive-Assertivism, distinguishes the view from other similar theories, and highlights several important implications for and advantages of Expressive-Assertivism. Part Two presents three of the most challenging embedding difficulties for expressivism, shows how Expressive-Assertivism avoids them, and highlights additional important implications for and advantages of the view.

As presented here, Expressive-Assertivism will have to remain incomplete. For example, there will not be space to defend Expressive-Assertivism

from the putative conceivability of an amoralist, nor to supply a positive account of moral properties, nor to discuss how Expressive-Assertivism should respond to Open Question type arguments. However, if all goes well, enough will have been said to demonstrate that Expressive-Assertivism is already a powerful theory. In particular, because it takes far more seriously than most other dual-use theories an analogy between moral and pejorative predicates, Expressive-Assertivism has the resources to defend itself from *every* embedding objection. Moreover, section 3.4 provides a thorough treatment of the surprisingly-neglected area of attitude ascriptions and shows that the descriptive content of moral sentences cannot be speaker-relative; since most other dual-use theories hold that the descriptive content of moral sentences *is* speaker-relative, Expressive-Assertivism is preferable to even these powerful theories.

2. *What is expressive-assertivism?*

The three central features of Expressive-Assertivism are the Dual-Use Principle (DP), the Extensionality Principle (EP), and the Generality Principle (GP).[9] I will first state these principles, present an example to show how a theory with these features distinguishes itself from other expressivist theories, and then explain each of the features in detail. The detail will require a good deal of unpacking and attention to several important theoretical distinctions, most importantly, the distinction between direct vs. indirect illocutionary acts and the notion of a correct, literal utterance. The payoff for attending to this detail will be developed throughout the remainder of the article.

2.1. THREE FEATURES AND THE EXAMPLES

The three central features of Expressive-Assertivism are as follows:

Dual-Use Principle (DP): If a speaker correctly and literally utters a basic ethical sentence, S, then the speaker performs one direct expressive illocutionary act and one direct assertive illocutionary act.

Extensionality Principle (EP): If a speaker correctly and literally utters a sentence that contains an ethical predicate in an extensional context, then the speaker performs a direct expressive illocutionary act.

Generality Principle (GP): If a speaker correctly and literally utters a basic or complex ethical sentence, the speaker performs a direct expressive illocutionary act expressing some conative attitude toward things of a certain kind, viz., things that have the property picked out by the ethical predicate.

For a rough idea of these features, how they work together, and how Expressive-Assertivism differs from some other expressivist theories,[10] consider a variation of Geach's famous example[11] of an intuitively valid argument:

> Tormenting the cat is bad;
> If tormenting the cat is bad, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad;
> Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad.

Expressive-Assertivism renders this argument, roughly, as follows.

> Tormenting the cat is F (where F is a non speaker-relative property); boo for things that are F!
> If tormenting the cat is F, then getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!
> Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!

Notice five points. First, Expressive-Assertivism holds that each premise – and therefore the conclusion – has an expressive component and a descriptive component, and thus utterances of these will be the performances of two distinct direct illocutionary acts (DP). Second, the expressive component is present whenever the moral predicate 'is bad' occurs in an extensional context, including when occuring in the antecedent or consequent of a conditional (EP). Third, the attitude that the expressive component expresses is directed not towards the more specific act of tormenting one's cat, but towards anything that is F (GP). Fourth, the descriptive content of 'tormenting the cat is bad' is not speaker-relative. Finally, the attitudes that the expressive components of the first two premises express is the same.

Expressive-Assertivism thus differs significantly from Blackburn's projectivism,[12] which would render Geach's argument, roughly, as follows.

> Boo for tormenting the cat!
> Boo for [booing tormenting the cat and not booing getting your little brother to torment the cat]!
> Therefore, boo for getting your little brother to torment the cat!

Blackburn's projectivism, then, holds that moral sentences have only an expressive component, that the attitude expressed is directed towards more specific acts (e.g. tormenting cats), and that the attitudes expressed in the premises differs.

Barker's implicature theory and Ridge's ecumenical expressivism are more comparable to Expressive-Assertivism than to Blackburn's

projectivism. For example, Ridge's theory renders Geach's argument, roughly, as follows.

> Tormenting the cat instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor disapproves of things for instantiating];[13] hooray for *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor!
> If tormenting the cat instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor disapproves of things for instantiating], then getting one's little brother to torment the cat instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor disapproves of things for instantiating]; hooray for *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor!
> Therefore, getting one's little brother to torment the cat instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor disapproves of things for instantiating]; hooray for *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor!

Ridge's ecumenical expressivism, therefore, differs from Expressive-Assertivism in holding that the descriptive content and the attitude expressed by an utterance of a moral sentence, such as 'tormenting the cat is bad,' are speaker-relative. Barker's implicature theory also differs from Expressive-Assertivism in these important ways.[14] As I explain later, I believe that such speaker-relativity will come back to haunt these, and other speaker-relative, theories.

2.2. DUAL-USE PRINCIPLE (DP)

Let's turn now to the details of the Dual-Use, Extensionality, and Generality Principles. Central to (DP) are the notions of *basic ethical sentence*, *illocutionary act*, *expressive* and *assertive* illocutionary acts, *direct* illocutionary act, *utterance*, and *correct* and *literal* utterance.

Unless stated otherwise, I restrict for simplicity the set of ethical sentences under discussion to present-tense English sentences of the form ⌈ϕ-ing is R⌉ or ⌈ϕ-ing is W⌉, where 'is R' and 'is W' represent the English ethical predicates 'is right' and 'is wrong' respectively, and their synonyms. Plausibly, most, if not all, of what I say about ethical sentences, from the point of view of Expressive-Assertivism, can be extended with appropriate modifications to sentences containing other ethical predicates such as 'ought' (if one does not hold that 'ought' is synonymous with 'right'), 'is bad,' 'is good,' 'is permissible,' and so on, as well as to past- or future-tense sentences containing these predicates, and to sentences in other languages that are synonymous with ethical sentences in English. Also for simplicity, I restrict 'ϕ' to terms expressing actions. I call these 'basic ethical sentences.' Thus, I set aside discussion of sentences whose subjects are persons, institutions, practices, and other nonactions, though, again, most of what I say about ethical sentences can be extended, with

appropriate modifications, to sentences containing ethical predicates whose subjects are nonactions. (1)–(3), but neither (4) nor (5), are examples of basic ethical sentences.

(1) Donating to charity is right.
(2) Killing innocents for fun is wrong.
(3) What you are doing now is unethical. (Taking 'is unethical' to be synonymous with 'is wrong')
(4) Amy is a good person. (Describes a person rather than an action)
(5) What you did yesterday was wrong. (Past tense sentence)

Following Austin,[15] I will say that the performance of an illocutionary act is the 'performance of an act *in* saying something.'[16] For example, in saying 'You will ski,' I may be performing the illocutionary acts of *predicting* or *stating* that you will ski. I do not attempt here to give a more precise definition of 'illocutionary act,' for doing so is surprisingly complex,[17] and because an intuitive grasp of it is sufficient for understanding (DP).

There are hundreds of distinct kinds of illocutionary acts: asking, requesting, ordering, advising, warning, apologizing, complimenting, adjourning (e.g. a court hearing), promising, hiring, firing, inviting, insisting, maintaining, reminding, and admitting, to name just a few. It is also clear, however, that illocutionary acts serve a relatively small number of *basic* purposes. For example, it seems intuitively obvious that the acts of stating, describing, suggesting, predicting, and summarizing all serve the basic purpose of describing the world as being a certain way, just as it seems intuitively obvious that the acts of commanding, telling, and ordering all serve the basic purpose of directing one's hearer to do something. Consequently, there have been attempts to categorize illocutionary acts into a relatively small number of basic illocutionary act types.[18] In what follows, I adopt Searle's taxonomy of basic illocutionary acts into one of five types according to their illocutionary *point*.[19] For purposes of this paper, the three most important types are *assertives*, which describe the world as being a certain way, such as with typical utterances of 'Bob is six feet tall' and 'The temperature is 68-degrees Fahrenheit,' *expressives*, which express a certain psychological state (as opposed to expressing *that* one is in that state, which would be an assertive), such as with typical utterances of 'Hooray!' and 'Terrific!,' and *directives*, which direct one's hearer to do something, as with typical utterances of 'Go home' and 'Buy some milk.'[20]

It is of paramount importance for understanding Expressive-Assertivism to distinguish between direct and indirect illocutionary acts. An indirect illocutionary act as an illocutionary act that is performed by way of, or on the basis of, another illocutionary act.[21] A direct illocutionary act, then, is an illocutionary act that is not an indirect illocutionary act.[22] As Searle notes, one can perform an indirect illocutionary act with the same

force but different content as the direct illocutionary act performed.[23] To use his example, a speaker's utterance of 'Can you reach the salt?' is the performance of a direct request (a directive) whose propositional content is 'You can reach the salt,' and typically is also the performance of an indirect request (a directive) whose propositional content is 'You will pass me the salt.' One can also perform an indirect illocutionary act with a different force as the direct illocutionary act performed. To use another of Searle's examples, a speaker's utterance of 'I want you to do it' is the performance of a direct statement (an assertive), and may also be the performance of an indirect request (a directive).

According to (DP), a correct, literal utterance of a basic ethical sentence is the performance of two *direct* illocutionary acts, one expressive and one assertive. It is *not* the case, according to (DP), that a correct, literal utterance of a basic ethical sentence is the performance of one direct expressive and one indirect assertive, *nor* the performance of one direct assertive and one indirect expressive,[24] *nor* the performance of an indirect expressive and an indirect assertive.

