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Beyond Frege-Geach:  
Neglected Problems For Expressivism

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PhD in Philosophy  
The University of Edinburgh  
2014



FÜR MEINE ELTERN



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that no part of it has been submitted to any other degree or professional qualification.

*Sebastian Köler*

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Signature

*06/03/2014 Edinburgh*

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Date & Place



## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the viability of meta-normative expressivism. On what I take to be the dominant conception of the view, it subscribes to two theses. First, that the meaning of sentences is to be explained in terms of the mental states these sentences conventionally express. Second, that there is a fundamental difference in the roles of the states expressed by normative sentences and the states expressed by descriptive sentences: descriptive sentences, according to expressivists, express mental states which are representational and non-motivational, while normative sentences express non-representational and motivational states.

Expressivism has attracted many naturalistically inclined philosophers for its ability to explain many of the distinctive features of normative discourse and thought, without adding entities to our ontology that are metaphysically and epistemologically problematic. In this way, expressivism promises to preserve the legitimacy of our ordinary normative practice within a naturalistic world-view, without giving up on any of its distinctive features. Despite its benefits, expressivism also faces significant problems. While one of these problems, the Frege-Geach Problem, has attracted a lot of attention, there are several other problems that have not been sufficiently addressed by expressivists. But, given that the reasonable assumption that the plausibility of philosophical theories needs to be assessed holistically, it seems that one should pay attention to these problems to be able to assess expressivism's overall plausibility. In this thesis I explain how expressivists can solve two of these problems.

The first problem the dissertation is concerned with is the normative attitude problem. This is a dilemma based on the challenge that expressivists need to give an account of the nature of the attitude that normative thinking consists in. The dilemma is then that expressivists could either do this by holding that normative thinking consists in *sui generis* attitudes, which is uninformative and potentially in conflict with naturalism, or by holding that normative thinking reduces to attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms, which is in conflict with our intuitions



about normative thinking. I argue that this dilemma is structurally identical to a dilemma which meta-normative representationalism faces (expressivism's dialectical rival) and that expressivists can use the same theoretical resources to address the normative attitude problem meta-normative representationalists have used to address their version of the dilemma. I also argue that these resources will not only help more traditional versions of expressivism, according to which normative thinking reduces to familiar kinds of attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms, but opens up the possibility of an expressivist view according to which normative thinking consists in *sui generis* attitudes.

The second problem I consider is a challenge to a particular expressivist project: quasi-realism. Part of this project is to show that expressivism is compatible with a web of closely connected assumptions, namely, that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and normative judgements are beliefs. While quasi-realists have made some progress in this direction, there is one relevant phenomenon that has so far been neglected, namely, those uses of that-clauses that are associated with propositional content. This is a problematic neglect, because that-clauses figure prominently in platitudes characterizing our ordinary notions of "truth-aptitude" and "belief", and so expressivists need to provide a plausible account of these uses of that-clauses which fits with their allowing that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and normative judgements are beliefs. I address this challenge as follows: I first remove any worries that one might have that a plausible account of that-clauses that helps the quasi-realist could be given, by introducing the distinction between semantics and meta-semantics and locating expressivism at the level of meta-semantics. I then develop a deflationist view of that-clauses which suits the quasi-realist's purposes. I start by giving such a view for the use of that-clauses in meaning-attributions by expanding on the work of Wilfried Sellars. I then go on to explain how the account can be generalized to the use of that-clauses in belief-attributions and propositional attitude ascriptions more generally, in a way that allows expressivists to say that normative judgements are beliefs.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For me the best way to do philosophy has always been the social way: in conversation, discussion, and debate with others, sticking our heads together to “understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.”<sup>1</sup> Because of this perspective on philosophy I feel that what I have achieved over the years owes much to those I encountered along the way and who have enriched my intellectual life with questions, discussions, and conversations. Here I want to thank those to whom I have some intellectual debt when it comes to this dissertation. I would like to thank Hanna Altehenger, Vuko Andrić, Simon Blackburn, Cameron Boulton, Lars Dänzer, Jamie Dreier, Ben Ferguson, Christoph Fehige, Romy Jaster, Robin McKenna, Timothy Kunke, Elijah Millgram, Emil Ljungberg Møller, Stephan Padel, Joey Pollock, Susanne Mantel, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Anna Rosenbaum, Stephen Ryan, Peter Schulte, Max Seeger, Ulla Wessels, Lee John Whittington, Alan Wilson, as well as two referees for *Ethics*, and the editors of *Ethics*. For financial support I want to thank the College for Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh and the Analysis Trust.

Four people deserve a very special thanks here, though. First, I would like to thank Matthew Chrisman for always keeping an eye on the bigger picture of my project, introducing me to Sellars, encouraging me at the right times and places, and for teaching me how to fly. Second, I would like to thank Guido Ehrhardt for suggesting (long ago) to read an introduction to meta-ethics, convincing me of the plausibility of expressivism, and being my long-time intellectual companion and friend. Third, I would like to thank Mike Ridge for excellent supervisions at David Bann’s (and other restaurants in Edinburgh), great conversations on philosophy and all nerdy things, being incredibly supportive and helpful at all times, and treating me like a colleague, rather than a student, from the very start. Fourth, I want to thank Nina Wilden for her love and emotional support, always being the perfect optimist to my own pessimist, for being a willing non-expert upon occasion on which to test ideas, and for making four years of long-distance something that I gladly mastered.

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<sup>1</sup> Sellars 1963: 1.



## INTRODUCTION

Ever since it was first raised by Peter Geach in 1960,<sup>1</sup> the Frege-Geach Problem has been a constant companion for those with sympathies for—or even just an interest in—expressivism. In fact, there is no problem for expressivism which has received more attention than it. While there is no doubt that the Frege-Geach Problem is very important, this focus seems a little surprising on closer inspection: expressivism is a view with many attractive features and which opens up novel avenues for thinking about concepts many philosophers find puzzling. When we are dealing with a view like this, should we not look at the whole package rather than only particular aspects of it, *especially* when already so much ink has been spilled over that particular aspect? Not only do I believe that we should, I think that it is philosophically fruitful to do so. So, this dissertation is set out to do a little to change this narrow focus of the debate: to move beyond the Frege-Geach Problem and to pay attention to issues surrounding expressivism that, so far, have been neglected both by those defending expressivism and by those who are opposed to it.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. The first chapter serves as an introductory chapter. It explains in greater details how I understand expressivism and why it is attractive, elaborates on why we should go beyond the Frege-Geach Problem, and provides more detail regarding the neglected problems this dissertation will be concerned with. Of course, there is only so much space and time when it comes to a PhD dissertation, and so I have to restrict my discussion to the following two problems. First, the problem of specifying the nature of the attitude in which, according to expressivists, normative judgements consist. This is the problem that the second chapter is concerned with. Second, the problem of giving an expressivist friendly account of those uses of *that*-clauses that are associated with propositional contents. This problem will be of concern in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> Geach 1960.



# CHAPTER I: EXPRESSIVISM. WHAT, WHY, AND WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

## 0. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with going beyond the Frege-Geach Problem and defending expressivism against two important, but neglected challenges. Before I turn to these challenges, however, I should explain what expressivism is, why it has appeal, and why it is important to pay more attention to challenges to expressivism other than the Frege-Geach Problem. Finally, I should say a little bit more about the challenges I will be concerned with. I do all of this in this chapter. The chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section, I explain what I take expressivism to be. In the second section, I present the main motivations for the view. In the third section, I then talk about the Frege-Geach Problem, why we should go beyond it, and provide a short introduction of the challenges that will concern us for the rest of the dissertation.

## 1. WHAT IS EXPRESSIVISM?

By “expressivism” I mean a family of theories that constitute the most sophisticated development in the tradition that gained prominence with emotivism and prescriptivism.<sup>1</sup> Some of the most well-known defendants of expressivism as I

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<sup>1</sup> Emotivism is the view according to which moral sentences, unlike descriptive sentences, do not have literal meaning and are not truth-apt, but rather function like interjections such as “Boo!” or “Yuk!”. It was prominently defended by Alfred Ayer (Ayer 1936), Rudolf Carnap (Carnap 1932), Charles Ogden and Ivor Richards (Ogden and Richards 1923), Bertrand Russell (Russell 1935), and Charles Stevenson (Stevenson 1937 and Stevenson 1944). Arguably, there is an interpretation of David Hume on which such a view can be attributed to him, as he sometimes says that moral judgements consist in feelings (see e.g. Hume 1739). Of course, whether this is so is a question for Hume scholars that I will not engage in here. Prescriptivism is the view that moral language is a species of prescriptive language, where the paradigm examples of prescriptive language are imperatives. It was prominently developed and defended by Richard Hare (Hare 1952, Hare 1965 and Hare 1982). Arguably, there is an interpretation of Immanuel Kant on which he held a version of this view, as he held that moral judgements are “categorical imperatives” (see e.g. Kant 1785). Of course, whether this is so is a question for Kant scholars I will not engage in here. Both emotivism and prescriptivism share the thesis that the meaning of moral sentences needs to be explained in very different terms than the meaning of descriptive sentences. The tradition these views made prominent is often called “non-cognitivism”, but I will not use that label as it has unfortunate implications, such as that “beliefs” have to be states of a certain kind, and that



understand it here are Simon Blackburn, Allan Gibbard, Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, Michael Ridge, and (arguably) Mark Schroeder.<sup>2</sup> Until quite recently, expressivism was seen primarily as a view about *moral* language and thought. But, as it became clearer that the motivations for expressivism derive from features that moral language and thought have in virtue of being *normative* in a particular sense, expressivism is now mostly understood as a view about all discourses and domains of thoughts that are normative in this sense.<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation I will be concerned with expressivism as a general view of this kind, namely, as a view about normative language and thought, which is why I will call expressivism and its dialectical rivals “meta-normative” theories (rather than using the more traditional label “meta-ethical”). However, for reasons of scope I will impose two restrictions on the kind of expressivism I will be concerned with. First, I will be concerned with expressivism only as a view about *practical* normative thought and discourse and bracket expressivism about other forms of normative thought and discourse to the extent this is possible. Second, I will be concerned with expressivism as a view *primarily* about normative *judgements* and *declarative* normative sentences. Before I turn to my presentation of the commitments that I take to be characteristic of expressivism, let me explain what these restrictions mean. I will begin with explaining what I take to be the relevant sense of “normative” that expressivism is concerned with.

It is surprisingly hard to give a genuinely theory-neutral characterization of what makes a domain of thought and discourse “normative” in the sense meta-normative theories like expressivism and its dialectical rivals are concerned with. One

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expressivists are, thereby, committed to denying that normative judgements are beliefs. As I will explain later (in the third chapter), this is an assumption we should not accept, at least without further argument. A better label, I think, would be “non-representationalism”. A comprehensive overview over this tradition is given by Mark Schroeder (Schroeder 2010a).

- 2 The views of these authors differ in important respects, but unless otherwise stated, these differences do not matter for the purposes of this dissertation. For Blackburn’s form of expressivism, see e.g. Blackburn 1984a and Blackburn 1998a. For Gibbard’s form of expressivism, see e.g. Gibbard 1992 and Gibbard 2003. For Horgan’s and Timmons’ form of expressivism, see e.g. Horgan and Timmons 2006. For Ridge’s form of expressivism, see e.g. Ridge 2006a, Ridge 2007a or Ridge Forthcoming. For Schroeder’s form of expressivism, see e.g. Schroeder 2008a. Schroeder only “arguably” counts as a defendant of expressivism, because even though he develops a very sophisticated form of expressivism in his book “Being For”, he ultimately rejects it in that same book.
- 3 For arguments that the relevant features are possessed by all normative thought and discourse, see e.g. Bedke 2010, Cuneo 2007, Enoch 2011, Gibbard 1983, Gibbard 1992, Schulte 2010 and Wedgwood 2008.

way to get at the phenomenon in question is by ostensive means. For example, whatever the phenomenon in question is, it is distinctively possessed at least by *moral* thought and discourse, so we might be able to pin the phenomenon down by pointing to moral thought and discourse. Furthermore, there are certain key terms such as “ought”, “reason”, “good”, etc., which, in particular uses, are the *mark* of the normative. These terms provide further ostensive means to pick out the relevant phenomenon. While both of these are legitimate ways to provide us with some starting point for understanding the normative, I think a more informative and systematic characterization can be given via the functional role that normative judgements play within our cognitive economy.<sup>4</sup>

A distinctive feature of humans (or rational agents generally) is their ability to step back from their immediate impulses towards and reactions to the world, to take responsibility for certain of these responses, and to *deliberate* about what responses to take: what actions to intend, what beliefs to form, how to feel about a particular situation, and so on. That is, a distinctive characteristic of humans (or rational agents generally) is that they have what Thomas Scanlon has called “judgement-sensitive attitudes”, the prime examples of such attitudes being intention and belief, and that they can form judgements to which these attitudes are responsive, judgements which directly settle what attitude to adopt.<sup>5</sup> I take a domain of *thought* to be normative, in the sense that expressivism is concerned with, if the primary functional role of judgements in that domain is to play this particular and distinctive role in settling a person on the thing to do, feel, think, believe, and so on.<sup>6</sup> A domain of *discourse* is normative if assertions in that domain express judgements that play a functional role of this kind. Of course, this characterization needs to be qualified a little bit, because

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4 Here I follow Michael Ridge’s approach of how to individuate the normative (see Ridge Forthcoming, and also Köhler and Ridge 2013).