I henceforth use the term 'utterance' in a stronger sense than I have thus far been using the term and than is usually found in the literature, in which the mere production of vocal noises – what Austin calls a 'phonetic act' – may be taken to be an utterance. I define 'utterance' as follows:

> *Utterance*: (a) the production of a meaningful sentence of a language (b) *as being* a sentence of that language, (c) in which the speaker uses the sentence's constituent expressions intending to refer to or to mean what the speaker believes the expressions refer to or mean in the language of which the sentence is a sentence.

By 'production of a meaningful sentence of a language,' I mean an act which causes there to be a token of a sentence type of a language, which is meaningful in that language. An utterance is the production of a meaningful sentence of a language 'as being' a sentence of that language just in case the speaker recognizes that the sentence is a sentence of that language and utters the sentence intending to speak in that language. For example, if a speaker recognizes that (6),

(6) La neige est blanche,

is a French sentence and produces (6) intending to speak French, then the speaker has produced (6) as being a French sentence. Note that it is possible for a speaker to produce a sentence of a language as being a sentence of that language without *understanding* the sentence. In the example just given, the speaker may recognize that (6) is a French sentence and produce (6) as being a French sentence without understanding (6), or

even without recognizing which terms in the sentence are referring terms, predicates, logical connectives, etc. Condition (c) captures the idea that a speaker must be using the terms in the sentence to refer to and to mean what he or she *believes* the words refer to or mean in the language of which the sentence is a sentence in order to count as an utterance in my sense. This leaves open the possibility that the speaker uses the constituent expressions incorrectly, perhaps because he or she is simply mistaken about what a constituent words means. Typical productions of meaningful sentences of a language are usually utterances in my sense. For example, in a typical utterance of (7),

(7) Bob is six feet tall,

the speaker produces a meaningful sentence of English, produces (7) *as* a meaningful sentence of English, uses 'Bob' intending to refer to what he or she believes 'Bob' refers to in English (relevant to the context), and uses 'is six feet tall' intending to mean what 'is six feet tall' means in English.[25]

A 'correct utterance' is an utterance in which the speaker uses the sentence's constituent terms intending to refer to or to mean what the speaker *correctly* believes the terms usually refer to or mean in the language of which the sentence is a sentence. This qualification ensures that the speaker does not misuse any of the terms. Notice, however, that a speaker can correctly utter (7) in my sense even during a stage play or some other context in which it is clear the speaker is not performing any illocutionary act. If a stage actor correctly utters (7), we would do not think that he or she is *asserting* anything. Hence, we need the notion of a literal utterance, which I define as follows:

> *Literal Utterance*: an utterance of a sentence S of L in which the speaker performs all and only the direct illocutionary act(s) that is (are) appropriate for S given its meaning in L.

The performance of an illocutionary act *I* is 'appropriate for a sentence S of L given its meaning in L' if and only if, given the meaning that S has in L (and, hence, given the rules for using S as a sentence of L), a competent speaker of L, using only this semantic knowledge (and no contextual[26] or background information or assumptions), recognizes that, under normal conditions, the speaker performs *I*.

The importance of focusing on correct and literal utterances of basic ethical sentences is to ensure that we focus on all of the conventional function(s) – i.e. the illocutionary act(s) – and only the conventional functions that speakers of a language use moral predicates to perform, since it is these conventional functions that play a role in providing a correct semantic theory for a language. Thus, since matters will undoubtedly

become irrelevantly complicated if we consider utterances in which a speaker (i) misuses the moral predicate, (ii) does not perform an illocutionary act in uttering a basic ethical sentence, (iii) uses the ethical sentence to perform a function it conventionally has, but not all of the functions it conventionally has, or (iv) uses the predicate to perform all of the functions it conventionally has *and* some other function(s), I explicitly restrict utterances to correct and literal ones. In what follows, I shall use 'utterance$_{(CL)}$' and 'utters$_{(CL)}$' for 'correct and literal utterance' and 'correctly and literally utters' respectively.

2.3. EXTENSIONALITY PRINCIPLE (EP)

According to (DP), if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ a basic ethical sentence, then the speaker performs a direct expressive and a direct assertive illocutionary act. (EP) tells us more about the direct expressive so performed, specifically, more about *when* the speaker performs a direct expressive via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of an ethical sentence.

Discussion of expressivist metaethical theories usually proceeds under the assumption that, even if a speaker performs an expressive illocutionary act via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a basic ethical sentence, the speaker does not perform an expressive, whether direct or indirect, via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a more complex sentence that embeds a basic ethical sentence – call these 'complex ethical sentences' – nor does she perform an expressive when ethical predicates are used in certain non-indicative sentences. Thus, it is commonly assumed – even by expressivists – that utterances$_{(CL)}$ of (8)–(12) are not, even in part, performances of expressive illocutionary acts.

(8) If I am correct, then donating to charity is right.
(9) If donating to charity is right, then I am correct.
(10) Donating to charity is right, or (else) I've lost my bet.
(11) Do what is right.
(12) Is donating to charity right?

In contrast, Expressive-Assertivism holds that this assumption is *false*. It holds that a speaker performs a direct expressive illocutionary act *whenever* she utters$_{(CL)}$ a sentence, whether basic or complex, in which ethical predicates are used in an extensional context.[27] Thus, according to Expressive-Assertivism, if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ any of (8)–(12), he or she thereby performs a direct expressive illocutionary act.

2.4. GENERALITY PRINCIPLE (GP)

Like (EP), (GP) tells us more about the direct expressive performed in an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of an ethical sentence. More specifically, (GP) tells us *toward*

what the speaker expresses an attitude via her direct expressive illocutionary act.

Discussion of expressivist metaethical theories often proceeds under the assumption that *if* a speaker's utterance$_{(CL)}$ of an ethical sentence, such as 'Donating to charity is right,' is the performance of an expressive illocutionary act at all, the attitude thereby expressed is directed toward the subject of the sentence (in this case, toward the act of donating to charity). Indeed, this assumption appears to be what drives our intuitions when thinking that no expressive is performed via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of ethical sentences like (8) and (9). Expressive-Assertivism holds that this assumption is also *false* – the attitude a speaker expresses (in the illocutionary act sense of 'express') in performing the direct expressive via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of an ethical sentence is *not* directed (at least only – and not by way of literal meaning) toward the subject of the sentence, but *toward things of a more general kind*, namely, things that have the property picked out by the ethical predicate. A predicate F 'picks out' a property *p* if and only if the meaning of F requires that something have, in the first instance, the property *p* in order for the thing to be in F's extension. For example, 'is red' picks out the property *redness*, since the meaning of 'is red' requires, in the first instance, that something be red in order for that thing to be in its extension. Likewise, 'is right' or 'is wrong' pick out the properties *rightness* and *wrongness* respectively, since the meanings of 'is right' and 'is wrong' require acts to have these properties in order for the acts to be in their respective extensions. A speaker has an attitude of the appropriate type 'toward things that have the property picked out by the ethical predicate' just in case she is disposed, upon being presented with things of the kind that he or she believes have the properties *rightness* or *wrongness*, to approve or disapprove respectively of those things.

To summarize (EP) and (GP), then, Expressive-Assertivism accepts as fundamental the idea that any sentence – basic or complex – in which an ethical predicate is used in an extensional context, when uttered$_{(CL)}$, is always used to perform a direct expressive illocutionary act, and the attitude the speaker thereby expresses (in the illocutionary act sense of 'express') is directed toward things of a certain kind, viz., things that have the property picked out by the predicate. Furthermore, according to (DP), a speaker also performs a direct assertive in uttering$_{(CL)}$ a basic or complex (indicative) ethical sentence. Thus, according to Expressive-Assertivism, if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ (13) or (14), a speaker performs a direct assertive illocutionary act[28] and a direct expressive illocutionary act expressing (in the illocutionary act sense of 'express') some positive attitude toward things that have the property picked out by 'is right.'

(13) Donating to charity is right.
(14) If I have thought matters through correctly, donating to charity is right.

2.5. SOME IMPLICATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF EXPRESSIVE-ASSERTIVISM

Earlier, I stated that expressivism's distinguishing feature is that it accounts for the practicality of moral judgments by holding that moral judgments 'express' desire-like pro- or con-psychological states rather than, or in addition to, expressing belief-like cognitive, descriptive, or representational states. It is now time to make more explicit in what sense moral judgments 'express' such pro- or con-attitudes. I think expressivism is best understood as holding that (E) is true:

(E): If a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence, then the speaker performs a direct illocutionary act whose sincerity condition requires the speaker to have a pro- or con-attitude.

The sincerity conditions for assertives, expressives, and directives are as follows: for an assertive, whose purpose is to describe the world as being a certain way, a speaker must have the *belief* that the world is as it is being described; for an expressive, whose purpose is to express a pro- or con-attitude, that a speaker have the appropriate *pro- or con-attitude*; and for directives, whose purpose is direct one's hearer to perform some action, that a speaker *desire* (where a desire is a more specific kind of pro- or con-attitude) one's hearer to perform the act the hearer is being directed to perform. Since these are the requisite sincerity conditions for assertives, expressives, and directives, expressivism can be characterized more succinctly as the view that (E′) is true:

(E′): If a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence, then the speaker performs a direct expressive or a direct directive illocutionary act.

To give a name to expressivism's traditional rivals, call 'assertivism' the view that (A) is true:

(A): If a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence, then the speaker performs a direct assertive illocutionary act.

Expressive-Assertivism differs significantly from the (logically) 'simple' expressivism of, among others, Ayer,[29] Blackburn,[30] and Gibbard,[31] according to which one performs *only* a direct expressive illocutionary act via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a basic ethical sentence, and also from the (logically) simple assertivism of, among others, Moore,[32] Brink,[33] Boyd,[34] Smith,[35] and Shafer-Landau,[36] according to which one performs *only* a direct assertive via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a basic ethical sentence.[37] Both simple theories capture something that is intuitively compelling about

utterances$_{(CL)}$ of basic ethical sentences. Simple expressivism best captures our intuitions about the practicality of moral judgments. Simple assertivism, on the other hand, best captures our intuitions about the 'cognitive' aspects of utterances$_{(CL)}$ of basic ethical sentences. For example, simple assertivism explains why we would typically take a speaker to have *described* the act of donating to charity, or to have said something *about* the act of donating to charity, if the speaker were to utter$_{(CL)}$ the sentence 'Donating to charity is right.' However, simple assertivists and simple expressivists explain away as illusory either the practical or cognitive aspects of utterances$_{(CL)}$ of basic ethical sentences, or accommodate both into their theories in way that is usually unnecessarily complicated, not intuitively compelling, or otherwise unsatisfactory. It is easy to sympathize with Michael Smith when he writes that each 'is bound to end up denying something that seems more certain than the theories they themselves go on to offer.'[38]

Expressive-Assertivism, like other dual-use theories, recognizes that there is, in a sense, a false choice between simple expressivism and simple assertivism. It denies that one performs only one direct illocutionary act via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a basic ethical sentence. It holds instead that a speaker performs *both* a direct assertive and a direct nonassertive illocutionary act via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of a basic ethical sentence and, so, is a (logically) 'complex' expressivist theory. This is precisely the desired result of adopting (DP). Expressive-Assertivism, then, neatly accounts for the Practicality and Objectivity of moral utterances.

Focus now on all three of the main features of Expressive-Assertivism. (DP), (EP), and (GP), are grounded in three uncontroversial features of predicates from other parts of natural languages – specifically, emotionally charged predicates, such as slurs and pejoratives, and thick ethical predicates, such as 'is kind,' 'is courageous,' etc. It is uncontroversial, for example, that utterances$_{(CL)}$ of sentences containing emotionally charged predicates, such as sentences used to spout racial epithets (e.g., 'Bob is a ____'), both directly describe certain people as having a certain property (e.g., as being of a certain race or ethnic group), and directly express the speaker's contempt ((DP)) toward anyone that has that property (and not just toward the subject of the sentence) ((GP)). Further, this attitude is directly expressed when these predicates occur in any extensional context (e.g., 'Is Bob a ___?'; 'If Bob is a ____, I'd be surprised') ((EP)). Thus, these features of Expressive-Assertivism are unsurprising, credible, and realistic. Moreover, as I will explain below, modeling these central features of Expressive-Assertivism on those of predicates from other parts of natural languages immunizes Expressive-Assertivism from every embedding objection – for these are the features of emotionally charged predicates that allow such predicates to be embeddable *everywhere* moral predicates are embeddable, including as antecedents of

conditionals and within the scope of quantifiers, negations, and attitude ascriptions.[39]

As I have so far described it, Expressive-Assertivism is a mostly formal metaethical theory, and so it is not forced to adopt any substantive theory of truth. Most importantly, it is not forced to accept 'minimalism' about truth, a view according to which there is nothing 'robust' or philosophically interesting to say about truth. According to many traditional theories of truth, truth is something philosophically interesting, or robust, such as some kind of correspondence between the world and entities that purport to represent, or describe, the world, such as beliefs, assertives, propositions, and indicative sentences. On such a robust view of truth, an indicative sentence, for example, is true just in case the world corresponds to how the sentence describes it as being, and false if it does not so correspond. Many expressivist theories, especially simple expressivist theories, are pressured to reject traditional theories of truth and, *ipso facto*, to accept minimalism about truth in order to explain why ethical sentences appear to have truth values. For example, ethical sentences such as 'Donating to charity is right' can be embedded as complement clauses in truth-ascriptions, such as 'It is true that donating to charity is right' and 'The sentence "Donating to charity is right" is true.' However, according to simple expressivist theories, ethical sentences directly express only attitudes, and do not directly describe the world. Thus, if a robust theory is correct, expressivism appears to be committed to the view that ethical sentences do not have a truth value, and hence, appears to be committed to something that is false. In order to respond to this difficulty, expressivists are pressured to reject traditional notions of truth, thereby invoking minimalism about truth.[40] Expressive-Assertivism is consistent with minimalism about truth, but, because it holds that utterances$_{(CL)}$ of ethical sentences *do* directly describe the world, i.e. they are direct assertives, it is quite capable of accepting a more robust notion of truth. An expressivist theory that is not forced to accept minimalism about truth is preferable to one that is forced to accept minimalism, and so Expressive-Assertivism is preferable to expressivist theories that reject traditional notions of truth. For independent reasons, I find a robust view of truth preferable to a minimalist theory, and since Expressive-Assertivism does not force me to accept minimalism about truth, I wish Expressive-Assertivism to henceforth be taken as adopting a robust theory of truth for ethical sentences.[41]

Most importantly, by adopting (DP), (EP), and (GP), Expressive-Assertivism is able to adequately respond to each of the family of embedding difficulties. Because the embedding difficulties, as a group, represent the most pressing objection to any expressivist theory, and because Expressive-Assertivism is able to respond adequately to them, we will have found little reason to reject Expressive-Assertivism. Thus, in the next section, I defend Expressive-Assertivism from three of the most serious of

all embedding difficulties. Although I will not be able to discuss all of the various embedding difficulties, my hope is that, by the end of the discussion, the reader will be able to see how Expressive-Assertivism has the resources to defend itself from any other embedding difficulty the reader may have in mind.

One surprising, important point that will emerge from our discussion of the problem of embedding into attitude ascriptions is that the properties picked out by moral predicates, if there be any, cannot be speaker-relative. Since most other dual-use theories (as well as some simple assertivist theories) hold that such properties are in fact speaker relative,[42] we will have reason to prefer Expressive-Assertivism over these other theories. Also, because it articulates its central theses in terms of the direct illocutionary acts performed via utterances$_{(CL)}$ of ethical sentences, Expressive-Assertivism best captures the central insight of expressivism. Consider Michael Ridge's ecumenical expressivism, a view that is 'ecumenical' in the sense that 'moral utterances express beliefs and desires.'[43] Unfortunately, Ridge remains silent about what it means for an utterance to 'express' a belief or a desire, except to say that expressing a desire is to be distinguished from reporting that one has a desire, thereby precluding ecumenical expressivism as a form of ethical subjectivism. David Copp's realist-expressivism goes further, explaining that moral sentences 'Frege-express' desire-like attitudes in virtue of containing moral predicates, which possess the semantic property of 'coloring.' But what is coloring? Copp explains the notion of coloring in terms of linguistic conventions: 'To be more exact, on this view it is a matter of linguistic convention that in asserting a basic moral proposition by uttering a sentence in which a moral term is used, a speaker "expresses" a relevant conative state of mind, other things being equal.'[44] Unfortunately, the scare quotes are Copp's, and so I'm not positive what 'express' is supposed to come to in Copp's deepest explanation. I'm pretty sure, though, that Copp has in mind something similar to that which Steven Barker suggests as the content of such linguistic conventions, namely, the convention that in uttering a moral sentence, the speaker have, or at least be committed to having, some desire-like attitude.[45] At this point, however, a deeper question remains: Why would such a convention have arisen in the first place? It seems to me that the obvious explanation is that having such a convention facilitates one of the five basic purposes of language: to perform a direct expressive illocutionary act. Thus, because it articulates its expressivist thesis – indeed, because it articulates expressiv*ism* – in terms of the direct illocutionary act(s) performed in uttering$_{(CL)}$ a moral sentence, Expressive-Assertivism best captures the heart of expressivism.

There is an additional benefit to articulating expressivism in terms of the direct illocutionary acts performed in uttering$_{(CL)}$ moral sentences, namely, it suggests a strategy for any particular category of linguistic

expressions that must deal with semantic challenges or puzzles: find another category of linguistic expressions with similar conventional purposes, but that avoid such difficulties. Since the linguistic expressions in the unproblematic category will have a similar conventional purpose, they will likely be governed by similar conventions, and so should possess similar semantic features. Such reflection might, consequently, suggest possible solutions for the linguistic expressions in the problematic category. This is the strategy famously pursued, for example, by Hare throughout *The Language of Morals*,[46] and the strategy I have pursued here by focusing on the three features of emotionally charged and thick ethical predicates.

3. *Defending expressive-assertivism from the various embedding objections*

Recall that expressivism is the view that (E′) is true.

(E′): If a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence, then the speaker performs a direct expressive or a direct directive illocutionary act.

Expressivist theories have been thought to face serious problems arising from the possibility of embedding ethical sentences within more complex sentences. Shortly, I will defend Expressive-Assertivism from three such objections. Before examining these, however, it is important to stress two points. First, it would be a mistake to think that Expressive-Assertivism can avoid all embedding objections simply because it has a full-blown cognitive component, for the most pressing embedding objections to expressivist theories are directed toward the *expressive* features of their views. Thus, while the adoption of a full-blown cognitive component may help Expressive-Assertivism avoid certain embedding objections, it does not help expressivism avoid the most challenging embedding objections, including the three that we will discuss shortly.

Second, there can be no *in principle* objection to the embedding of sentences that retain an expressive function when embedded in more complex sentences. Such an objection would prove far too much. For, it is clear that, for a large range of sentences that have an expressive function, these sentences retain this function even when embedded in more complex sentences, and even when embedded within nonindicative sentences. For example, it is clear that if we fill in schemas S_1–S_6 with evaluative, pejorative, or slur terms, such as ‘a sweetheart,’ ‘an angel,’ ‘a sugar dumpling,’ ‘a saint,’ ‘a bozo,’ ‘a jerk,’ ‘a yankee,’ ‘a frog,’ ‘a kraut,’ ‘a wop,’ ‘a spic,’ ‘a towelhead,’ ‘a Jesus-freak,’ ‘a kike,’ or ‘a nigger,’ the resulting embedded sentences retain their expressive function.