5 See Scanlon 1998: 18-22.

6 Among expressivists, a similar understanding for the practical domain can be found, at least implicitly, in Gibbard (see e.g. Gibbard 1992 and especially Gibbard 2003), in Blackburn (see Blackburn 1998a), and in Horgan and Timmons (see Horgan and Timmons 2006 and Horgan and Timmons 2008). The role of normative thoughts in deliberation—or generally for the reactive attitudes—as their characterizing feature has also been highlighted by opponents of expressivism, such as David Enoch (Enoch 2011), John McDowell (McDowell 1988), Thomas Scanlon (Scanlon 1998), and Ralph Wedgwood (Wedgwood 2008). Of course, the distinctive role that normative judgements play in settling people on the responses to adopt is much richer than I can do it justice here. For example, one way in which our normative judgements settle our responses, is by blocking certain paths of deliberation, effectively combatting temptation in this manner.

not *all* judgements in normative domains of thought will play this kind of role. For example, such domains will include *disjunctive* judgements, such as

- (1) Giving to charity helps people or it is not morally required.

or *conditional* judgements, such as

- (2) If an action maximizes satisfaction of one's long-term interests, then one has prudential reason to perform it.

Complex judgements like (1) and (2), however, do not have the relevant functional profile. Rather, it is what we can call *atomic* normative judgements, those normative judgements expressed by sentences that can no longer be broken down into logically less complex sentences, that paradigmatically have the relevant profile. So, I take a domain of *thought* to be normative, if the primary functional role of *atomic* judgements in that domain is to play this particular and distinctive role in settling a person on the thing to do, feel, think, believe, and so on.<sup>7</sup> A domain of *discourse* is normative if assertions of atomic sentences in that domain express judgements that play a functional role of this kind. With this characterization of normative thought and discourse on the table, let me now explain what the two restrictions I introduced above mean.

First, I said that I will be concerned with expressivism only as a view about

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7 Of course, if we individuate the normative by pointing to *atomic* judgements and sentences, one difficult question is how it is determined whether a specific *complex* judgement or sentence is normative. It cannot be the case that a complex judgement is normative if and only if an atomic normative judgement figures in it, because not every complex judgement that has an atomic normative judgement as its part is plausibly regarded itself as normative (think of “ $2+2=4$  or murder is morally wrong”, for example). So, how exactly do we *distinguish* normative from non-normative complex judgements? My answer to this question is that I take it to be a *part* of the project that meta-normative theories engage in to fully answer this question and that difficulties with systematically distinguishing normative from non-normative thinking are problematic for expressivists and their dialectical rivals alike. I will give a rough sketch of how I think this question should be addressed in the context of my response to the normative attitude problem in the second chapter. Let me note, however, that for our purposes here, namely, the purpose of identifying the normative domain, we do not require a complete answer to this question. We already have some intuitive grasp regarding what distinguishes normative from non-normative judgements in general and normative from non-normative complex thoughts in particular. This is an understanding that any theory of normative judgements needs to respect and which we can use as starting points for the purposes of constructing a general philosophical theory of normative judgement. However, I take it that our intuitive grasp with regards to *atomic* normative judgements is much stronger, which is why it is *these* judgements that are assigned a much more prominent role in identifying normative domains in developing a theory of normative judgement and are given a primary theoretical focus in the debate. In fact, I take it to be very plausible that even according to our pre-theoretic understanding of the normative *what is distinctive* about the normative domain is located primarily in *atomic* normative judgements, not in complex normative judgements.

*practical* normative thought and discourse. *Practical* normative thought and discourse are normative thought and discourse concerned with the thing to do or the thing to intend. Paradigmatic examples of such discourse are most parts of *moral* thought and discourse, as well as most parts of *prudential* thought and discourse, but of course other kinds of judgements might fall under this as well, such as generic thoughts about what one has reason, *pro tanto* or *all things considered*, to do. Most importantly, focusing on practical normative thought and discourse means that I will bracket expressivism about *epistemic* normativity (although of course other kinds will be bracketed as well, e.g. aesthetic judgements insofar as they are plausibly construed as normative judgements concerned with how to feel).<sup>8</sup> While I do think that expressivism about all normative thought and discourse is defensible, I will see expressivism as only concerned with practical normative thought and discourse to give the dissertation more focus. While I think such arguments can be made, motivating expressivism about non-practical domains requires additional arguments to the more well-known ones. Going into the details of these arguments would, however, unnecessarily distract from the dissertation's core ideas.

Second, I said that I will be concerned with expressivism as a view primarily about normative judgements and declarative normative sentences. Expressivism is an explanatory theory about the nature of normative language and thought. In general, we can see an explanatory theory of normative *language* as a theory that provides an account of the meaning of normative terms, phrases, and sentences. And, in general, we can understand an explanatory theory of normative *thought* as giving an account of the nature of the mental states that constitute normative thought. However, any normative domain of thought and discourse will include many different kinds of mental states and events, as well as sentences the use of which expresses them. For example such a domain will not only include normative judgements and the sentences that express them, but also, for example, normative *questions* and their

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<sup>8</sup> For expressivism about *epistemic* normativity, the normativity involved in knowledge-attributions or claims about what one ought or has reason to believe, see e.g. Blackburn 1996, Chrisman 2007, Field 2001a, Gibbard 2003, and Ridge 2007b. Some authors have argued that *epistemic* expressivism faces the special worry of being incoherent (see e.g. Cuneo 2007 and Lynch 2009). For replies to these worries, see Carter and Chrisman 2012 and Kappel 2011. For expressivism about *aesthetic* judgements, see Todd 2004.

mental counterparts. And, a *complete* explanatory account of normative language and thought will give an account of *all* kinds of normative sentences and *all* kinds of normative thoughts, that is e.g. declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives, etc. (and the mental counterparts of uses of such sentences). While giving such a full account should be the eventual aim for an expressivist, I will see expressivism and its dialectical rivals, for the sake of simplicity, as *primarily* concerned with normative *judgements* and *declarative* normative sentences.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, when I talk of “normative sentences” and “normative thought” I will mean “declarative normative sentences” and “normative judgements” unless otherwise stated.<sup>10</sup> With these caveats out of the way, let me now turn to the commitments that characterize expressivism.

Expressivism, as I understand it, is characterized by the subscription to the following two-part account.<sup>11</sup> First, expressivism is characterized by the subscription to a distinctive theory about the meaning of (declarative) sentences.<sup>12</sup> According to

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9 As the linguistic equivalents of judgements, declarative sentences are often also called *judgements*, but I will restrict the use of “judgement” to the relevant mental phenomena.

10 Of course, restricting one’s focus primarily to giving an account of normative judgements and declarative normative sentences in giving an account of normative language and thought is not arbitrary. First, as the functional characterization of the normative shows, these phenomena lie at the heart of normative language and thought. Second, there is, arguably, an explanatory asymmetry between declarative sentences and other kinds of sentences and judgements and other kinds of thoughts *in general* (here I follow roughly Robert Brandom’s reasoning for rejecting Wittgenstein’s idea that language (and thought) does not have a “downtown”. For Wittgenstein’s position, see Wittgenstein 1953. For Brandom’s opposing position, see e.g. Brandom 1983, Brandom 1994: 157 and Brandom 2008: 39-42). For example, it seems that at the centre of any account of the nature of questions lies an account of the judgements that are supposed to be answers to these questions. But, it does not seem to be the other way round: to give an account of the nature of a certain kind of judgements we do not first need to have an account of the corresponding questions. The same seems to hold for other kinds of sentences (and their mental counterparts), such as imperatives, for example. Because of this explanatory asymmetry declarative sentences and judgements are marked as explanatory *primary* to other kinds of sentences and thoughts, so that we can treat explanatory accounts of those sentences which do not take declarative form and those mental states which are not judgements as lying downstream from accounts of declarative sentences and judgements.

11 See e.g. Blackburn 1998a: 49/50, Gibbard 1992: 55 and Gibbard 2003: 7, Horgan and Timmons 2006: 257/258, Ridge 2006a: 303 and Schroeder 2008a: 16-19. Note that what I call “expressivism” is not the only view that has been called “expressivism” in the contemporary debate. Robert Brandom and Huw Price, for example, sometimes call their views forms of expressivism as well, although the labels “pragmatism” or “non-representationalism” are sometimes also used (see e.g. Brandom 2000: 7-12, and MacArthur and Price 2007 and Price 2011). While these views are not what I intend to use the label “expressivism” for, it can be noted that they nevertheless share important features with the view I am concerned here. In particular, they endorse a non-representationalist order of explanation (in the sense I will explain in a little bit) for certain philosophically interesting vocabularies (and in fact for *all* vocabularies).

12 How exactly we formulate this commitment depends on whether we want to give priority to the meaning of *sentences* or to the meaning of sub-sentential constituents of sentences. In what follows I

expressivism the meaning of (declarative) sentences *in general* is to be explained in terms of the mental states that assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express. The meaning of words or sub-sentential phrases is then explained in terms of the contribution they make to the mental states conventionally expressed by assertoric uses of sentences in which those words or phrases figure.

One crucial question in this context is what the relation of *expression* amounts to. Until recently, it has been surprisingly unclear to *what* account of the expression relation expressivists are actually committed to. While there are some plausible alternative construals, I take it that this is most naturally understood in a way that makes expressivism part of the *ideationalist* tradition.<sup>13</sup> This tradition goes back at least to John Locke, and has gained some prominence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the work of Paul Grice.<sup>14</sup> According to *ideationalism* the meaning of meaningful linguistic items is explained by those items being related via linguistic conventions with certain mental entities, e.g. by words being related to ideas, and by sentences being related to thoughts or mental states. In this way, ideationalism holds a domain of thought and its distinctive characteristics to be explanatorily primary to the kind of discourse's distinctive characteristics which is that domain of thought's linguistic counterpart.<sup>15</sup>

Within the ideationalist framework, expressivists have a variety of options of how to understand the expression relation. For example, they could, as Allan Gibbard does, accept a Gricean account of the expression relation, according to which,

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will, for expository purposes, present expressivism in terms of the former view, but for the purposes of this dissertation nothing crucial hangs on this. Everything that is said should *mutatis mutandis* work for either version of the view.

13 One interesting alternative suggestion is made by Peter Schulte, who suggests that expressivists can use a *teleosemantic account* to give an account of the expression relation (see Schulte 2010: 178-197; for proponents of teleosemantics see e.g. Millikan 1984 and Millikan 1989 or Papineau 1984; for an overview, see Neander 2012). According to Schulte, a sentence S expresses a mental state M, if and only if utterances of S have the *function* to convey that the speaker is in M, where, roughly some entity x has the function to  $\Phi$ , if and only x exists *because* its predecessors have  $\Phi$ -ed to a sufficient extent (of course, other teleosemantic accounts might be used to spell this out slightly differently depending on the notion of "function" used). A discussion of this alternative is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

14 See Locke 1690 and Grice 1957 and Grice 1969. The most worked-out and sophisticated version of ideationalism is the account by Wayne Davis (see Davis 2003 and Davis 2005).

15 Of course, this order of explanation has been contested. See for example Wilfrid Sellars' "Myth of Jones" (Sellars 1956), which is a thought experiment that is supposed to show that the mental can be explained by taking established linguistic conventions as primary.

**INTENDING TO CONVEY:** A sentence S expresses a state of mind M, if and only if by uttering S the speaker intends her audience to come to believe that she is in M *in virtue of* their recognizing her intention to bring them to believe that she is in M by uttering S.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, there are well-known problems with the Gricean program.<sup>17</sup> A second option, and one that was developed to escape the problems of the Gricean account, would be to adopt the account of the expression relation given by Wayne Davis.<sup>18</sup> According to Davis the expression relation should be understood in terms of *indication*. According to this construal of the expression relation

**INDICATION:** A sentence S expresses a state of mind M, if and only if by uttering S the speaker conventionally indicates the presence of M.

A third option would be to adopt an account on which expression is understood in terms of *accountability*.<sup>19</sup> On this account linguistic conventions are such that uttering a sentence makes one *accountable* to be in the state that is conventionally associated with the utterance of that sentence. According to this construal of the expression relation

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** A sentence S expresses a state of mind M, if and only if the person uttering S is, as a matter of linguistic convention, accountable for being in M.

In what follows, I will not commit myself to any specific account with regards to the nature of this relation, as the specific details will not matter for my discussion. What matters is only that expressivists hold a domain of thought and its distinctive characteristics to be explanatory primary to the kind of discourse's distinctive characteristics which is that domain of thought's linguistic counterpart. In particular, what normative language means and the distinctive ways in which it behaves is supposed to be solely explained in terms of the nature of the mental states that

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16 See Gibbard 1992: 84-86. The account is from Grice 1957 and Grice 1969.