S_1: If I am correct, then Aurie is _____.
S_2: If Aurie is _____, then I am correct.
S_3: Aurie is _____, or (else) I've lost my bet.
S_4: It is possible that Aurie is _____.
S_5: Go ahead and be _____.
S_6: Is Aurie _____ ?

Because the resulting embedded sentences retain their expressive function when embedded, there *must* be a semantic story that explains this data. The trick for expressivists, then, is to uncover the correct semantic story for these embeddings, and to determine whether they can use it to supplement their metaethical theories. Thus, there can be no in principle objection to the embedding of sentences that retain their expressive function when embedded, and any objection to expressivism on such grounds must be directed toward the specific semantic account offered by expressivists. We will come back to this important point as we proceed through the various objections.

3.1. OBJECTION 1: FREGE'S INSIGHT – THE OBJECTION FROM MISSING EXPRESSIVES

According to The Objection from Missing Expressives, if all a metaethical theory tells us is the kind of illocutionary acts that are performed when uttering$_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence, then the theory is severely incomplete, since the theory is silent about many uses of ethical sentences – specifically, the uses of ethical sentences when embedded in more complex sentences. The thought behind this objection is that just as a speaker fails to directly assert that donating to charity is right when uttering$_{(CL)}$ (15) or (16), so too does a speaker fail to perform an expressive illocutionary act in virtue of uttering$_{(CL)}$ (15) and (16).

(15) If donating to charity is right, then I'll get my wallet.
(16) It is possible that donating to charity is right.

This is the Fregean insight[47] that excites Geach[48] and leads the latter to teach us the insight's main lesson, a lesson we will discuss shortly. In more explicit form, the Objection from Missing Expressives is as follows:

(17) Expressivist theories tell us only that the utterance$_{(CL)}$ of basic ethical sentences involves the performance of a direct expressive.
(18) The performance of a direct expressive is an act in which the speaker expresses an attitude.
(19) For a large number of uses of basic ethical sentences, no attitude is expressed by the speaker.

Therefore,

(20) Expressivist theories do not tell us anything about basic ethical sentences for many uses of them. (17–19)

Therefore,

(21) Expressivist theories are radically incomplete. (20)

This objection fails for several reasons,[49] but I want to focus on (19), intuitive support for which provides the force of this objection, as well as several other embedding objections. There are two ways of understanding (19), both of which lead to the conclusion that this objection is unsound, either because (20) does not follow from (17)–(19), or because (19) is false. If we consider the sentence 'Donating to charity is right' as it appears in (15) and ask whether a speaker, in uttering$_{(CL)}$ (15), is expressing an attitude, it may seem that the answer is 'No.' What is driving our intuitions in this case? I suggest that, in this case, it is a reading of 'expressing an attitude' as 'expressing an attitude *toward donating to charity*.' I share these intuitions. Suppose, however, we ask whether a speaker, in uttering$_{(CL)}$ (15), is expressing an attitude *toward things of a general kind*, specifically, things of that have the property *rightness* (say, for example, the property *maximizing general welfare*[50]). My intuitions say 'Yes' – the speaker is expressing such an attitude. This feature comes out strongly when we consider the entire range of evaluative terms and sentences in which these terms are used. For example, it is intuitively clear that a speaker who utters any of (22) to (28) is expressing contempt not just toward Aurie, but also toward all people of Italian descent.

(22) Aurie is a wop.
(23) If Aurie is a wop, then she probably vacations in Italy.
(24) If Aurie vacations in Italy, then she is a wop.
(25) Aurie does not have a lot of garlic in her refrigerator or (else) she is a wop.
(26) It is possible that Aurie is a wop.
(27) Go ahead, Aurie, be a wop.
(28) Is Aurie a wop?

This feature also comes out strongly when we consider what are sometimes referred to as 'thick' ethical terms, i.e. those ethical terms that appear to have more 'content,' such as 'just,' 'kind,' 'generous,' 'industrious,' 'selfish,' 'lustful,' 'vile,' etc. For example, it seems intuitively obvious that if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ (29) or (30), then the speaker is expressing either a positive or negative attitude toward anything that has the properties *kindness* or *vileness* respectively.

(29) If I am correct, then Aurie is kind.
(30) It is possible that Aurie is vile.

I am claiming, then, that Expressive-Assertivism can be defended from the Objection from Missing Expressives by first recognizing a distinction between 'no attitude is expressed toward the subject of the (basic ethical) sentence' and 'no attitude is expressed toward things of the kind that have the property picked out by the ethical predicate.' If, in (19), 'no attitude is expressed by the speaker' is intended to mean the former, then (19) is true, but the objection is unsound, since (20) does not then follow from (17)–(19). If, in (19), 'no attitude is expressed by the speaker' is intended to mean the latter, then (19) is false, and hence, this objection is still unsound.

According to Expressive-Assertivism, then, if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ (15), then the speaker performs a direct (complex) assertive, *viz*., that if donating to charity has the property picked out by 'is right,' then the speaker will grab his or her wallet, and performs a direct expressive expressing some kind of positive attitude toward things of the kind that have the property picked out by 'is right.' Thus, Expressive-Assertivism escapes this objection because it adopts (EP) and (GP).[51]

One might object that (GP) is too general, on the grounds that, even if it were agreed that *some* attitude is directly expressed via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of (15), the attitude expressed by the speaker appears to be directed toward the act of donating to charity, not toward whatever has the property picked out by 'is right.' However, Expressive-Assertivism has a plausible explanation for this intuition: since the speaker is directly expressing a positive attitude toward things of the kind that have the property picked out by the predicate 'is right,' and since the speaker is also directly asserting that the act of donating to charity is of this kind, we easily infer that the speaker has this positive attitude toward the act of donating to charity. Thus, Expressive-Assertivism explains this intuition on plausible pragmatic grounds, an explanation that is consistent with our intuitions about sentences like (22) and (23).

3.2. OBJECTION 2: GEACH'S LESSON – THE OBJECTION FROM INCOMPLETE SEMANTICS

According to The Objection from Incomplete Semantics, there is a lacuna in many expressivist theories, since many are not 'semantically robust' enough to show how we can understand the meanings of complex ethical sentences. The idea is that any metaethical theory that does not tell us how we can understand the meanings of complex ethical sentences is incomplete, and since many Expressivist theories do not tell us how we can understand the meanings of complex ethical sentences, many Expressivist theories are, therefore, incomplete.

This objection arises from the lesson that Geach, inspired by the Fregean insight, and Searle teach us: illocutionary force is *not* what is

semantically contributed by sentences that are embeddable in more complex sentences.[52] This lesson is also at the heart of Dreier's ' "Bob is Hiyo!" Objection.'[53] Dreier's explicit targets are expressivist theories according to which ethical sentences lack a truth value or are only 'minimally' true, since these theories cannot use a Tarski-style truth theory to explain how we can understand the meanings of complex sentences on the basis of understanding the meanings of their component sentences, logical connectives, and syntactic combination. Hence, these expressivist theories are required to provide some other compositional semantic account of how to understand complex ethical sentences. However, Dreier's objection stings any theory that contains a positive, expressivist component, including any dual-use theory like Expressive-Assertivism, since it is very unclear how an appeal to a Tarski-style truth theory can help explain the 'expressive meaning' of a complex sentence on the basis of understanding the expressive meanings of its component parts and syntactic combination.

My response has three parts. First, I deny that Expressive-Assertivism has any special difficulty here that others do not also have, for, as I mentioned earlier, it is clear that there is a whole range of complex sentences whose embedded sentences retain their expressive function when embedded. Hence, if a compositional semantic theory is required in order to understand the complete meanings, i.e. the truth-conditional and expressive meanings, of complex sentences on the basis of understanding their component sentences, logical connectives, and their combination, there *must* be one, and the burden to uncover it falls on everyone, not just Expressive-Assertivism. This important point generalizes and, I believe, renders Expressive-Assertivism immune from every embedding *objection*. Since Expressive-Assertivism maintains that moral predicates work in all important ways like emotionally charged predicates, and since emotionally charged predicates are ubiquitously embeddable, it would be unjustified to object that Expressive-Assertivism has some special obligation – to explain the embeddability of moral predicates – that it fails to fulfill.[54] Thus, to the extent that Objection 2 is a significant objection, it cannot be an *in principle* objection. Rather, it must be an objection that is directed toward the specific details of Expressive-Assertivism.

Second, if Objection 2 is to be a significant objection to Expressive-Assertivism, it cannot be a challenge to Expressive-Assertivism to provide a compositional semantic account of the truth-conditional meanings of complex ethical sentences, since Expressive-Assertivism accepts that ethical sentences have robust truth conditions. Hence, Expressive-Assertivism can adopt a semantic theory that uses a Tarski-style truth theory to explain how we can understand the truth-conditional meanings of complex ethical sentences on the basis of understanding the truth

conditional meanings of its component sentences, logical connectives, and their syntactic combination. Therefore, if this objection is to be effective against Expressive-Assertivism at all, it must be challenging Expressive-Assertivism to provide a compositional semantic account of the expressive meanings of complex ethical sentences.