17 See e.g. Davis 2005: 84, Millikan 1984, Platts 1979, and Ziff 1967. For an overview, see Lycan 2008: 86-96 and Miller 1998: 224-241. A defense of the Gricean account in the face of many of the original worries has been developed by Stephen Schiffer (see Schiffer 1972).

18 See Davis 2003 and Davis 2005.

19 Accounts along these lines have been suggested by Simon Blackburn, Michael Ridge, and Mark Schroeder. See Blackburn 1984a: 124-126, Ridge Forthcoming: chapter 4, and Schroeder 2008a: 25-32 and Schroeder 2008b: 108/109.

constitute normative thinking, as what descriptive language means and the distinctive ways in which it behaves is supposed to be solely explained in terms of the nature of the mental states that constitute descriptive thinking. With this said, let us now turn to expressivism's second commitment.

The second distinctive thesis of expressivism is that the type of mental state in terms of which the meaning of normative sentences is to be explained differs in theoretically interesting, important, and fundamental ways from the type of mental state in terms of which the meaning of descriptive sentences is to be explained: normative judgements and descriptive judgements differ in very deep and fundamental respects. To explain what this claim amounts to in detail, it will be worthwhile to take a little detour through the assumption about declarative sentences and the states of mind they express commonly made in contemporary philosophy to which expressivism's second thesis stands in opposition.

The assumption is what can be called "representationalism". According to representationalism, the meaning of *all* declarative sentences is to be explained in terms of those sentences standing in some theoretically robust representation relation to things in the world. More importantly for our context, representationalism's assumption about the mind is that the nature of all judgements—the states of mind expressed by meaningful declarative sentences—is to be explained in terms of those states consisting in *representational states*, states the primary functional role of which is to represent, in some theoretically robust and significant sense, the world as being a certain way.<sup>20</sup> And, it is not only the case that all judgements consist in such

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<sup>20</sup> Frank Jackson is an outspoken proponent of this position (Jackson 2008: 78). Of course, it is a significant and quite tricky question how the notion of a sentence or mental state being "representational in a theoretically significant sense" is to be spelt out. In meta-normative theory, a common way to do this for mental states is by using the notion of a "constitutive aim" or "direction of fit" (for this notion, see e.g. Lillehammer 2002: 10 and Smith 1994a: 111/112; for two interesting proposals for how cash out the notion of robust representation in this vein, see Ridge 2006b and Sinclair 2006). According to this characterization, representational states have "mind-to-world fit", where states with *mind-to-world fit* "aim" at fitting the world: if the world is not in accordance with their content, these states can be expected to cease to exist. Of course, the notion of a direction of fit is itself highly metaphorical. There are different ways to cash out this metaphor, but the specifics will not interest us here (for different ways of doing so, see e.g. Smith 1994a: 111-116 (who cashes the notion out in dispositional terms) and Schulte 2010: 160-168 (who cashes the notion out in terms of teleofunctionalism). It should be noted that there are some philosophers, who can be called "global non-representationalists", who have argued that no sense can be made of a "theoretically significant" notion of "representation", at least not in the sense required by representationalism (this has been argued e.g. by Robert Brandom (Brandom 1994 or



representational states: rather all judgements consist in representational states such that the judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true. This caveat is important because representational states could be part of complex mental states that are not *themselves* representational states. According to representationalism, those complex mental states would *not* be *judgements*. Complex mental states are only judgements if they consist in representational states that determine the mental states' truth-conditions.

Plugged into ideationalism, representationalism yields the thesis that the states of mind expressed by declarative sentences, the states that constitute judgements in the relevant domain, are representational states such that the use of a sentence is true if and only if the representational state expressed by use of that sentence is true. Judgements consist in representational states such that a judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true. Note that according to representationalism, the distinctive nature of domains of discourse is to be explained in terms of the particular things they function to represent. For any domain of thought and discourse, representationalism gives questions about the facts they represent explanatory primacy in accounting for the nature of that domain of thought and discourse. Call this the “representationalist order of explanation.”

According to expressivists representationalism is correct with regards to *descriptive* language and thought: descriptive sentences express and descriptive judgements are primarily representational states. More precisely, according to expressivists, it is true that uses of descriptive sentences are true if and only if the representational state their use expresses is true, and that descriptive judgements are true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true. But, expressivists *deny* that representationalism is correct with regards to *normative* language and thought: the mental states expressed by normative sentences and which constitute normative judgements are *not* primarily representational states. That is, it is *not* true

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Brandom 2000), Joshua Gert (Gert 2012: 11-18), Huw Price (Price 2004, Price 2010 and Price 2013), Richard Rorty (Rorty 1995) and (most famously) Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1953). Note that these authors do not necessarily think that “representation” makes no sense. Rather they think that the notion cannot do the theoretical work many philosophers assign to it. While I have some sympathies for this approach I will, in this dissertation, follow expressivists in assuming that representationalism is not false *in general* but only applied to certain domains of thought and discourse.

that uses of normative sentences are true if and only if the representational state their use expresses is true, or that normative judgements are true if and only if the representational state they consist in is true. So, expressivists are *bifurcationists*: they think that representationalism is true for some domains, but not all.

This means, of course, that according to expressivists normative judgements are *non-representational* states. But, expressivists also have something more substantive to say about the nature of those non-representational states which constitute normative judgements. According to expressivists, normative judgements are importantly constituted by states that fall into the broad category we can call “conative attitudes”. *Conative attitudes* are mental states with the following unifying feature: they are non-representational states the functional role of which is such that they can potentially play a certain kind of motivating role in the production of action, namely, a motivating role that can sensibly figure in the intentional explanation of actions.<sup>21</sup> The paradigm examples for states that fall into this category are attitudes of approval and disapproval, desires, intentions, or plans. According to expressivists, normative judgements at least partially consist in attitudes that fall into this category. Note that this claim leaves room for what can be called *traditional expressivism*, according to which normative judgements consist *only* in conative attitudes and for what can be called *hybrid expressivism* according to which normative judgements consist in *both* representational states *and* conative attitudes, although the judgements are not true if and only if the representational state they consist in is true.<sup>22</sup> Since what I will say in the remainder of the dissertation is supposed to be

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21 It is, of course, an important question how this functional role that all these attitudes have in common is to be cashed out. We might want to do this, again, using the “direction of fit” metaphor. According to this metaphor, conative attitudes are those states with “world-to-mind” direction of fit, where mental states with *world-to-mind fit* “aim” to fit the world with themselves: if the world is not in accordance with their content, these mental states can be expected to motivate the person (at least *pro tanto*, meaning that the motivation can be overridden) in them, to bring the world in accordance with their content.

22 Most of the well-known defendants of expressivism are traditional expressivists: for example, Blackburn, Gibbard, Horgan and Timmons and Schroeder all defend some version of traditional expressivism. Hybrid expressivism is a more recent development and has, consequently, not yet found many adherents. The prime defender of a hybrid view is Michael Ridge (see especially his Ridge 2006a, Ridge 2007a, and Ridge Forthcoming, as well as his Ridge 2007b and Ridge 2009a). Hybrid forms of expressivism have also been suggested by Mark Schroeder (Schroeder 2013a) and Teemu Toppinen (Toppinen 2013). For an introduction into hybrid theories in meta-normative theory, see Köhler and Ridge Forthcoming and Schroeder 2009.

compatible with both pure and hybrid expressivism, I will not commit myself either way.

We can now summarize as follows the two distinctive claims to which expressivists subscribe. First, expressivists subscribe to a particular account in the theory of meaning, namely, a

***PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING:*** The meaning of declarative sentences is to be explained in terms of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

Second, expressivists subscribe to a particular claim about normative judgements, which can be further distinguished into two parts, namely,

***NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements do *not* consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

***CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements (at least partially) consist in conative attitudes.

With this characterization in place, let us now turn to the main motivations for accepting some form of expressivism.

## 2. WHY EXPRESSIVISM?

Why believe in expressivism? I take it that the arguments in favour of expressivism are well-known, and I do not think that there is much value in my extensively mulling over well-trodden territory here. So, I will try to keep my presentation as short as possible, trying to emphasize the broader picture of what motivates expressivism, rather than going too much into the details. Before I turn to the motivations for expressivism, however, I will first say a little bit about what views I will see as expressivism's dialectical rivals for the purposes of this dissertation.

There are three possible reasons for rejecting expressivism. First, it could be that you only disagree with expressivism's first thesis, its commitment in the theory

of meaning. Second, it could be that you only disagree with expressivism's second thesis, its commitment about the nature of normative thought. Third, it could be that you disagree with both theses. In what follows, I take the primary dialectic relevant for the purposes of this dissertation to be the one concerned with the nature of normative thought. Of course, it is not the case that expressivism's first thesis, which I have classified as embedding expressivism within the ideationalist tradition, is uncontroversial: there is significant debate about whether it is the most plausible view in the philosophy of language. And, of course, there are some meta-normative theories that explicitly reject expressivism because of its acceptance of ideationalism.<sup>23</sup> I see these disputes, however, as primarily being disputes in the philosophy of language *in general*, namely, disputes about what most plausibly explains the meaning of linguistic entities and whether the linguistic has explanatory primacy over the mental or *vice versa* and not disputes particularly concerned with what is most interesting about expressivism as a *meta-normative* view. In fact, I think that insofar as positions have an axe to grind with expressivism's *meta-normative* commitments, that we mostly can—without much theoretical loss—rephrase this disagreement in terms of a disagreement about the nature of normative thought. Consequently, I will, for the purposes of this dissertation, treat the debate about the nature of normative thought as the centre of the meta-normative dialectic that is the home of expressivism, and consider only those rivals that deny its second thesis. This has the disadvantage of bracketing the details of certain interesting meta-normative views, but has the advantage of making the discussion more tractable.

With this restriction in place, what are the main motivations for expressivism as a view about the nature of normative judgements? Since expressivism's second thesis has two parts, points in favour of expressivism derive from the *non-representational* and *conative* character of normative judgements. That is, the phenomena meta-normative theories are interested in exemplify certain distinctive characteristics that are well captured by views that subscribe to *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* and to the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*, and which cause trouble for views which deny these two theses. Before I explain what this means,

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew Chrisman is the most outspoken critic of expressivism on this front. See e.g. Chrisman 2010, Chrisman 2011 and Chrisman 2012.

however, let me make a quick note about what I take to be an appropriate methodological assumption regarding how to decide between different meta-normative views.

I take it that one of the prime lessons for philosophy to take from W. V. O. Quine's work is that we should *not* expect there to be knock-down arguments for or decisive proof of philosophical theories:<sup>24</sup> all philosophical theories need to be assessed *holistically*, in the light of how well they do *on balance* in the light of a variety of desiderata, such as how well they capture the relevant phenomena, what additional assumptions they require and how plausible those assumptions are, how well those theories cohere with what else we believe, etc. I take it that this fact about philosophical theories explains why reflective equilibrium is the methodology of choice not only in normative ethics or political philosophy, but in philosophy *in general*.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, we should assess *meta-normative* theories in the light of how well they do on balance and compared to their dialectical rivals in terms of the collection of, borrowing a phrase by David Enoch, "plausibility points."<sup>26</sup> When we consider the main motivations for expressivism, what we should, therefore, look for are the respects in which expressivism gains plausibility points over its dialectical rivals. What follows should be read in this vein.

So, in what respect does normative judgement have a non-representational or conative character? Let us start with the

***CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements (at least partially) consist in conative attitudes.

The classic argument in support of the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* is that this thesis can easily and straightforwardly account for the role of normative judgement in the production of action. It seems quite plausible that at least all things considered atomic normative judgements are governed by some form of

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<sup>24</sup> See Quine 1951.

<sup>25</sup> Reflective equilibrium gained prominence in normative ethics and political philosophy through the work of John Rawls and Norman Daniels (see Daniels 1979 and Rawls 1999: 18/19). However, reflective equilibrium is very plausibly also the most widely used methodology in philosophy *in general*. For reflective equilibrium as a methodology for philosophy in general, see e.g. DePaul 1998, Goodman 1955, Kelly and McGrath 2010, or Lewis 1983: x-xi.

<sup>26</sup> Enoch 2011: 14.

**MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM:** Someone who makes a normative judgement is, thereby, in certain relevant conditions C, motivated to act accordingly, on pain of irrationality.<sup>27</sup>

For example, we expect someone who judges that there is all things considered reason to perform action  $\Phi$  in conditions C to actually be motivated to  $\Phi$  if she believes to find herself in C, on pain of irrationality. If you say that you have all things considered reason to give thirty percent of your income to charity, but are not motivated to give thirty percent of your income to charity, we will judge you to be irrational (or insincere).

Why does *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM* support the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*? Because following a broadly Humean theory of motivation, which is often taken to be our most plausible theory of action, first the production of any action requires a relevant representational state *and* a suitably related conative attitude, and second representational states and conative attitudes are modally distinct.<sup>28</sup> If normative judgements can motivate to act without the addition of any further conative attitudes, this seems to imply that normative judgements have to be constituted (at least partially) by conative attitudes. At the very least, this seems to be the easiest and most straightforward way to explain the motivational power of normative judgements.<sup>29</sup>

An additional line of support for the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* derives from the fact that normative judgements seem *emotionally charged*.<sup>30</sup> The

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27 Of course, it is neither uncontroversial what form of *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM* is the most plausible, nor whether *any* form of *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM* is plausible. This dissertation is not the place to get into this debate, so here I am just going to assume that a theory's ability to account for *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM* counts in favour of that theory. For different versions of *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM*, see e.g. Bedke 2009, Blackburn 1998a, Dreier 1990, Gibbard 2003, Korsgaard 1996, Lenman 1999, and Smith 1994a. For critics of *MOTIVATIONAL JUDGEMENT INTERNALISM*, see e.g. Brink 1986 and Brink 1989, Copp 2001, Shafer-Landau 2003 and Svavarsdóttir 1999 and Svavarsdóttir 2006.

28 The Humean theory of motivation has gained prominence in the philosophy of action through the work of Davidson, although he himself did not use that label for the theory (see Davidson 1963). Recently the Humean theory of motivation has been defended by Michael Smith (Smith 1987 and Smith 1994a), and Neil Sinhababu (Sinhababu 2009).

29 Other explanations are, of course, possible (see e.g. Nagel 1979 and Smith 1994a). In most cases these explanations need to make more robust assumptions about the nature of rationality as has been aptly diagnosed by Jay Wallace (Wallace 1990). I take it that having to make these assumptions can itself be seen as a loss of plausibility points as a more slim theory of rationality scores points on parsimony (see Sinhababu 2009).

30 I take it that at least the fact that moral judgements are emotionally charged is stably confirmed by

clearest illustrations are probably moral judgements: for example, if others act in ways which we judge to be morally *wrong* this, *ceteris paribus*, provokes anger or disgust within us, and if we ourselves act in such ways this, *ceteris paribus*, provokes us to feel guilt or shame. But we also feel, for example, frustrated or angry when someone, including ourselves, fails to do what there was most reason to do, independently of whether we feel that this has something to do with morality. That normative judgement is emotionally charged supports the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*, because this is the most straightforward way to explain this fact. After all, if there *are* paradigm examples of mental states that are emotionally charged in the relevant way, those mental states are conative attitudes. Disapproval and approval, for example, often go hand in hand with emotions, such as being angry or upset when the disapproved thing occurs, and plans or intentions, to take another example, often have guilt as an emotional uptake if we fail to follow through with them.

These considerations give some plausibility to views that subscribe to the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* and, consequently, score expressivism plausibility points. What about

***NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS***: The mental states which constitute normative judgements do *not* consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

though? Traditionally it was held that *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* follows from the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*. However, recent developments have shown that those two theses can come apart. This is due to the possibility of *hybrid* views according to which normative judgements consist in a *complex* mental state constituted by conative attitudes and representational states, but where the judgement itself remains a representational state.<sup>31</sup> Because of the possibility of such views, we can only fully see what considerations support expressivism by considering further arguments that earn those views plausibility points which subscribe to non-representationalism.

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moral psychology. See, for example, Greene et al. 2001, Greene and Haidt 2002, Haidt 2001 and Prinz 2006 and Prinz 2007.

31 For a view of this form, see Tresan 2006.

The main argument in favour of the non-representational character of normative judgements derives from problems faced by views that subscribe to

**REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** The mental states which constitute normative judgements consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

Let us call such views forms of “meta-normative representationalism”.<sup>32</sup> The most forceful considerations for non-representationalism about normative judgement take the form of a dilemma, which can be set up as follows.<sup>33</sup> If you subscribe to meta-normative representationalism, you accept the representationalist order of explanation with regards to normative judgements. That is, if you subscribe to meta-normative representationalism, you commit yourself to the claim that the distinctive nature of the normative domain is to be explained in terms of the particular things that judgements in that domain function to represent. With regards to their account of the nature of the normative facts, meta-normative representationalists can either accept or deny

**REDUCTIONISM ABOUT NORMATIVE FACTS:** The facts represented by normative judgements are fully describable in non-normative descriptive terms.<sup>34</sup>

Along these lines, we can distinguish two positions within the camp of meta-normative representationalism. First, *non-reductionist meta-normative representationalism* (which I will call “non-reductionism” for short) which is any form of meta-normative representationalism rejecting *REDUCTIONISM ABOUT NORMATIVE FACTS*. According to non-reductionism, accounting for the representational content of normative judgements

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32 Views that endorse *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* are often called forms of “meta-normative cognitivism”, but I prefer the label “meta-normative representationalism”, because it does not suggest that beliefs have to be representational states. As I will explain in the third chapter, quasi-realist expressivists have given good arguments that we should not accept this assumption, at least not without further argument.

33 The dilemma was originally put forward by Ayer (Ayer 1936), and remains expressivists’ argument of choice, although the terms in which Ayer posed it are no longer ones in which contemporary expressivists would pose it.

34 The relevant distinction here is sometimes taken to be the distinction between “natural” and “non-natural” facts. However, it is notoriously difficult to say what this distinction amounts to (See Papineau 2009 or Ridge 2008) and most of the relevant forceful arguments seem to be concerned with whether normative facts are *reducible* to facts fully describable in non-normative descriptive terms. For these reasons I view the central issue to be between reductionists and non-reductionists.



requires introducing an additional type of fact into our ontology over and above those that are already the objects of non-normative descriptive thinking. Following this approach, representationalists will hold that the facts represented by normative judgements consist (characteristically) in a distinctive, *sui generis* type of fact, which cannot be (completely) reduced to those types that are the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements. Second, meta-normative representationalists could endorse *reductionist meta-normative representationalism* (which I will call “reductionism” for short) which is any form of meta-normative representationalism that accepts *REDUCTIONISM ABOUT NORMATIVE FACTS*. According to reductionism, accounting for the representational content of normative judgements does not require introducing an additional type of fact into our ontology over and above those that are already the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements. Instead, the facts represented by normative judgements can be completely accounted for in terms of facts that are the objects of non-moral descriptive thinking.

The dilemma directed against representationalism is now that each of these views faces quite significant problems, and that non-representationalism avoids all of these problems, in this way gaining expressivism plausibility points for endorsing non-representationalism. On the first horn of the dilemma, if meta-normative representationalists endorse non-reductionism it turns out that there are important features of normative facts which non-reductionism cannot explain, but must merely presuppose. This makes those facts and the relationship between them and our normative judgements very mysterious in a way that representationalism threatens to entail an error theory. On the second horn of the dilemma, if meta-normative representationalists endorse reductionism it turns out that normative judgements possess certain characterizing features which judgements about other kinds of facts do not possess. This means that representationalism threatens to eliminate what is distinctive about normative judgements. Let me present each horn in further detail.

The first horn of the dilemma is directed against non-reductionism.<sup>35</sup> Non-

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35 The locus classicus for non-reductionism is G.E. Moore’s *Principia Ethica* (Moore 1903). After being out of favour for some time non-reductionism has reemerged quite strongly in recent years. For *moral* judgements non-reductionism has been defended by Thomas Nagel (Nagel 1989), Russ Shafer-Landau (Shafer-Landau 2003), and Nicholas Sturgeon (Sturgeon 1988). Most of the newer non-reductionists have defended non-reductionism about normativity *in general* (see e.g. Dancy

reductionism is often motivated by the impression that we can vindicate the central presuppositions underlying our ordinary normative practice *only if* we treat normative judgements as representing non-reductive *normative* facts. However, non-reductionism faces the problem that on such an account features of normative facts and the relationship between our judgements and these facts would remain unexplained in a way that makes them mysterious. Rather than vindicating our ordinary practice, non-reductionism, thereby, threatens to entail that our normative judgements are fundamentally in error because they represent facts which do not exist. There are two general kinds of worries which non-reductionism faces which support this conclusion.

First, there are *epistemological worries*. These can be seen as worries about the *relationship* between our normative judgements and the facts they are supposed to be judgements about. On any view which holds that our normative judgements are judgements representing some domain of fact, we must have some sort of epistemic access to those facts supposed to be the normative facts: our normative judgements must stand in some kind of relationship to normative facts which makes it plausible to assume, e.g. that the facts they are about really do exist, that we hold our judgements *because* they exist, that our judgements reliably track these facts, etc. At the very least, it must be plausible that there *could be* such an account.<sup>36</sup>

The problem for non-reductionists, however, is that it is not clear what kind of

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2006, Enoch 2007 and Enoch 2011, Oddie 2005, Parfit 2006, and Parfit 2011, Scanlon 2003, (arguably) Smith 1994a and Wedgwood 2008; interestingly, of these authors only Sturgeon defends a version of non-reductionism on which the irreducible normative facts are nevertheless natural facts, which indicates that philosophers think that non-reductionism and non-naturalism go hand in hand). A full discussion of the most recent developments in the non-reductionist tradition would go well beyond the purposes of this chapter. The worries these positions face are still, however, roughly the same that traditional non-reductionist theories face.

<sup>36</sup> This challenge is made even more pressing through an argument developed by Sharon Street (Street 2006): it seems plausible that our normative judgements *can* be completely explained in terms of a causal story. After all, human beings are natural creatures, shaped by natural and causal forces. For everything we do and that includes our normative judgements, there will probably be a causal story—a story completely describable in naturalistic terms—which fully explains the occurrence of the respective event (Street formulates her challenge in terms of our normative judgements being shaped by evolution, but it seems that any formulation in terms of the causal factors that explain our judgements will do, for example, a story proceeding solely in terms cultural and other environmental influences. See Enoch 2010: 426 and Blackburn (unpublished) for similar points). However, it is questionable whether the kinds of causal factors that determine our normative judgements, such as evolution or our cultural and environmental circumstances, would bring about a correlation between our normative judgements and the normative facts. At least, it seems that this would be a miraculous coincidence, to say the least.

relationship they could bring forward to do the required explanatory work.<sup>37</sup> It seems that all non-reductionists can do is postulate the existence of an extra source of epistemic access, over and above those we have to access the non-normative descriptive facts, maybe a faculty of “intuition”, about which not much illuminating can be said. But, this does not remove the mystery about the relationship between our normative judgements and the normative facts at all. Rather, it just *highlights* the fact that the non-reductionist has no plausible answer.<sup>38</sup> However, without such an answer the nature of the relationship between normative facts and our normative judgements becomes mysterious.<sup>39</sup>

The second kind of worries that non-reductionism faces are *metaphysical worries*. These can be seen as worries about certain features possessed by the facts our normative judgements would be about if non-reductionism were true. Any form of *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* is committed to the representationalist order of explanation: explaining the distinctive features of normative judgements—what distinguishes them from other kinds of representational states—in terms of the distinctive features of the facts represented. It seems, however, that normative facts

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37 This is highlighted by the fact that the most plausible way to explain a correlation between our normative judgements and the normative facts, namely, in terms of a *causal relationship* does not seem to fit well with non-reductionism, since it seems that non-reducible normative facts do not even figure in the best explanations of our normative judgements (Harman 1977: 3-10; of course this issue is subject to debate (see e.g. Sturgeon 1988)). However, it is also highly mysterious what *other* way there could be than a causal relationship that explains the existence of the relevant correlation.

38 See e.g. Copp 2005 and Mackie 1977: 39.

39 One reply to such epistemological worries often given by non-reductionists are “companions in guilt” arguments (see e.g. Parfit 2011 and Shafer-Landau 2003; a notable exception here is David Enoch (Enoch 2010)). First, they note that the same kinds of epistemological worries plague other domains of judgement as well, e.g. mathematics, modality, or philosophy. However, the argument continues, we would surely not hold *these* domains to be illegitimate just because of epistemological worries. So, one should also not hold that these worries threaten the legitimacy of the normative domain. Hence, epistemological worries pose no real problem for non-reductionism. Although these arguments are common, however, I do not think that this is a good reply for a non-reductionist to take. The reply presupposes that the best theory of the respective domains of judgement implies an interpretation of those domains on which they do face similar epistemological worries as non-reductionism faces *and* that the legitimacy of those domains is, thereby, not threatened. However, just one quick look at the relevant philosophical debates reveals that this thesis is far from uncontroversial and not something one can presuppose in meta-normative argument. Just like in meta-normative theory, non-reductionism is not the only possible theory in the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of modality and the philosophy of philosophy. Instead in these areas we also find reductionists, expressivists, error-theorists and fictionalists. So, by using a companions-in-guilt argument the non-reductionists are far from being able to point to something uncontroversial to justify the legitimacy of something controversial. Rather, they just shift the problem to another domain, where they still find similar challenges.

would possess certain peculiar features. One example here is the common thought that it is a conceptual truth that the normative facts supervene on the non-normative descriptive facts.<sup>40</sup> Such features, however, call for an explanation of how normative facts could possess them.