However – and this is the third part of my response – I reject this assumption. It is possible to provide a compositional semantic theory for the complete meaning of a complex ethical sentence without providing a compositional semantic theory for the expressive meaning of a complex ethical sentence.[55]

Recall that, according to Expressive-Assertivism, if a speaker $\text{utters}_{(CL)}$ an ethical sentence (in an extensional context), whether basic or complex, the speaker performs a direct expressive. That is, Expressive-Assertivism adopts (EP). If the $\text{utterance}_{(CL)}$ of a sentence is the performance of a direct expressive, then that sentence has expressive meaning. Since a complete compositional semantic theory finitely specifies all those things one would have to know in order to understand the complete meaning of any sentence in the language, a complete semantic theory must finitely specify all those things one would have to know in order to understand the expressive meaning. All one has to know in order to understand the expressive meaning of a sentence is that some specific conative attitude is expressed, whenever an ethical predicate is used in an extensional context, along with an account of what the specific attitude is.[56] No compositional theory for expressive meaning is necessary in order to know this. That is, all one has to know in order to grasp the expressive meaning of a sentence in which an ethical predicate is used (in an extensional context) is that the speaker expresses an attitude when $\text{uttering}_{(CL)}$ the sentence and what kind of attitude is expressed. But we can specify this in a semantic theory merely by pairing the different ethical predicates with the specific attitudes a speaker expresses when $\text{uttering}_{(CL)}$ sentences containing them and, then, state that an $\text{utterance}_{(CL)}$ of any sentence containing any of these predicates *expresses that* (rather than *means that*) the speaker has the requisite attitude. This is all the machinery that is needed in order to specify the expressive meaning of either 'Donating to charity is right' or 'If donating to charity is right, I'll get my wallet.' Both sentences express that the speaker has some kind of conative attitude (say, approval) toward things of the kind that have the property *rightness* (say, *maximizing the general welfare*). Thus, we can understand the expressive meaning of the latter sentence without doing so *on the basis* of understanding the expressive meaning of the antecedent; the expressive meanings of sentences containing ethical predicates in an extensional context are *not* compositional. Expressive-Assertivism can adopt such a semantic theory and, hence, is able to respond The Objection from Incomplete Semantics.

3.3. OBJECTION 3: THE OBJECTION FROM AMBIGUITY OF ATTITUDE-ATTRIBUTION VERBS

Attitude-attribution verbs, such as 'believes that,' 'fears that,' 'wonders whether,' etc. are used to attribute psychological states (belief, fear, wonderment, etc.) whose contents are given by the sentences used in their complements. For example, in (31),

(31) John believes that Jackie is a lawyer,

'believes that' is used to attribute to John a representational state (belief) whose content is that Jackie is a lawyer. Ethical sentences can also appear as complement sentences of attitude-attribution verbs. If expressivism is correct, then ethical sentences have an expressive component. The question arises whether having this expressive component of ethical sentences plays a role in their use in complement sentences of attitude reports, specifically, a role in determining what kind of psychological state is attributed by the use of these verbs. For simple expressivism, it is hard to see how the answer could fail to be 'yes,' for there is nothing more to their content than what they express. So, it appears that, in (32),

(32) John believes that donating to charity is right,

'believes that' is used to attribute to John some kind of positive conative state, rather than some kind of representational state. Thus, it appears that simple expressivism has to hold that attitude-attribution verbs are ambiguous, sometimes attributing a representational state to the subject of the sentence in which they appear, sometimes attributing a conative state, depending on whether the complement sentence is an ethical sentence. Intuitively, however, these verbs are not ambiguous, so simple expressivism appears to be committed to something that is false.[57]

Again, although this objection is explicitly directed toward simple expressivist theories, it strikes at the heart of any expressivist theory that contains a positive expressivist thesis, including dual-use theories such as Expressive-Assertivism, since, according to Expressive-Assertivism, moral thoughts, which are articulated by moral utterances, are complex psychological states consisting of a representational state and a conative state. Thus, if a sentence's having an expressive component plays a role in determining the kind of psychological state attributed by the use of attitude-attribution verbs, an objection might be raised against Expressive-Assertivism that the theory entails that these verbs are ambiguous, sometimes attributing a simple representational psychological state, and sometimes attributing a complex psychological state with representational and conative components, depending on whether its complement sentence is an ethical sentence. Roughly, the argument goes as follows:

(33) 'believes that' is not ambiguous in English, and more specifically, it would be extremely implausible to suggest that what it means is affected by what complement sentence appears after 'that.'

(34) If Expressive-Assertivism is true, then when an ethical complement sentence is used with 'believes that,' a complex psychological state (with representational and conative components) is attributed.

(35) When a nonethical complement sentence is used with 'believes that,' a representational psychological state alone is attributed.

(36) If a representational state alone is attributed when a nonethical sentence is used as the complement of 'believes that,' but a different type of psychological state is attributed when an ethical sentence is used as the complement of 'believes that,' then 'believes that' is ambiguous.

Therefore,

(37) If Expressive-Assertivism is true, then 'believes that' is ambiguous. ((34)–(36))

Therefore,

(38) Expressive-Assertivism is false. ((33), (37))

For now, I will respond to this objection on the assumption that a sentence's having an expressive component does play a role in determining the kind of attitude that is attributed by 'believes that.' I will then argue that the expressive components of sentences in fact play such a role, and then draw out some important implications of this point.

On the assumption that a sentence's having an expressive component plays such a role, this objection fails, because (36) is false. There are three main strategies for providing the semantics for sentences containing attitude-attribution verbs, which we may call the 'sentential account,' 'propositional account,' and 'utterance account.' Any of these strategies can be adopted by Expressive-Assertivism (or expressivists in general) without its being committed to the ambiguity of attitude-attribution verbs. I will illustrate the strategy first in the case of a sentential account and then indicate how it can be modified for a propositional account. In doing so, the modification of the strategy for an utterance account will become transparent. A sentential account of the semantics of 'believes that' would hold that the subjects of (31) and (32) have psychological states that are the same in content as the semantic content of their respective complement sentences. Let's assume for simplicity that the semantic content of a sentence is constituted only by the sentence's representational (truth-conditional) content and its expressive content. A sentential account of the semantics of (31) would then hold that John has a

psychological state whose content is the same as the semantic content of the sentence 'Jackie is a lawyer' (as used on the occasion of utterance – henceforth, I omit this qualification for brevity). Since we can safely assume that 'Jackie is a lawyer' does not have expressive content, the sentential account of the semantics of (31) would hold that John has a psychological state with the same representational content and (trivially) the same expressive content as the sentence 'Jackie is a lawyer.' A sentential account of the semantics of (32) would hold then that John has a psychological state whose content is the same as the semantic content of the sentence 'Donating to charity is right.' Since 'Donating to charity is right' (according to Expressive-Assertivism) has both representational content and expressive content, the sentential account of the semantics of (32) would require that John has a psychological state with the same representational content as 'Donating to charity is right,' say, that donating to charity maximizes the general welfare, and with the same expressive content as 'Donating to charity is right,' say, approval toward things that maximize general welfare. The important thing to note here is that the *semantics* of 'believes that,' as it is used in (31) and (32), is the same: an attitude is being attributed to the subject of the sentence in which the verb is used, which is the same in content as its complement sentence. Of course, since the semantic contents of the respective complement sentences differ, so does the particular attitude being attributed to the subject of the sentence. However, this does not mean, in turn, that the *semantics* of 'believes that' also differs, i.e. this does not mean that 'believes that' is ambiguous. Analogously, even though our semantic evaluations of (39) and (40) differ significantly (since (39), but not (40), is to be evaluated as true or false), we do not think that 'and' is ambiguous.

(39) Jackie is a lawyer and John is doctor.
(40) Donating to charity is right and don't forget it.

Rather, our semantic evaluations of the sentences are a function of the embedded sentences interacting with a word that has a uniform meaning.

A propositional account of the semantics of 'believes that' would also hold that the grammatical subjects of (31) and (32) have psychological states that are the same in content as the semantic content of their respective complement sentences, only it would articulate the representational content by employing the notion of a proposition. A propositional account of the semantics of (31) would hold that John has a psychological state that is the same in content as the proposition *that Jackie is a lawyer*. On the assumption that a sentence's expressive component plays a role in determining the kind of psychological state attributed by 'believes

that,' a complete propositional account would also have to contain a clause allowing for such an attribution. The easiest way to do this is to include a clause that holds that any conative attitude attributed is the same in expressive content as the complement sentence. Thus, a propositional account of the semantics of (31) would also hold that John has a psychological state with the same expressive content as the sentence 'Jackie is a lawyer.' Thus, as with the sentential account, the state attributed to John in (31) is, trivially, the same in expressive content as 'Jackie is a lawyer.' A propositional account of the semantics of (32) would hold that John has a psychological state with the same representational content as the proposition *that donating to charity is right*, say, that donating to charity maximizes general welfare, and with the same expressive content as the sentence 'Donating to charity is right,' say, approval toward things that maximize general welfare. As with the sentential account, the important thing to note is that, though the semantic content of the respective complement sentences differs in (31) and (32), the semantics of 'believes that' does not, in turn, differ, and hence, 'believes that' is not ambiguous. A similar kind of story can told even more straightforwardly about the utterance account.[58] Thus, Expressive-Assertivism, and expressivism in general, can adopt any of the three main strategies for providing the semantics for sentences containing attitude-attribution verbs without being forced to conclude that these verbs are ambiguous. Thus, The Objection from Ambiguity of Attitude-Attribution Verbs poses no threat to Expressive-Assertivism.

I now show that that my defense of Expressive-Assertivism from this objection is relevant, for a complement sentence's having an expressive component *in fact* plays a role in determining the kind of psychological state attributed by the use of 'believes that.' There are two reasons why one might think otherwise. First, one might think that 'believes that' really is used only to attribute a representational state, and that therefore, a sentence's having an expressive function cannot play a role in attributing a conative state when used in the complement of a belief report. However, this claim is intuitively implausible, especially in light of the entire range of evaluative sentences that might be embedded as complement sentences after 'believes that.' For example, if we fill in schema S_7 with the emotionally charged terms mentioned earlier, it seems intuitively obvious that a conative attitude is being attributed to Jackie.