The problem that arises out of such features for non-reductionism is that it seems non-reductionists cannot give an explanation for these features of normative facts. At most they must presuppose that they have them. For example, according to non-reductionists the normative facts and non-normative descriptive facts are *metaphysically independent* of each other. However, if the normative facts and the non-normative descriptive facts are distinct, it seems mysterious why the normative facts nevertheless supervene on those facts and why this is a conceptual truth. Consequently, it seems that non-reductionists must presuppose that, as a matter of conceptual truth, a supervenience relation holds between normative and non-normative descriptive facts without being able to explain this. This, however, would make the normative facts look highly mysterious or, to use J.L. Mackie's famous phrase, *queer*. Similar worries arise for the other features of normative judgements that seem to call for an explanation.

Assume, for the purposes of this dissertation, that these kinds of challenges cannot be met.<sup>41</sup> This poses a serious threat for non-reductionism. First, these worries threaten to undermine non-reductionism's compatibility with a broadly naturalistic, scientific world-view, given that it seems that the facts postulated by non-reductionism

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40 The challenge based on explaining supervenience originates in Blackburn 1971 and is also found in Mackie 1977: 40/41. Blackburn refined his argument in Blackburn 1984b. For an overview over the debate regarding supervenience, see e.g. Ridge 2008 and Schmitt 2013. Another example for a problematic feature derives from the thought that normative facts would have to be *intrinsically motivating*, or that they would provide *categorical* reasons for action, reasons *not* based on people's desires, interests, and the like (see Mackie 1977: 40-42. For a later versions of this argument, see e.g. Gauthier 1986 and Joyce 2001: 1-174). A third example might be the feature of irreducible normative facts of seemingly playing no explanatory role—not even for our normative judgements—and of not being embedded in the causal framework at all. This challenge was originally raised by Gilbert Harman (see Harman 1977. See also Leiter 2001 for a more recent development of this challenge).

41 I am only assuming this without argument for the purposes of this dissertation. Obviously, non-reductionists have tried to meet these challenges (for a reply to the epistemological worry, see e.g. Shafer-Landau 2003: 84-98 and Enoch 2010: 427-438. For a reply to the problem with supervenience, see e.g. Shafer-Landau 2003: 247-302 and Wedgwood 2008:134-152; for problems with Shafer-Landau's approach see Ridge 2007c, for problems with Wedgwood's account see Schmitt and Schroeder 2011).

would not easily fit into the world as described by science. Given that the naturalistic world-view is one we have good reasons to hold, non-reductionism would then lead to the conclusion that normative facts do not exist, and in this way turn into an error-theory. Second, even independently of worries about the compatibility with naturalism, the relationship between normative facts and our normative judgements and the nature of these facts themselves would *by themselves* be deeply puzzling in a way that seems to provide good reasons to hold that such facts do not exist. In either case, we are left with an error theory, according to which normative judgements *are* judgements about non-reducible normative facts, but none of these judgements are true, because the facts they are about do not exist. This, however, is a serious cost for non-reductionism as, other things being equal, a meta-normative theory that does not need to attribute deep, systematic, and wide-spread error as underlying our ordinary normative practice, error which threatens the very legitimacy of this practice seems preferable to one that has to attribute such error.<sup>42</sup> Following this, on the first horn of the dilemma directed against *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*, the view would lose a significant portion of plausibility points, if combined with the denial of *REDUCTIONISM ABOUT NORMATIVE FACTS*.

The second horn of the dilemma is then directed against reductionism. Reductionism, recall, is any view accepting

***REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS***: The mental states which constitute normative judgements consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

***REDUCTIONISM ABOUT NORMATIVE FACTS***: The facts represented by normative judgements are fully describable in non-normative descriptive terms.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For a similar point, see e.g. Hare 1982: 82 and Blackburn 1985: 149-152.

<sup>43</sup> Because the meta-normative debate mostly focused on *moral* judgements in the past, many of the classical reductionists have only defended reductionism for moral judgements. For reductionism about moral judgements, see e.g. Brink 1989, Boyd 1988, Jackson 1998, Jackson and Pettit 1995, Lewis 1989 or Smith 1994a. Many of these approaches, however, are easily adaptable to the case of normative judgements in general. For authors who (arguably) defend some form of reductionism about all normative judgements, see e.g. Brandt 1977, Finlay 2009, Gauthier 1986,

Reductionism certainly fares better regarding the problems non-reductionism faces. However, it faces a distinctive kind of objection itself:<sup>44</sup> roughly, it faces the worry that normative judgements have certain characterizing features which judgements about non-normative descriptive facts do not, and cannot, have and that, consequently, no judgement about non-normative descriptive facts could be recognizable as a normative judgement.

The kinds of worries I have in mind have their origin in an argument known as the “Open Question Argument” (*OQA* for short) introduced by G.E. Moore in *Principia Ethica*.<sup>45</sup> The *OQA* is an argumentative strategy supposed to establish that a certain kind of concept *F* can *in principle* not be analysed in terms of another kind of concept *G*. This is done by pointing out that an analysis of *F* in terms of *G* is successful, only if for some sub-set *G\** of the set of concepts belonging to *G*, competent speakers regard the question “*x* is *G\**, but is *x* also *F*?” to be conceptually closed (they have to think that for some sub-set *G\** one could not coherently imagine some *x* which is *G\**, but not *F*). The next step then consists in strengthening the intuition that for any sub-set *G\**, competent speakers will regard this question to be conceptually open. Absent either any further explanation why these intuitions are mistaken or another way of justifying this divergence, analyses of *F* in terms of *G*, therefore, fail.<sup>46</sup>

Moore used the *OQA* to argue that *moral* concepts could not be analysed in terms of *naturalistic* concepts, but it seems that the argument would equally well apply to normative concepts and non-normative descriptive ones. Directed against reductionism the argument using the *OQA* would be the following: take any

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Railton 1986 and Railton 1990, Schroeder 2007, and Stemmer 2008.

44 It is common for this objection to be pressed both by expressivists and by non-reductionists. It is e.g. pressed in one form or another by Ayer (Ayer 1936:104-106), Blackburn (Blackburn 1998a: 83-87 and 104-121), Gibbard (Gibbard 1992: 9-22 and Gibbard 2003: 11-17), Hare (Hare 1952: 79-93 and 148/149), Horgan and Timmons (Horgan and Timmons 1992), G.E. Moore (Moore 1903) and Wedgwood (Wedgwood 2008).

45 See Moore 1903: 10-17.

46 Note that the *OQA* as I present it here is an argument from inference to the best explanation (that this is the best way to read the argument is argued by Stephen Ball (Ball 1988) in response to an objection to the original formulation of the *OQA* by William Frankena (Frankena 1939)). According to this reading of the *OQA*, the *best* explanation for the openness of the relevant questions is that there is a distinctive difference between normative and non-normative descriptive judgements e.g. that the former are not about facts which are such that they can be completely described in non-normative terms.

normative concept N and any non-normative descriptive concept D. It seems that competent speakers would hold the question “x is D, but is x also N?” to be conceptually open. For example, it seems plausible that, for any non-normative descriptive concept D, competent speakers will hold the question to be conceptually open whether an action that has the property picked out by D is what we have, all things considered, reason to do. Consequently, absent further explanation why these intuitions are mistaken or another way of justifying this divergence, analyses of normative concepts in terms of non-normative descriptive concepts fail. If this is correct, then normative judgements have certain specific characterizing features which judgements about non-normative descriptive facts do not—and cannot—have, which means that no judgement about non-normative descriptive facts could be recognizable as a normative judgement. This would have the obvious consequence that reductionism loses a significant portion of plausibility points as a view about normative judgement.

However, while this original version of the OQA long caused significant trouble for reductionists, some of its proponents have since developed ways to discharge the challenge posed by this version of the OQA. The relevant responses have been developed with *moral* judgements in view, but the responses easily generalize to the case of normative judgements. The problem with the above version of the OQA is that the argument rests on at least two problematic presuppositions that reductionists can reject to provide plausible explanations of why the relevant intuitions are mistaken, and so do not defeat reductionism. The first problematic assumption is that two concepts can only refer to one and the same property if the concepts have the same content, where the content of a concept in this sense is accessible *a priori* by competent speakers at least on reflection. The second presupposition is that if two concepts have the same content in a sense accessible *a priori* by competent speakers on reflection, then this is obvious or at least easily determinable. Both of these assumptions, however, can be challenged. The details of how this can be done will become relevant in the second chapter and I will elaborate on them there. For the purposes of this chapter, it suffices to say that by challenging these two assumptions reductionists have ways to escape the worry that their account misses something

crucial about normative judgements, at least in the form that this worry is raised by the OQA.

However, the worry still lingers, because there are more sophisticated versions of, or predecessors to, the OQA that still apply even to these more sophisticated versions of reductionism. What I have in mind, is the argument first proposed by R.M. Hare and later developed in a more sophisticated form by Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons.<sup>47</sup> Hare and Horgan and Timmons again only develop their argument for the case of *moral* judgements, but the argument can be modified to apply to the case of normative judgements in general. This argument goes as follows.

First, note that reductionists must provide an account of how it is determined to which properties, also describable in non-normative descriptive terms, normative concepts refer. Specifically, any such an account must specify a relation R in which our normative concepts stand to those properties which fixes the reference of those concepts. This account, however, will have significant consequences on a reductionist view. More specifically, for any account a reductionist gives of the relation relevant for the reference fixing of normative concepts, that account will, on the reductionist view, determine when two individuals have the same concepts or different concepts, and so whether their *judgements* will be in agreement or disagreement or at cross purposes in a given situation.<sup>48</sup> So, any such reductionist view will make certain

47 See Hare 1952: 148/149, Horgan and Timmons 1991, Horgan and Timmons 1992, Horgan and Timmons 2000, and Horgan and Timmons 2009a.

48 I will ignore, for the sake of simplicity, the possibility of certain forms of hybrid versions of reductionism that need not subscribe to this thesis about agreement and disagreement. Hybrid reductionist theories can come either in the form of *linguistic hybrid reductionism* according to which normative *language* expresses both representational states and conative attitudes, where normative sentences are true if and only if the representational state they express is true, although normative *judgements* consist only in representational states. Or they can come in the form of *mentalist hybrid reductionism* according to which normative judgements consist in conative attitudes and representational states where a normative judgement is true, if and only if the representational state it consists in is true. It should be true for forms of linguistic hybrid reductionism that normative *judgements* can only be in disagreement if they refer to the same properties (and so are unable to explain certain cases of disagreement that expressivists can explain (see my Köhler 2012 for a more detailed argument in this direction). Mentalistic hybrid reductionists, however, can say that normative judgements can *also* be in disagreement if they consist in disagreeing conative attitudes. Even forms of mentalistic hybrid representationalism have problems to fully account for the phenomenon of normative disagreement, though: on such views our attributions of truth and falsity and of whether we agree or disagree with someone will come apart in problematic ways. For example, there will be cases in which we can sincerely say that what someone judges is true, but that we disagree with the person's judgement. Discussion of these finer details of the debate, however, would be beyond the scope of this chapter. For detailed arguments, see Ridge Forthcoming: chapter 4 and Ehrhardt Unpublished: chapter 7.



predictions about what cases should and what cases should not count as cases of disagreement in normative judgement, and should, consequently, be testable against the linguistic intuitions of speakers competent with the concepts in question. Horgan and Timmons found a case to test this by modifying Hilary Putnam's famous twin-earth thought experiment.<sup>49</sup>

The idea is that *if* our normative concepts indeed refer to some set of properties  $\Delta$  fully describable in non-normative terms because they stand to  $\Delta$  in some relation  $R$ , then it should be the case that competent and clear-headed speakers have, for the relevant relation  $R$ , the following intuitions: take Raphael who lives on normative twin-earth, a distant planet in another galaxy, who has a set of concepts  $N$  that possess those "formal" properties and "surface appearances" we take to be characteristic of our normative concepts and which would make us inclined *on first sight* to assume that with  $N$  Raphael possesses the same normative concepts as we do. That is, he has a set of concepts that, like normative concepts, are emotionally charged, play the same motivational role, and which also settle Raphael on the thing to do or intend in the relevant distinct way. Assume next that *our* normative concepts stand in relation  $R$  to a set of properties  $\Delta_1$  fully describable in non-normative terms and that this settles to what properties they refer (that is properties in  $\Delta_1$ ), and that Raphael's set of concepts  $N$  stand in relation  $R$  to a different set of properties  $\Delta_2$  fully describable in non-normative terms and that this settles to what properties they refer (that is properties in  $\Delta_2$ ). In this case, we should have the intuition that people on earth cannot engage in *normative disagreement* and *agreement* or even in *conversation on normative issues* with Raphael. Instead we should have the intuition that when Raphael employs his respective concepts that these concepts are at cross-purposes with our normative concepts. Indeed, we should be inclined to hold that Raphael *does not have normative concepts at all*.

This provides us with a thought experiment that allows us to test any reductionist proposal of the relation  $R$  that is supposed to fix the reference of our normative concepts: if we fill in the relation  $R$  with the relevant reductionist proposal, would we think that earthlings and Raphael in the above case could agree

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49 See Putnam 1975.

or disagree when the earthlings employ normative concepts and Raphael employs concepts from set  $N$ , or would we think that they are employing different concepts? If our answer to the latter question is “No”, then we can see this as evidence that the proposal has failed to provide a plausible account of our ordinary normative concepts and judgements, as it cannot account satisfactorily for our intuitions about when two speakers can be in agreement and disagreement on normative matters, rather than being at cross-purposes. Only if our answer to the latter question is “Yes” can we regard the reductionist view as giving a plausible account of when two speakers have the same normative concepts. Note that this kind of test actually connects to the intuitions that were supposed to be elicited by the original OQA: what this test is supposed to tease out is whether competent and clear-headed speakers think that normative questions can be conclusively settled by finding out that our normative judgements stand in some relation  $R$  to a set of properties  $\Delta$  fully describable in non-normative terms.

How would reductionism fare with regards to this kind of thought experiment? Horgan and Timmons have argued that we have good evidence for *moral* judgements that for *any* relation  $R$  a reductionist could propose, the account will always have the wrong implications with regards to whom we can be in moral agreement and disagreement with.<sup>50</sup> Let us furthermore assume—for the purposes of this

50 Their evidence derives from two sources. First, from considering prominent proposals by reductionists and whether they would pass a respective normative twin-earth scenario (for their arguments in detail see Horgan and Timmons 1992 and Horgan and Timmons 2009a; see also Holland 2001 and Rosati 1995 for further evidence along these lines; of course these arguments have only been developed for the case of *moral* judgements). Second, it comes from considering the structure of the normative twin-earth case and asking whether we think that there is a relation  $R$  for which we *would* think that competent and clear-headed speakers’ intuitions about the thought experiment are in agreement with the predictions of the relevant reductionist account. And, it seems that by only looking at the structure of the scenario we can already say that it is unlikely that there is such a relation: for any relation  $R$  to which our normative judgements could stand to any set of properties  $\Delta$  fully describable in non-normative descriptive terms, sensible and meaningful normative disagreements whether some action, person, state of affairs, etc. that has  $\Delta$  is indeed good, bad, right, wrong, etc. seem possible. After all, it seems quite plausible that it is a very real possibility that different individuals consistently apply normative concepts to a wide variety of cases with quite different non-normative descriptive properties: just think about Hare’s example of the missionary who lands on an island of cannibals (Hare 1952: 148/149). We can imagine the missionary and the cannibals applying their *moral* concepts to quite different things over a wide variety of cases, e.g. the missionary thinking people good “who are meek and gentle and do not collect large quantities of scalps” while the cannibals think people good “who are bold and burly and collect more scalps than the average” (Hare 1952: 148). However, *just* the fact that the missionary and the cannibals apply such concepts consistently to cases with different non-normative descriptive properties would not make us *at all* inclined to say that they have different

dissertation—that for *normative* judgements the very same is true.<sup>51</sup> What would the consequence of this be? The consequence would be that reductionists give us insufficient individuation conditions for normative concepts, and that some characterizing aspect of normative judgements would be missed by any reductionist account. More specifically, it would show that competent and clear-headed speakers have the intuition that the issues which normative judgements are about cannot be settled *conclusively* by pointing to certain properties fully describable in non-normative terms or some relation *R* in which our normative judgements stand to such properties. This sets them distinctively apart from questions arising in science, e.g. about what the chemical structure of water is, which intuitively *can* be so answered. It seems, consequently, that competent speakers have the intuition that questions involving normative concepts are questions demanding a different *kind* of judgement as an answer than the kind of answers that judgements about non-normative descriptive facts provide. A good explanation for what goes wrong with reductionist accounts might, therefore, be that non-normative descriptive judgements lack the distinctive way in which normative judgements can settle the thing to do, and so that reductionism misses what is distinctively *normative* about normative judgements. Of course, if this is correct this is a very serious problem for reductionism since it means that any reductionist account of our normative judgements will miss something that is fairly central to these judgements, namely, their distinctive normative character. This should be seen as costing the representationalist a quite significant chunk of plausibility points, if she decides to impale herself on the second horn of the dilemma directed against *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*.<sup>52</sup>

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moral concepts, as can be seen from the fact that we would regard the missionary and the cannibals to be in *disagreement about what is good*. What normative twin-earth highlights, is the fact that the reductionist must be able to tell a plausible story about why the fact that different judgements stand towards different descriptive properties in some relation *R* should be any different from the other ways in which individuals could be inclined to apply the same normative concepts to cases with different descriptive properties. And the problem for reductionists is that it seems hard to see what this story could be.

51 I am only assuming this without argument for the sake of this dissertation. Of course, meta-normative representationalists have given responses to the kind of argument given by Horgan and Timmons. See, for example, Copp 2000, Laurence, Margolis, and Dawson 1999, van Roojen 2006, Sayre-McCord 1997, and Viggiano 2008. For more elaborate defences of the argument in the face of criticism, see e.g., Ehrhardt Unpublished: chapter 2, Horgan and Timmons 2000, and Rubin 2008.

52 Of course it is possible that reductionists will come up with a satisfactory account of the

The fact that *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* loses a significant number of plausibility points either way provides support for *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*, and thus supports the second part of expressivism's second thesis. That is, the problems that *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* encounters give quite a lot of plausibility to the thesis that normative judgements have a non-representational character. In fact, it is easy to see that if we endorse *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* we do not face the worries we face on either horn of the dilemma. If we endorse *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* we lose any commitment to the representationalist order of explanation for normative judgements, and in this way evade the problems it brings with it.

First, we face neither the epistemological nor the metaphysical problems of non-reductionism. Specific metaphysical worries about features of normative facts do not plague non-representationalism, as the non-representationalist's explanatory story of the nature of normative judgements does not even proceed in terms of the nature of normative facts. Moreover, the same applies to the epistemological worries that non-reductionism faces. Because the non-representationalist's explanatory story does not proceed in terms of the nature of normative facts, there will be no need for an account of the relationship between our normative judgements and the facts they are about as part of the explanatory story. So, non-representationalism makes no assumptions about normative judgements that are incompatible with a naturalistic, scientific world-view, or which are otherwise metaphysically queer. It, thereby, does not threaten to commit us to an error-theory and, consequently, does not undermine, by itself, the legitimacy of our ordinary normative practice. That it promises to do so within a naturalistic framework rakes in additional plausibility points.

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normativity of normative judgement (which I have here assumed, for the purposes of this dissertation, is not the case). One such option might be "going hybrid" that is by giving accounts according to which normative language serves to express or normative thinking consists in *both* representational states *and* conative attitudes and by letting the conative element bring in the normative dimension into normative judgements, while the representational state still remains primary in determining the truth conditions of normative judgements (see e.g. Copp 2001, Finlay 2004 and Tresan 2006 for views of this kind). However, even these theories still face variants of the same problems that other reductionists face (as mentioned in footnote forty eight of this chapter; see again the arguments given in Ridge Forthcoming: Chapter 4 and Ehrhardt Unpublished: chapter 7).

Second, *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* also does not have implications of the kind that reductionism has, which would lead us to ignore something distinctive about normative judgement. For reductionism, the representationalist order of explanation brings with it the problem raised by the OQA and its predecessors of illegitimately closing or settling certain kinds of questions, and by the resulting wrong predictions about the possibility of normative disagreement. Non-representationalism faces neither of these problems. First, nothing on a non-representationalist framework entails that normative questions can be settled in the way in which reductionist theories are committed. While this just means that non-representationalism avoids this problematic commitment, *expressivism*—as a particular non-representationalist view—can already give a particular account for this: on an expressivist account, questions requiring normative judgements as an answer cannot be conclusively settled by judgements about facts fully describable in non-normative terms because the formation of a normative judgement consists (at least partly) in the adoption of a conative attitude, while the formation of judgements involving only non-normative descriptive concepts consists in adopting representational states such that a judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true. However, because conative attitudes and representational states are modally distinct (as assumed by a broadly Humean theory of psychology), there is also a modal “gap” between adopting normative judgements and adopting judgements about things fully describable in non-normative descriptive terms.

Additionally, within a non-representationalist framework, whether or not two parties disagree will *not* be determined by whether they stand in some relation to the same facts or properties, and so non-representationalism avoids reductionism’s problems with normative disagreement. Of course, this also just means that non-representationalism avoids problematic commitments, but again *expressivism*—as a particular non-representationalist view—has a particular account to give for this phenomenon: note that intuitively not only representational states, but also non-representational states of the kind that expressivists think (at least partially) constitute

normative judgements can be in disagreement.<sup>53</sup> One very clear example for this is what C.L. Stevenson has called “disagreement in attitude”. For example, if Hannelore wants herself and Manfred to spend the evening watching a movie, while Manfred wants Hannelore and himself to spend the evening dancing at The Club, it seems plausible to say that they have a disagreement in conative attitudes, not a disagreement in representational states. However, people can disagree in these relevant non-representational states, even if they agree in all their representational states. Not only that, but people can even disagree in these non-representational states if those states stand in the same relation *R* to different sets of properties  $\Delta_1$  and  $\Delta_2$  and even if both of the parties know this. So, on the expressivist account, two individuals can have the same normative concepts and be in normative disagreement or agreement in exactly those conditions which our intuitions about normative twin-earth reveals that they can be.

The dilemma that *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* faces and the way that *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* avoids it can be seen as the main source of plausibility points for that thesis. More specifically, the dilemma that *REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* faces provides significant credibility to the claim that the nature of normative judgement is non-representational. The fact that a particular thesis about what kind of non-representational state is constitutive of normative judgement can provide plausible explanations for certain of the phenomena that representationalism has difficulties capturing, lends stronger support for this thesis.

I think we should now have a reasonably good overview of the main motivations for expressivism, namely, the supporting considerations that derive from the points in favour of *NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* and in favour of the *CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS*. The main point in favour of expressivism, I take it, is that it promises to preserve the legitimacy of our ordinary normative practice and what is distinctive about normative thought and discourse, without requiring the adoption of extravagant metaphysical assumptions that might, in the end, *undermine* the legitimacy of ordinary normative practice, or which would

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<sup>53</sup> For different accounts of disagreement in non-representational states, see e.g. Gibbard 2003: 65-71, Ridge 2013 and Stevenson 1937 and Stevenson 1944: 1-19.

put the legitimacy of ordinary normative practice at odds with a broadly naturalist world-view. I think it should be uncontroversial—even from this brief overview—that expressivism is a well-motivated and interesting philosophical view with some initial theoretical appeal, a view the *overall* prospects of which, it is worthwhile to investigate. Because we must assess the prospects of philosophical views *holistically*, that is how well they do *on balance* compared to their competitors, however, it will not do just to focus on the points *in favour* of expressivism. If we think that expressivism and its promises are initially attractive, we must also consider expressivism’s problems to be able to see how attractive it is on balance. I will turn to this issue in the next section.

### 3. BEYOND FREGE-GEACH: NEGLECTED CHALLENGES FOR EXPRESSIVISM

While there are significant motivations *for* expressivism, expressivism also faces significant problems. One such problem has, thereby, been at the centre of attention in the debate surrounding expressivism for more than fifty years: the Frege-Geach Problem.<sup>54</sup> I take the *Frege-Geach Problem* to be the following: expressivism gives an account of the meaning of normative sentences, presumably an account of those sentences as they occur in natural languages. That means that expressivism should entail the right kinds of predictions about the semantic behaviour of normative sentences in natural languages. However, on the basis of this requirement, there are two features of natural languages which pose a problem for expressivists. The first feature of natural languages is that they are governed by the *principle of compositionality*. According to the principle of compositionality, the meaning and semantic properties of every meaningful complex sentence is a function of the meaning and semantic properties of its parts. The second feature of natural languages is that normative

<sup>54</sup> The Frege-Geach Problem was first introduced independently by Peter Geach (Geach 1960 and Geach 1965) and John Searle (Searle 1962). Since then the problem has received a lot of attention with expressivists (and those sympathetic to the view) proposing solutions to the problem or ways how the problem might be solved (e.g. Hare 1970, Blackburn 1984a: 189-196 and Blackburn 1988, Dreier 2006, Gibbard 1992: 83-102 and Gibbard 2003: 60-87, Horgan and Timmons 2006: 277-282 and 288-292 and Horgan and Timmons 2009b, Ridge 2006a: 324-333 and Ridge 2007a: 62-67, Schroeder 2008a and Schroeder 2008c, Sinclair 2011, and Toppinen 2013) and their opponents arguing that these solutions do not satisfactorily solve the problem (among the vast collection of such arguments a notable selection includes Schueler 1988, Hale 1993, van Roojen 1996, Unwin 1999 and Unwin 2001, and Schroeder 2008a). A very good overview of this debate and the nature of the Frege-Geach Problem in general can be found in Schroeder 2008d.

vocabulary can be part of complex sentences *in the same ways and with the same semantic properties* in which ordinary non-normative descriptive vocabulary can be part of complex sentences.

An expressivist account must be able to preserve both of these features of natural languages and explain why sentences have the semantic properties they have. However, giving such an account has proven to be incredibly difficult for expressivists, due to their commitments about the nature of normative judgements. As we know, on the expressivist account, the meaning of any sentence is to be explained in terms of the mental state that sentence expresses. So, expressivists should subscribe to the claim that the meaning of more complex sentences is to be explained in terms of the mental states they express, where this mental state can somehow be seen as a function from the mental states that are expressed by the sentences which constitute the parts of the relevant complex sentences. Consider now the example of an atomic normative sentence, namely, atomic moral sentences of the form

(3)  $\Phi$ -ing is morally wrong.