S_7: Jackie believes that Aurie is _____.

Moreover, suppose John has every reason to believe that Jackie utters$_{(CL)}$ any of the odd-numbered sentences below, has no idea what Jackie's conative attitudes are towards anything, but reports Jackie's beliefs by using one of the 'corresponding' even-numbered sentences below.

(41) Aurie is genuinely friendly to everyone she meets.
(42) Jackie believes that Aurie is a sweetheart.
(43) Aurie is always gladly willing to help out whenever someone is in need.
(44) Jackie believes that Aurie is an angel.
(45) Aurie is a white American.
(46) Jackie believes that Aurie is a yankee.
(47) Aurie is Hispanic.
(48) Jackie believes that Aurie is a spic.
(49) Aurie is Jewish.
(50) Jackie believes that Aurie is a kike.

Let's assume that the properties picked out by the predicates of the complement clauses in the even numbered sentences are those that are also picked out by the predicates in the odd-numbered sentences. Still, intuitively, (42), (44), (46), (48), and (50) are *misreports*. However, they would not be misreports if 'believes that' were used to attribute only representational states. Therefore, we should conclude that 'believes that' is not used to attribute only representational states.

The second reason one might think that a complement sentence's expressive component plays no role in determining the kind of psychological state attributed by the attitude-attribution verbs is that one might think that the conative state involved in the use of 'believes that' is expressed by the speaker, rather than attributed to the subject of the sentence. Let's look at some examples that might give rise to such an idea. Suppose John has every reason to believe that Jackie $\text{utters}_{(CL)}$ (51),

(51) Italians eat a lot of pasta.

and reports Jackie's belief as in (52).

(52) Jackie believes that wops eat a lot of pasta.

In this case, it seems clear that the complement clause in (52) is being used to express the speaker's conative state, rather than helping to determine that a conative state is attributed to Jackie. Similarly, suppose John has every reason to suppose that Jackie $\text{utters}_{(CL)}$ (53),

(53) Christians are correct in their beliefs.

and reports Jackie's belief as in (54).

(54) Jackie believes that Jesus-freaks are correct in their beliefs.

Again, it seems clear that the complement clause in (54) is being used to express the speaker's conative state, rather than helping to determine that a conative state is attributed to Jackie. These examples provide some evidence for the claim that a complement sentence's expressive component is being expressed by the speaker rather than attributed by 'believes that' to the subject of the sentence.

The first part of my response is to point out that (52) and (54) can also be used to attribute the conative states to Jackie, for example, if we suppose that John has every reason to believe that Jackie utters$_{(CL)}$ (55) and (56), and uses (52) and (54) to report this.

(55) Wops eat a lot of pasta.
(56) Jesus-freaks are correct in their religious beliefs.

The second part of my response is to explain these two readings of (52) and (54) as instances of scope phenomena. In the first case, the quantified noun phrase, 'wops,' takes wide scope relative to 'believes that,' while in the second case, the quantified noun phrase, 'Jesus-freaks,' takes narrow scope relative to 'believes that.' That is, in the first case, we understand (52) as (52′), while in the second case, we understand (54) as (54′).

(52′) [All x: x is wop][Jackie believes that x eats a lot of pasta].
(54′) Jackie believes that [all x: x is a Jesus-freak][x is correct in x's religious belief].

Therefore, cases in which we understand belief reports as used to express a speaker's conative state are cases in which the quantified noun phrases used in the complement sentences, which carry the expressive component of the complement sentences, take wide scope relative to 'believes that,' and hence, do not play a role in determining the attitude attributed by 'believes that.' However, cases in which we understand belief reports as used to attribute a conative state to the subject of the sentence are cases in which the quantified noun phrases used in the complement sentences take narrow scope relative to 'believes that,' and hence, do play a role in determining the attitude attributed by 'believes that.' Therefore, the appearance that complement sentences containing quantified noun phrase are used to express a speaker's conative state is easily explained as taking wide-scope relative to 'believes that.'[59] Therefore, we should remain convinced that a complement sentence's expressive component in fact plays a role in determining the kind of psychological state attributed by the attitude-attribution verb and that neither Expressive-Assertivism, nor expressivism in general, entail the ambiguity of attitude attribution verbs.

3.4. ATTITUDE ASCRIPTION AND DESCRIPTIVE CONTENT

Reflection on the Objection from the Ambiguity of Attitude Attribution verbs shows that an attitude ascription, such as 'John believes that donating to charity is right,' is true if and only if the subject of the sentence is in a psychological state that is the same in content as the ascription's compliment sentence. This point, in turn, explains why the descriptive content of moral sentences cannot be speaker-relative,[60] contra many other metaethical theories.

Consider again, for example, Barker's implicature theory of value content, according to which the descriptive content of (57) is illuminated by (58):[61]

(57) Donating to charity is right
(58) Donating to charity instantiates dthat [the property that *I* (the speaker) approve of things for instantiating].

Suppose that John morally approves of actions insofar as they maximize general welfare and that Jackie approves of actions insofar as they fail to violate anyone's autonomy. In this case, the descriptive content of (57), uttered respectively by John and Jackie, is (59) and (60):

(59) Donating to charity maximizes general welfare
(60) Donating to charity fails to violate anyone's autonomy

Suppose further that both have good reason to believe that acts of donating to charity maximize general welfare and fail to violate anyone's autonomy, and that both John and Jackie know all of this information. The pressing question is this: Can Jackie use a moral sentence to ascribe to John the moral belief that John in fact has? Of course she *should* be able to do so; she should be able to ascribe to John his moral belief by using (61):

(61) John believes that donating to charity is right.

Using moral sentences as complements of attitude-attribution verbs is *precisely* the mechanism that allows us to provide third party moral attitude reports. But doing so appears to be impossible on Barker's view. For (61) is true just in case John has a psychological state that is the same in descriptive and expressive content as (57); but since *Jackie* is uttering (61), the descriptive content of (57), on Barker's view, is (60), which is certainly not the descriptive content of John's moral belief. Thus, it appears that the thesis of speaker-relative descriptive content leads to the untenable position that it may be impossible to use a moral sentence to ascribe a moral belief to someone that he or she may in fact have.

The only solution I see is to hold that the descriptive content of a moral sentence is subject-relative, rather than speaker-relative, when embedded in attitude-ascriptions. But there seems to be no principled reason to hold such a view, especially in light of the fact that *all* other speaker-relative descriptive expressions in natural language appear to retain their speaker-relativity when so embedded. To take a paradigm example, consider (62):

(62) My mother was born in Oklahoma.

Surely when using (62) to ascribe a belief to Jane, as in (63), it does not follow that Jane believes that *her* mother was born in Oklahoma.

(63) Jane believes that my mother was born in Oklahoma.

Rather, it follows that Jane believes that the *speaker's* mother was born in Oklahoma.

We are thus led the conclusion that the descriptive content of moral sentences must be non speaker-relative and, accordingly, any view committed to speaker-relativity of the descriptive content of moral sentences is false.[62] And there are, in addition to Barker's, a number of such views. For example, Ridge's ecumenical expressivism, Dreier's speaker-relativism, and classical ethical subjectivism hold that the descriptive content of (57) is illuminated by (64)–(66) respectively:[63]

(64) Donating to charity instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor disapproves of things for instantiating];[64]
(65) Donating to charity instantiates dthat [the property of being approved of by a moral system that best balances the content and subject matter of a moral standard with *my* (the speaker's) motivations and affective attitudes;[65]
(66) *I* (the speaker) approve of donating to charity.

However, on their respective theories, a speaker can have a different ideal advisor, or have different motivations and affective attitudes, or approve of different properties than one to whom that speaker may be ascribing a moral attitude. In such cases, these views render it impossible to use a moral sentence to ascribe to the subject of the sentence a moral attitude that that person may in fact have.

Since Expressive-Assertivism is not forced to accept a speaker-relative account of the descriptive content of moral sentences, I wish Expressive-Assertivism to be taken as holding, instead, a non speaker-relative account of the descriptive content of moral sentences.

4. Conclusion

According to Expressive-Assertivism, if a speaker utters$_{(CL)}$ a sentence that contains an ethical predicate in an extensional context, the speaker performs both a direct expressive illocutionary act and a direct assertive illocutionary act, where the expressive performed expresses an attitude toward things that have the property picked out by the ethical predicate. That is, Expressive-Assertivism adopts (DP), (EP), and (GP). Expressive-Assertivism also adopts a robust theory of truth and an account of the descriptive content of moral sentences that is non speaker-relative.

Expressive-Assertivism remains incomplete. Most importantly, Expressive-Assertivism must provide a more detailed account of the semantics of moral sentences than the outlines of a theory that have been provided here, and must be supplemented with a positive account of moral properties. Moreover, Expressive-Assertivism must account for the putative conceivability of an amoralist and for the deliverances of Open-Question type arguments. Nevertheless, if the theory is right about all that it has said so far, then Expressive-Assertivism has at least the following advantages:

(i) Expressive-Assertivism (EA) is thoroughly motivated by adopting three central features of predicates from other parts of natural language, and so the theory is thoroughly motivated, credible, and realistic;
(ii) its adoption of its three central features provides the theory with an impenetrable defense from *every* embedding *objection* (though a satisfying theory will still provide solutions to various embedding puzzles);
(iii) it holds that the descriptive content of moral sentences is non speaker-relative and, so, has no difficulty accounting for attitude ascriptions, unlike most dual-use theories;
(iv) it coherently explains why even complex sentences have expressive content, and so can adequately respond to the Objection from Missing Expressives;
(v) it provides a coherent, principled rationale for holding that the descriptive semantic content of moral sentences is, but the expressive semantic content of complex moral sentences need not be, compositional, and so can adequately respond to the Objection from Incomplete Semantics;
(vi) it is consistent with, but is not forced to accept, minimalism about truth;
(vii) it provides a direct, clean account of the Practicality of moral judgments;
(viii) it accounts for the 'cognitive,' 'descriptive,' or 'representational' features of moral discourse and thought; that is, in addition to

accounting for Practicality, it also accounts for what Smith calls the Objectivity of ethics;

(ix) its formulation in terms of the direct illocutionary acts performed in correct and literal utterances of moral sentences captures expressivism's motivating insight better than similar dual-use theories.