On a very simplistic expressivist model I will use for illustration, sentences of the form of (3) express an attitude of disapproval towards  $\Phi$ -ing, where  $\Phi$ -ing stands for some action type. To account for the two features of natural languages mentioned further above, we now have to ask what mental state is expressed by more complex sentences in which "... is morally wrong" figures. To illustrate the difficulties that expressivists have with giving a plausible answer to this, it suffices to take the most simple case, the case of

(4)  $\Phi$ -ing is not morally wrong.

What kind of mental state could be expressed by (4)? It needs to be a mental state being in which is *inconsistent* with being in the mental state expressed by (3), as (3) and (4) are inconsistent and expressivists want to explain the properties of sentences in terms of the properties of the mental states they express. What mental state could this be? It *cannot* be the *same* attitude towards inconsistent contents, because the attitude which is inconsistent in this sense with the attitude expressed by (3) is disapproval of *not*  $\Phi$ -ing. However, on the above expressivist account, disapproval of



not  $\Phi$ -ing should be the attitude expressed by “Not  $\Phi$ -ing is morally wrong”, *not* the attitude expressed by “ $\Phi$ -ing is not morally wrong”. This means though that so far we have an account of the meaning of (3) and of

(5) Not  $\Phi$ -ing is morally wrong.

but not for (4). Furthermore, it seems *prima facie* hard to see how the same attitude expressed in (3) could plausibly figure in (4) so as to give the correct kind of semantics. But, if we cannot give a plausible answer even for this simple case (making it unlikely that expressivism would fare better for more complex cases), it seems that this would be a very high, potentially devastating theoretical cost for expressivism.

It is unquestionable that the Frege-Geach Problem is a very important challenge to expressivism. However, while this problem has attracted a lot of attention in the debate surrounding expressivism, there are other problems for expressivism that have been neglected. In this dissertation, I want to shift more of the attention of the debate to such challenges, and make progress on developing plausible expressivist responses to these challenges. I think that this is an important task at least for the following reasons. First, as already explained in the last section, it seems plausible that the prospects of meta-normative theories need to be assessed *holistically*, in light of how attractive they are *on balance* compared to their respective competitors. Consequently, to be able to determine the *overall* plausibility of expressivism, we should consider whether expressivists can successfully respond to all challenges it faces, and whether any of the solutions an expressivist could give might not even *gain* expressivism plausibility points over its competitors. So, while the Frege-Geach Problem is most definitely an important problem, there is good justification, when trying to determine expressivism’s prospects as a meta-normative view and maybe argue that the prospects are *good*, to pay more attention to more neglected challenges as well.

Someone might object at this point that no amount work done on any amount of *other* challenges to expressivism than the Frege-Geach Problem could in any way counterbalance the loss in plausibility that expressivism faces if the Frege-Geach Problem cannot be given a satisfactory solution. However, it seems to me that recent years have actually already seen a lot of progress towards plausible solutions to the

Frege-Geach Problem. First, and foremost, while the “Blackburn-Gibbard” solution to the Frege-Geach Problem, which I take it is now the standard response, has recently come under fire by Mark Schroeder, the debate that was generated in response to Schroeder’s critique actually shows this solution to be far more promising, resourceful, and plausible than Schroeder makes it appear.<sup>55</sup> Second, even if one were convinced by Schroeder’s critique and concluded that the Blackburn-Gibbard solution must be abandoned, Schroeder’s worries actually generated several quite sophisticated alternative solutions to the problem for pure expressivists.<sup>56</sup> Third, the prospects of hybrid forms of expressivism to solve the Frege-Geach Problem “on the cheap” by including a representational element in normative judgement that does not dictate its truth-conditions also appear promising.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Michael Ridge, the main proponent of a form of hybrid expressivism, has argued in great detail that this is one of the main advantages of hybrid forms of expressivism, and has elaborately fleshed out how hybrid forms of expressivism can deal with the problem.<sup>58</sup> With all this progress on the Frege-Geach Problem, however, I think that we can be at least cautiously optimistic that a fully satisfying solution to the Frege-Geach Problem is forthcoming. If this is the case though, then there is actually reason to consider other

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55 The “Blackburn-Gibbard” solution to the Frege-Geach Problem was suggested independently by Simon Blackburn (Blackburn 1988) and Allan Gibbard (Gibbard 1992 and Gibbard 2003) and later endorsed by Horgan and Timmons (Horgan and Timmons 2006). It suggests that we introduce an attitude of *toleration* or *rejection* which is held to be expressed by sentences like (4). Tolerating  $\Phi$ -ing is, thereby, supposed to be inconsistent with disapproval of  $\Phi$ -ing in the same sense in which (4) is inconsistent with (3). This is supposed to yield an account of the attitude that is expressed by (4), which has all the relevant semantic properties. According to Schroeder’s critique, however, this account provides no *real* explanation of what kind of attitude “toleration” or “rejection” is, nor an explanation for *why* that attitude does have all the properties that are required of it. Instead, it seems that the Blackburn-Gibbard solution merely presupposes what it was supposed to explain (Schroeder 2008a: 49-55). I think that the best response to this criticism is given by Allan Gibbard, who points out, roughly, that any theory of meaning has to start with unexplained primitives and that just because Schroeder thinks that we should start with different primitives, this *by itself* provides no objection to the expressivist’s order of explanation (Gibbard 2012, 20: Appendix 2 Schroeder on Expressivism). Other responses to Schroeder’s critique have been developed in e.g. Horgan and Timmons 2009b, Richard 2011: 322, Sinclair 2011 and Wedgwood 2010.

56 Most notably, Schroeder’s own account which he is quite critical of himself (Schroeder 2008a). Other notable novel responses are given by Nate Charlow (Charlow Forthcoming) and Seth Yalcin (Yalcin 2011 and Yalcin 2012). Recently Schroeder has also argued that the higher-order attitude approach originally suggested by Blackburn (Blackburn 1984a), has much more promise than is often thought (Schroeder 2014a).

57 For hybrid forms of expressivism that promise to solve the Frege-Geach Problem, see Ridge Forthcoming, Schroeder 2013, and Toppinen 2013.

58 See Ridge 2006a: 324-330, Ridge 2007a: 56-67 and Ridge Forthcoming: chapter 4.

challenges as well, as questions regarding how expressivism will fare with regards to those challenges will then have some importance for determining expressivism's overall plausibility.

In fact, even if we are pessimistic about whether an expressivist account that resolves the challenge posed by the Frege-Geach Problem to our *full* satisfaction is forthcoming, I take it that the progress made and the fact that all of these (at least to some extent satisfying) responses exist indicates that we should not think of the Frege-Geach Problem as having the force that the above worry suggests. Rather, even if no expressivist answer to the Frege-Geach Problem is *fully* satisfactory, the extent to which it would be *revisionist* could be acceptable if it fares much better on other grounds, and if other challenges can be successfully resolved. This is especially important to bear in mind once we consider that the stage of the meta-normative debate and the fact that different aspects of normative language and thought seem to support inconsistent meta-normative theories should not make us optimistic that any one meta-normative theory will be satisfactory on *all* grounds, and that, consequently, revisionism to some extent needs to be expected.<sup>59</sup> Here I agree with Gibbard's suggestion about how we should approach philosophical theories in general and meta-normative theories in particular:

“An analysis can be offered not as a bald statement of fact about what people mean, but as a proposal. Where a term is problematical, a new and clearer sense may serve its purposes—or some of them. No unique analysis need be correct; rather, we can expect some analyses to work better than others. There may be an analysis that is clearly best for certain purposes, and there may not. [...] Any philosophical analysis strains its concept. We can learn about a concept by seeing what choice of strains it offers. When an analysis keeps us from saying things we want to say, then we have to think how important it is to go on saying them, and we have to think about costs. Analyses let us compare the strains of alternatives.”<sup>60</sup>

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59 In fact, Don Loeb, Michael Gill, and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong have taken the current stage of the meta-normative debate as evidence that no single meta-normative theory is true for all of our ordinary normative practice. These authors differ on why they think that this is the case, though. Loeb has argued that this is because ordinary normative practice is *incoherent* (Loeb 2008). Gill has argued that this is because different theories might be true for different *parts* of ordinary normative practice, but that no theory is true for *all* of ordinary normative practice (Gill 2008a, Gill 2008b, and Gill 2009). Sinnott-Armstrong has argued that this is because it is *indeterminate* which theory is true for ordinary normative practice (Sinnott-Armstrong 2009).

60 Gibbard 1992: 32. For a similar point, see also Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton 1992.

If this is correct, however, then it will be even more important to consider how expressivism would handle many different kinds of challenges and to pay more attention to the neglected ones, in order to see how much, compared to its competitors, an expressivist account would strain our ordinary normative concepts.

There is one further motivation for looking at problems for expressivism other than the Frege-Geach Problem that I want to mention here: looking at other relevant challenges for expressivism might help to highlight significantly whether and how important the Frege-Geach Problem actually is. If a solution to these problems in some way presupposes a solution of the Frege-Geach Problem, for example, this would highlight the importance of solving the Frege-Geach Problem. If these problems can be solved independently of the Frege-Geach Problem, on the other hand, this would support that the Frege-Geach Problem is of less importance than one might think.

Of course, while there are many neglected problems that one could pay more attention to, reasons of scope require that I restrict my focus for the purposes of this dissertation. In what follows I will focus on two challenges. Let me now end this chapter by saying a little bit more, by way of introduction, about each of these two challenges.

The first challenge I will consider (in the second chapter) is what can be called the “normative attitude problem”.<sup>61</sup> This is an objection to expressivism based on the claim that expressivists must provide an account of the nature of the conative attitudes which centrally constitute normative judgements. According to the objection, the challenge impales expressivists on a dilemma, each horn of which has unacceptable consequences for the expressivist. Consequently, expressivists cannot give a satisfactory answer to the challenge of giving an account of the nature of the attitudes which constitute normative judgements. I argue that expressivists can address this challenge by drawing on resources that meta-normative representationalists made available when they faced a structurally similar dilemma, and that these resources even make an expressivist account feasible on which normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes.

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<sup>61</sup> Following Alexander Miller’s terminology who calls the problem as applied only to moral judgements the “moral attitude problem” (see Miller 2003).

The second challenge I will consider (in the remaining chapters) is a challenge to a particular expressivist project: quasi-realism. Quasi-realism aims to show that expressivism is compatible with those assumptions underlying our ordinary practice that lend support to meta-normative realism. Part of this project is to show that expressivism is compatible with a web of closely connected assumptions, namely, that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and that normative judgements are beliefs. While quasi-realists have made some progress in this direction, there is one relevant phenomenon that has so far been neglected, namely, those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents. This is a problematic neglect, as I argue in the third chapter, because in order to allow that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and normative judgements beliefs, expressivists must allow certain relevant uses of *that*-clauses. However, it is unclear how expressivism's theoretical assumptions fit with such uses. In that same chapter I then remove *in principle* worries that expressivism could be compatible with such uses. In the fourth and fifth chapters I will then develop a deflationary account of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses that is fully compatible with expressivism's theoretical commitments. I will start developing the account in the fourth chapter by focusing on the use of *that*-clauses in attributions of meaning. In the fifth chapter I will then explore how the account can be expanded to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions.

#### 4. SUMMARY

This chapter has served as an introduction into the material covered in this dissertation. I have explained how I understand expressivism and presented the main motivations for this view. I have then talked about the Frege-Geach Problem and argued why it is important to go beyond this problem when one is concerned with expressivism's overall plausibility. I have ended the chapter with a short presentation of the problems that concern the rest of the dissertation.

## CHAPTER II: DO EXPRESSIVISTS HAVE AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM?<sup>1</sup>

### 0. INTRODUCTION

The objection I consider in this chapter is the *normative attitude problem*. This is the objection that (i) expressivists must give an account of the nature of the attitudes constituting normative judgements, (ii) they can do so by saying either that these are *sui generis* attitudes or that they are reducible to attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms, but (iii) that the first option is uninformative and incompatible with naturalism and the second incompatible with our intuitions about normative judgements. In this chapter I argue for two conclusions regarding this apparent dilemma. First, that expressivists can and should address this problem by drawing on strategies meta-normative representationalists use to address a problem, whose analogy to the normative attitude problem has not been sufficiently appreciated in meta-normative theory. Second, that piggybacking on these strategies not only makes the second horn of the apparent dilemma viable for expressivists, but also clears the way for expressivists to take its first horn, holding that normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes.

I proceed as follows: section one clarifies the normative attitude problem. In section two, I argue that meta-normative representationalism faces an analogous and equally pressing problem. Here I also explain what strategies representationalists have developed to address it, and argue that expressivists can use the same strategies to address the normative attitude problem. Moreover, I argue these strategies not only allow the more typical expressivist approach—on which normative judgements are reducible to attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms—to address the normative attitude problem. They also reveal how we might develop an expressivist approach according to which normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes. In section three, I sketch just enough of one such non-standard expressivist position to provide at least some license for optimism that adopting the dilemma's first horn is *in principle* feasible.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws heavily on my Köhler 2013.