Expressive-Assertivism, then, is already a powerful expressivist metaeth-ical theory.

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NOTES

* I thank Dorit Bar-On, Matthew Chrisman, David Copp, Steve Finlay, Kirk Ludwig, Mark Schroeder, Kyle Swan, Jon Tresan, and Mark van Roojen for their thoughtful comments and questions on earlier drafts of this work. I also thank an anonymous referee, whose conscientious feedback forced me to clarify several important points. This paper mentions offensive language and stereotypes, since, unfortunately, such language best exemplifies the linguistic points I most need to make.

[1] Moral judgments come in two forms: moral thoughts, such as the thought that donating to charity is right, and moral utterances, such as an utterance of the English sentence 'Donating to charity is right.' Moral utterances are, of course, the verbal articulations of moral thoughts.

[2] Smith, M. (1995). *The Moral Problem*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 6.

[3] Stevenson, C. L. (1963). *Facts and Values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 10–31, 55–70.

[4] Hare, R. M. (1952). *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Hare, R. M. (1997). *Sorting out Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[5] Barker, S. (2002). 'Is Value Content a Component of Conventional Implicature?,' *Analysis* 60, pp. 268–279.

[6] Ridge, M. (2006). 'Ecumenical Expressivism: Finessing Frege,' *Ethics* 116, pp. 302–336; Ridge, M. (2007). 'Ecumenical Expressivism: The Best of Both Worlds,' in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. II. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Ridge, M. (forthcoming). 'The Truth in Ecumenical Expressivism,' in David Sobel (ed.) *Reasons for Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Hare, J. (2001). *God's Call: Moral Realism, God's Commands, and Human Autonomy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Swan, K. (2006). 'A Metaethical Option for Theists,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 34, pp. 3–20.

[8] I leave aside, for the most part, discussion of David Copp's realist-expressivism, which appears to be consistent with the most important features of Expressive-Assertivism. The central difference between realist-expressivism and Expressive-Assertivism appears to be one of explanatory focus. Whereas realist-expressivism seeks to explain the kind of linguistic conventions that govern moral predicates, Expressive-Assertivism seeks to explain *why* moral predicates would be governed by such, or similar, linguistic conventions. It is also open to realist-expressivism to reject the Extensionality and Generality Principles, which will be explained shortly. However, since, as I will argue, these principles are central to defending expressivism from its most serious problem – the Frege-Geach objection –

realist-expressivism ought not reject them. See Copp, D. (2001). 'Realist-Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism,' *Social Philosophy and Policy* 18, pp. 1–43. I also leave aside Steve Finlay's conversational implicature theory and Dorit Bar-On and Matthew Chrisman's neo-expressivism, since neither holds that the expressive content of an utterance of a moral sentence is a part of that sentence's conventional meaning. See Bar-on, D. and Chrisman, M. (forthcoming). 'Ethical Neo-Expressivism,' in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics IV*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Finlay, S. (2005). 'Value and Implicature,' *Philosophers' Imprint* 5, pp. 1–20.

[9] Two other important features of Expressive-Assertivism will be the adoption of a robust notion of truth and a certain restriction on moral properties, viz. that they be non speaker-relative. The rationale for adopting these two features will be explained below.

[10] Here, I follow Mark Schroeder's identification of several features with respect to which expressivist theories can differ. See Schroeder, M. (in preparation). 'Hybrid Expressivism: Virtues and Vices.' I also follow Schroeder's suggestion of adopting Kaplan's 'dthat' convention for rigidly designating what Barker's and Ridge's theories respectively take moral properties to be.

[11] Geach, P. T. (1965). 'Assertion,' *Philosophical Review* 74, pp. 449–465.

[12] Blackburn, S. (1984). *Spreading the Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Blackburn, S. (1988). 'Attitudes and Contents,' *Ethics* 98, pp. 501–517; Blackburn, S. (1993). *Essays in Quasi-Realism.* New York: Oxford University Press; Blackburn, S. (1998). *Ruling Passions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[13] Ridge's view is ultimately more complicated. For Ridge, the property picked out by an ethical predicate on an occasion of uttering an ethical sentence is anaphoric on the attitudes a speaker expresses in uttering that very sentence. Thus, Ridge's view would ultimately render 'Tormenting the cat is bad' as something like: Tormenting the cat instantiates dthat [the property that *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor – the one that *I* am expressing approval of in uttering this very sentence – disapproves of things for instantiating]; hooray for *my* (the speaker's) ideal advisor!

[14] Barker's implicature theory would render the first premise, roughly, as: 'Tormenting the cat instantiates dthat [the property *I* (the speaker) disapprove of things for instantiating]; boo for things that instantiate dthat [the property *I* (the speaker) disapprove of things for instantiating]!.'

[15] Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to Do Things with Words*, J. O. Urmson and M. Sbisa, eds, 2nd edn. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 9.

[16] Which is to be contrasted with (a) performance of an act *of* saying something, i.e. a locutionary act, and (b) performance of an act *by* saying something, i.e. a perlocutionary act Ibid. To borrow an example from Austin, 1975, pp. 101–102, suppose *a*, speaking to me, utters the sentence 'Shoot her!.' The locutionary act is *a*'s act *of* saying 'Shoot her!' and meaning by 'shoot' *shoot* and referring by 'her' to *her*; however, *in* saying 'Shoot her!,' *a* performs the illocutionary act of, perhaps, *commanding* me to shoot her, or *advising*, *urging*, or *ordering* me to shoot her; *by* saying 'Shoot her!,' *a* performs the perlocutionary act of, perhaps, getting me to shoot her, of losing my respect, of causing the referent of 'her' to flee the country, etc. Thus, for Austin, an illocutionary act is something 'over and above' a speaker's uttering a sentence and using its constituent expressions to refer to or to mean what they do in the language of which the sentence is a sentence – *this*, roughly, is what Austin calls a locutionary act.

[17] For example, one quarter of William Alston's recent book, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* is devoted to sorting out issues involved in an analysis of 'illocutionary act.' See Alston, W. P. (2000). *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press). It also speaks to the difficulty of defining 'illocutionary act' that John Searle, one of the pioneers in speech act theory, wrote his classics *Speech Acts* and *Expression and Meaning*, the latter in which he proposes his famous taxonomy of basic illocutionary

acts, without ever defining 'illocutionary act.' See Searle, J. (1979). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Searle comes close to defining 'illocutionary act' later in *Intentionality*. See Searle, J. (1983). *Intentionality, an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. There, Searle suggests that what turns an action, such as raising one's arm, into an illocutionary act, such as the statement that the enemy is retreating, is that the speaker 'imposes' Intentionality on entities that are not 'intrinsically intentional' (p. 167), and a speaker does *this* by performing the action 'with the intention that the utterance itself has conditions of satisfaction' (p. 167). I think this definition is on the right track, though it requires significant modification and illumination.

[18] See for example Alston, 2000; Austin, 1975; Searle, J. (1979). 'A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,' in *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[19] Searle, 1979, 'A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts.'

[20] The other basic types in Searle's taxonomy are commissives and declaratives. *Commissives* commit one to a certain course of action, as with typical utterances of 'I promise to buy you a diamond for your birthday,' and *declaratives* make something the case in virtue of the speaker's standing in some socially constructed position of authority and uttering certain locutions, as with typical utterances of 'This court is adjourned' uttered by a judge in the required setting (during the course of a trial) and 'You're out!' as uttered by a baseball umpire in the required setting (during a game on a baseball field). Nothing in this paper depends on my using Searle's taxonomy. Any other taxonomy could have been used to describe Expressive-Assertivism, provided only that it include a category of illocutionary acts that subsumes Searle's categories of assertives and expressives.

[21] 'On the basis of' or 'by way of' can be understood in terms of one's recognition of an illocutionary act. For example, we can say that one performs an illocutionary act A on the basis of performing another illocutionary act B if one can recognize the performance of A only by first recognizing the performance of B.

[22] See Searle, 1979, 'A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts.'

[23] Ibid., p. 30.

[24] Stephen Finlay's conversational implicature theory is one that holds that a moral judgment is the performance of a direct assertive and an indirect expressive. See Finlay, 2005.

[25] I think my definition of 'utterance' is what Austin meant by 'locutionary act,' but I am not certain. See Austin, 1975, pp. 92–93. According to Austin, a locutionary act is an act in which three nested actions – the phonetic, phatic, and rhetic acts – are present. Austin defines 'phonetic act' as 'the act of uttering certain noises,' 'phatic act' as 'the act of uttering certain vocables or words, i.e. noises of certain types belonging to and as belonging to a certain vocabulary, in a certain construction, i.e. conforming to and as conforming to a certain grammar, with a certain intonation, etc.,' and 'rhetic act' as 'the act of using that pheme or its constituents with a certain more or less definite "sense" and a more or less definite "reference" (which together are equivalent to meaning).' I think conditions (a), (b), and (c) in my definition of 'utterance' are equivalent to Austin's definitions of 'phonetic,' 'phatic,' and 'rhetic' acts respectively.

[26] By 'contextual' information or assumptions, I do not mean to include information or assumptions that are normally considered 'contextual' in a technical sense, viz., the sense in which such information is required in order to assign semantic values to context-sensitive elements of a sentence, such as knowledge of who the speaker is when a sentence contains the personal pronoun 'I.'

[27] Section 3.1 provides a diagnosis of why metaethicists may have been misled into accepting this assumption, and motivates Expressive-Assertivism's rejection of it.

[28] In an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of (13), the speaker performs a direct simple assertive describing the act of donating to charity as having the property rightness. In an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of (14), the speaker performs a direct complex assertive describing the world as being such that if she has thought matters through correctly, then donating to charity has the property *rightness*.

[29] Ayer, A. J. (1952). *Language, Truth, and Logic*. New York: Dover Publications.

[30] Blackburn, 1993; 1998.

[31] Gibbard, A. (1990). *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Gibbard, A. (2003). *Thinking How to Live*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[32] Moore, G. E. (1903). *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[33] Brink, D. O. (1989). *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[34] Boyd, R. (1988). 'How to Be a Moral Realist,' in G. Sayre-McCord (ed.) *Essays on Moral Realism*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press.

[35] Smith, 1995.

[36] Shafer-Landau, R. (2005). *Moral Realism: A Defence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[37] Of course simple expressivist theories hold that a speaker may, on occasion, also perform an indirect assertive by way of performing the expressive, and simple assertivist theories hold that a speaker may, on occasion, also perform in indirect expressive by way of performing the assertive. The difference between these simple theories and more complex theories to be discussed shortly is that the latter theories hold that two distinct direct illocutionary acts are always performed via an utterance$_{(CL)}$ of an ethical sentence.

[38] Smith, 1995, p. 19.

[39] Technically, it is these three features, together with the adoption of a robust theory of truth, which will be explained presently, and of a restriction that moral properties be non speaker-relative, which will be explained in the next section.

[40] Gibbard, 2003, p. x, explicitly admits such pressure: 'Does (my view entail) that there are no moral facts of what I ought to do, no truths and falsehoods? Previously I thought so, but other philosophers challenged me to say what this denial could mean. In this book, I withdraw the denial and turn non-committal. In one sense there clearly are "facts" of what a person ought to do, and in a sense of the word "true" there is a truth of the matter. That's a minimalist sense, in which "It's true that pain is to be avoided" just amounts to saying that pain is to be avoided . . .'

[41] Expressive-Assertivism's adoption of a robust notion of truth, combined with its adoption of (DP) and (EP), also explains how Expressive-Assertivism can avoid a problem that has vexed expressivists for half a century, viz., the problem of explaining the intuitive validity of moral arguments, such as Geach's famous argument, a variation of which was discussed earlier:

> If tormenting the cat is bad, getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad;
> Tormenting the cat is bad;
> Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is bad.

See Geach, 1965. As Dreier has convincingly shown, expressivists who deny that moral sentences can be (robustly) true or false cannot help themselves to the standard explanation of validity in terms of preservation of truth, since such an explanation presumes a robust notion of truth. See Dreier, J. (1996). 'Expressivist Embeddings and Minimalist Truth,' *Philosophical Studies* 83, pp. 29–51; Dreier, J. (2004). 'Lockean and Logical Truth Conditions,' *Analysis* 64, pp. 84–91. Such expressivists have thus attempted to provide non-standard accounts of validity, typically by constructing a 'logic of attitudes,' that attempt to account for validity in terms of the preservation of attitudes. (Thanks to Mark Schroeder for

suggesting the interpretation of these accounts as involving a preservation of attitudes.) Blackburn and Gibbard are the standard-bearers for such a logic of attitudes. See Blackburn, 1984, 1993, 1998 and Gibbard 1990, 2003. The success of the logic of attitudes approach is controversial. For a thorough, illuminating discussion of the logic of attitudes, see Schroeder, M. (forthcoming). *Being For: Evaluating the Semantic Program of Expressivism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. However, since Expressive-Assertivism adopts (DP) and (EP), it interprets the above argument (as Mark van Roojen has suggested to me) in the way described earlier:

> If tormenting the cat is F, getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F!;
> Tormenting the cat is F; boo for things that are F!;
> Therefore, getting your little brother to torment the cat is F; boo for things that are F.

And since Expressive-Assertivism need not deny that 'Tormenting the cat is F' and 'Getting one's little brother to torment the cat is F' can be robustly true, Expressive-Assertivism can help itself to the standard explanation of validity in terms of the preservation of truth.

[42] See Barker, 2002; Copp, 2001; Ridge, 2006, 2007, forthcoming. Stevenson and Hare hold that descriptive content is also part of the semantic content of ethical sentences, then this point applies to their dual-use theories as well. See Hare, 1952, 1997; Stevenson, C. L. (1944). *Ethics and Language*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; and Stevenson, 1963.

[43] For example, Ridge, 2006, p. 305.

[44] Copp, 2001, pp. 14–15.

[45] Barker, 2002, p. 271.

[46] Hare, 1952.

[47] For example, Frege, G. (1918). 'Negation,' in M. Beaney (ed.) *The Frege Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 348–349.

[48] Geach, P. T. (1958). 'Imperative and Deontic Logic,' *Analysis* 18, pp. 49–56; Geach, P. T. (1960). 'Ascriptivism,' *Philosophical Review* 69, pp. 221–225; and Geach, 1965.

[49] For example, more recent expressivist theories tell much more about ethical sentences than that utterances of them involve the performance of a direct expressive illocutionary act.

[50] I intend this example to be just that – an example. I am not advocating here a Utilitarian or Consequentialist moral theory. The properties picked out by the moral predicates are just whatever the correct moral theory says they are.

[51] My entire case does not rest on the hope that others share my intuition about the expression of an attitude towards a kind. In the end, my case may simply rest on an argument by analogy supplemented by an argument from theoretical utility. The analogy: (i) moral predicates work in many important ways like slurs and thick ethical terms; (ii) utterances$_{(CL)}$ of sentences containing slurs or thick ethical terms in extensional contexts are in part direct expressive illocutionary acts; therefore, (iii) utterances$_{(CL)}$ of sentences containing thin ethical predicates in extensional contexts are also in part direct expressives. One who thinks (iii) implausible (rather than just unintuitive) should, of course, reject this argument, though I find no good reason to think that it is implausible, especially if we take the attitude expressed to be directed towards a type of thing, rather than to specific instances of that type. This argument may also be supplemented by an argument from theoretical utility: as we are in the midst of discovering, (iii) solves a number of theoretical problems; therefore we should take it to be true.

[52] Geach, 1958, 1960, 1965; Searle, 1983, pp. 136–141.

[53] Dreier, 1996.

[54] To put the matter another way, Expressive-Assertivism may respond rhetorically to any of the different embedding challenges: 'You explain to me how emotionally charged

predicates meet the challenge, and I'll explain to you how moral predicates meet the challenge.' Of course, by itself, such a response is unsatisfying, since we desire a positive semantic proposal for ethical *and* emotionally charged predicate.

[55] I cannot possibly articulate all of the details of such a theory here, but grasping the following outlines of such a theory should help one see the bigger semantic picture. I provide the details of this semantic theory theory in Boisvert, D. R. (in preparation). 'Success Condition Semantics for Expressivism.'

[56] Sinnott-Armstrong argues otherwise. See Sinnott Armstrong, W. (2000). 'Expressivism and Embedding,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, pp. 677–693.

[57] This objection is raised by David Copp. Objecting to Gibbard's Norm Expressivism, he writes,

> Gibbard's account implies that various sentential contexts in which a sentence p can be embedded are ambiguous, with their semantics depending on whether p is normative. A cognitivist theory could avoid this kind of complexity. For example, if p is not normative, a sentence of the form 'S knows that p' expresses a relation between S and the proposition expressed by p. Similarly, a sentence of the form 'It is possible that p' expresses a proposition about the proposition expressed by p. And a sentence of the form, 'If p then q,' expresses a proposition concerning a relation between the propositions expressed by p and q. But if p is normative, matters are otherwise, for p does not express a proposition. A variety of complex constructions give rise to problems, since it appears that a non-cognitivist theory must treat them differently, depending on whether an embedded sentence is or is not one that would standardly be used to make a normative claim. (Copp, D. (1995). *Morality, Normativity, & Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 17.)

And Jeffrey King has suggested to Copp that matters are even worse for expressivists when one attends to molecular complement sentences containing both ethical and nonethical sentences. See Copp, 1995, p. 17, fn. 29.

[58] An utterance account of the semantics of 'believes that' would hold that the grammatical subjects of (31) and (32) have psychological states that are the same in content as the semantic content of an utterance of the respective complement sentences.

[59] Kaplan discusses similar scope phenomena with quantified noun phrases used in discourse reports. See Kaplan, D. (1989). 'Demonstratives,' in J. Almog, J. Perry and H. Wettstein (eds) *Themes from Kaplan*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 555, fn. 571.

[60] This point might be put in terms of a restriction on moral properties: moral properties cannot be speaker-relative properties.

[61] Barker, 2002.

[62] Mark Schroeder is developing even more troubling implications for theories that hold that the descriptive content of moral sentences is speaker-relative. See Schroeder, in preparation. See also an online discussion of these issues at: http://peasoup.typepad.com/peasoup/2007/10/a-problem-for-s.html#more

[63] Hare and Stevenson both hold that moral sentences have speaker-relative descriptive content, but it is controversial whether, on their views, this descriptive content is part of the semantics of moral sentences. If so, then this objection is fatal to their theories as well. See Hare, 1952; Hare, R. M. (1989). *Essays in Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Hare, 1997; Stevenson, 1944 and 1963.

[64] Ridge, 2006, 2007, and forthcoming.

[65] Dreier, J. (1990). 'Internalism and Speaker Relativism,' *Ethics* 101, 6–25, at pp. 23–24.