## 1. EXPRESSIVISM AND THE NORMATIVE ATTITUDE PROBLEM

The normative attitude problem is an objection to expressivism's second thesis.<sup>1</sup>

Recall that this thesis consists in two claims, namely,

**NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** The mental states which constitute normative judgements do *not* consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

**CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** The mental states which constitute normative judgements (at least partially) consist in conative attitudes.

The normative attitude problem has, in varying forms, been pressed by several philosophers, although these philosophers have mostly concentrated on the more narrow *moral* attitude problem, which is a form of the normative attitude problem applied to a sub-class of normative judgements, namely, *moral* judgements.<sup>2</sup> Applied to moral judgements Judith Jarvis Thomson, for example, presents the objection in the following remarks:

“[T]he [expressivist] needs to avail himself of a special kind of approval and disapproval: these have to be moral approval and moral disapproval. For presumably he does not wish to say that believing Alice ought to do a thing is having toward her doing it the same attitude of approval that I have toward the sound of her splendid new violin. The problem I point to here is a familiar one; [...] It pays to stress its seriousness, however. For if there is no way of saying what the attitude of moral approval consists in other than by saying that having it toward a thing *just is* believing a favorable moral sentence, then this [expressivist] thesis is uninformative [...].”<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Michael Smith writes, this time about normative judgements in general:

- 1 For the purposes of this chapter I will bracket, for simplicity's sake, hybrid views according to which normative judgements consist in *both* representational states *and* conative attitudes. Of course, such views also face the normative attitude problem, as they have to give an account of the attitude partly constituting normative judgements (in fact, they face the normative attitude problem both as it applies to representationalism and as it applies to expressivism). Everything I say about how to address the normative attitude problem, however, should be available to hybrid theorists too.
- 2 For authors who have pressed the moral attitude problem, see e.g. D'Arms and Jacobson 1994 Harth 2008: 51-53, Kauppinen 2010: 225-257, Kirchin 2012, McDowell 1998: 158-59, Merli 2008, Miller 2003: 43-51 and 88-94, Smith 2001: 107-114, and Thomson 1996: 104-111.
- 3 Thomson 1996: 110.

“[Expressivists] insist that it is analytic that when people sincerely make normative claims they thereby express desires or aversions. But which desires and aversions [...], and what special feature do they possess that makes them especially suitable for expression in a normative claim? How do they differ from mere desires and aversions that aren’t suitable for such expression? The difficulty involved in supposing that there are any such desires or aversions at all cannot be overestimated. It is, after all, agreed on all sides that the psychological state we express when we make a normative claim has many of the functional features of [representational states]. The difficulty, to anticipate, is that it is hard to see how desires or aversions could have exactly these functional features [...].”<sup>4</sup>

The argument can be set up in the form of a dilemma in three steps.

The first is to note that the conative attitudes supposed to constitute normative judgements do significant explanatory work on the expressivist account: both the meaning of normative sentences and the nature of normative judgements are explained in terms of these attitudes. Without an account of the nature of these states, which shows how they do this explanatory work, expressivism would, consequently, be objectionably incomplete. So, expressivists must provide such an account. Meeting this challenge is especially important because it is not obvious that normative judgements *do* consist in conative attitudes, which makes the challenge to give an account of the specific nature of such attitudes all the more pressing. First, as Crispin Wright has pointed out, for the case of moral judgements, which seems equally true for normative judgements in general, the phenomenology of normative judgements is not *decisively* like that of any of the familiar conative attitudes, so we will not be able to use phenomenology to tell us something about the nature of the attitudes that constitute normative judgements.<sup>5</sup> Second, as Michael Smith has noted for the case of moral judgements, which again seems true for normative judgements in general, normative judgements seem to have a functional role that is (at least partially) like that paradigmatically associated with representational states—for example, normative judgements behave in inferences like representational states and they seem to be governed by similar epistemic norms—and like that paradigmatically associated with conative attitudes—for example, normative judgements have

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4 Smith 2001: 107-108.

5 Wright 1988: 11-13.



motivational power and a close connection to emotions.<sup>6</sup> Smith's point is particularly crucial for expressivists, since they accept a broadly Humean theory of motivation according to which mental states cannot have *both* the functional role of representational states *and* that of conative attitudes and, consequently, need to explain this appearance differently.

The second step is to note that expressivists have only two routes to give an account of the nature of the normative attitude. First, they can hold that to account for normative judgements, we need to introduce an *additional type* of conative attitude into our theory of mind, over and above those already part of an account of non-normative thinking such as emotions, desires, or intentions. Following this approach, expressivists will hold that normative judgements consist (characteristically) in a distinctive, *sui generis* type of conative attitude which cannot be (completely) reduced to attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking.

The second route is to hold that in order to account for normative judgements, we do *not* need to introduce an additional type of conative attitude into our theory of mind over and above those already part of an account of non-normative thinking. Instead, normative judgements can be completely accounted for in terms of attitudes that are already part of an account of non-normative thinking. Of course, since the relevant conative attitudes will *in themselves* not be normative attitudes, expressivists taking this approach must identify some feature that distinguishes normative instances of these attitudes from non-normative instances. This could, e.g., be that they play a distinctive functional role or result from distinctive causal processes.

Finally, we can note three conditions expressivist accounts of the normative attitude must satisfy. First,

**INFORMATIVITY:** The expressivist account of the normative attitude must be informative.

Imposing INFORMATIVITY is justified by those considerations that raise the challenge to provide an account of the normative attitude in the first place. Since those conative attitudes that supposedly constitute normative judgements pull significant explanatory weight for expressivists, they must give an *informative* account of these

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Smith 1994a: 4-11.

attitudes that pulls this weight. Without such an account, expressivists have asserted, but not shown that the relevant features of normative language and thought can be accounted for in terms of conative attitudes.

The second condition that needs to be satisfied is,

**NATURALISM:** The expressivist account of the normative attitude must be compatible with a naturalistic world-view.

Although expressivism is not necessarily tied to a naturalistic world-view, two considerations support imposing NATURALISM on expressivist accounts of normative judgements. First, all expressivists in the meta-normative debate endorse a naturalistic world-view, so NATURALISM applies to all actual expressivists challenged with the normative attitude problem. Second, as explained in the first chapter, a main argument in favour of expressivism is its ability to fit normative judgements into a naturalistic framework, while preserving what is distinctive about normative judgement. The rejection of NATURALISM would deprive expressivists of this argument for their view.

The third condition is,

**PLAUSIBILITY:** The expressivist account of the normative attitude must, at least in clear cases, agree with competent speakers' intuitions about what is, and what is not, an instance of normative judgement.<sup>7</sup>

PLAUSIBILITY is justified as follows: expressivists give a systematic and informative analysis of a phenomenon of which we already have some (rough and mostly implicit) understanding. This understanding is exemplified by competent speakers' intuitions about possible cases. Since these intuitions are our best epistemic guide to the phenomenon in question, agreement with these intuitions is required just to avoid changing the subject: if the expressivist analysis disagreed substantially with

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<sup>7</sup> One worry that one might have about PLAUSIBILITY is that “normative” is not a term that is part of ordinary discourse, but a *technical term* that philosophers have introduced for specific purposes. If this is the case, however, it will be mistaken to assume that ordinary speakers have intuitions about what judgements are “normative” and so imposing PLAUSIBILITY on accounts of normative judgements is mistaken. My response to this worry is that philosophers use the term “normative” to pick out a specific phenomenon for which I assume that ordinary speakers *do* have a—mostly implicit and rough—understanding, even if ordinary speakers do not use the label “normative” to talk and think about this phenomenon, but might only be able to pick it out by ostensive means e.g. as “what is distinctive about moral judgements, judgements about reasons, etc.”. What we are concerned about with PLAUSIBILITY is only that accounts of normative judgements satisfy ordinary speakers' intuitions about this phenomenon.

competent speakers' intuitions about normative judgements, it would become plausible that the analysis is not of normative judgements, but of something else. Therefore, for the expressivist analysis to be plausible as an analysis of normative judgements, it must agree with competent speakers' intuitions, at least in clear cases. With these remarks in place, we can now present the dilemma that constitutes the normative attitude problem.

If, on the first horn of the dilemma, expressivists claim that the normative attitude is a *sui generis* attitude irreducible to conative attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking, they will fail to satisfy INFORMATIVITY and NATURALISM: what can they say about the normative attitude on this approach? They can say that it is expressed by normative language, constitutes normative judgements, and that its functional role seems like that of both representational states and of conative attitudes. However, neither of these claims is informative, nor does this kind of account satisfactorily explain any of the features of normative judgements that call for an explanation. For example, it merely presupposes, without explanation, that there could be attitudes with the functional role of both representational states and conative attitudes. It also fails to explain *what* normative judgements are. As an explanatory account of how normative language and thought fit into a naturalistic world-view this seems unsatisfactory and to violate both INFORMATIVITY and NATURALISM.

If, on the second horn of the dilemma, expressivists say that the normative attitude can be analysed in terms of attitudes already part of our theory of non-normative thinking they will—according to proponents of the normative attitude problem—violate PLAUSIBILITY. Ironically, there seems to be some support for this thesis in an argumentative device expressivists use to argue for their position, namely, the OQA.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Alexander Miller introduced the OQA in the context of the moral attitude problem (Miller 2003: 47-51). He proposes two versions of the OQA one could use against expressivism: the first just relies on the intuition that competent speakers will hold the question to be open whether some conative attitude already part of our account of non-moral thinking is an instance of moral thinking. The other identifies some feature  $F_M$  characteristic of moral thinking and then argues that competent speakers will hold the question to be open whether some conative attitude already part of a theory of non-moral thinking has  $F_M$ . Since the difference between these versions is irrelevant for what follows, I will present the argument in its simpler form.

How might the OQA be used to press the second horn of the dilemma? Although proponents of this line of argument have only concentrated on moral judgements, it seems that it also works for the case of normative judgements in general. Remember that on the second horn of the dilemma, expressivists want to analyse normative judgements in terms of some conative attitude C that is already part of a theory of non-normative thinking and has some non-normative feature X that distinguishes it from non-normative instances of the same kind of attitude. Such an analysis succeeds only if competent speakers hold the question “S has attitude C with feature X, but is that an instance of normative judgement?” to be conceptually closed: they must hold that we could not coherently imagine someone who has attitude C with feature X, but where this is not an instance of normative judgement. However, it is plausible that, for any conative attitude C already part of our account of non-normative thinking, when combined with some non-normative feature X, competent speakers will hold this question to be conceptually open. Absent further explanation of why this intuition is mistaken or another way to justify this divergence, expressivist analyses of normative judgements in terms of conative attitudes already part of a theory of non-normative thinking will, therefore, fail. And so, this second route to an account of the normative attitude fails to satisfy PLAUSIBILITY.

In sum, whichever route they take, expressivist accounts of the nature of normative judgements seem to violate at least one of the conditions such accounts should satisfy. Of course, as it stands, this dilemma is not a knock-down argument against expressivism, but rather a challenge to escape the dilemma. Until now expressivists have mostly reacted to the normative attitude problem insofar as it applies to *moral* judgement. And, for that version of the problem, they have generally tended to pursue the *second* horn of the dilemma by giving analyses of moral judgement in terms of conative attitudes already part of an account of non-moral thinking that are supposed to agree with competent speakers’ intuitions.<sup>9</sup> However, I think that approaching the normative attitude problem in this way, independently of whether we consider the general version or some narrow application of it, is wrongheaded: in my view, expressivists must recognize that they can use resources

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9 See, for example, Blackburn 1998a: 8-14, 51, Gibbard 1992: 126-150 and Kauppinen 2010.

meta-normative representationalists have made available *when representationalists faced the same dilemma*. Let me explain what I have in mind and then explain how expressivists can benefit from lessons representationalists learned.

## 2. REPRESENTATIONALISM AND THE NORMATIVE ATTITUDE PROBLEM

Anyone working in meta-normative theory (or anyone who has read the first chapter of this dissertation) should be familiar with an argument that is structurally similar to the normative attitude problem, but actually applies to expressivists' opponents. The problem of specifying the nature of the mental state constituting normative judgements is clearly not restricted to expressivists: it also applies to meta-normative representationalists. Normative judgements have many features which, *prima facie*, do not fit with the features representational states exemplify. After all, that normative judgements display the functional role of *both* representational states *and* conative attitudes, should be problematic for *both* expressivists *and* representationalists. Of course, representationalists normally try to explain the nature of normative judgements—what is distinctive about normative judgements as opposed to other kinds of judgements—not in terms of their *psychological* features, but in terms of their *representational content*: they try to explain the nature of normative judgements in terms of the nature of the states of affairs normative judgements represent.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, to provide a successful explanatory account of the nature of normative judgements, representationalists must also give an account of normative judgements, or, more

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<sup>10</sup> An exception to this rule might be those who reject the Humean theory of motivation and accept that normative judgements consist in (non-hybrid) *sui generis* states which are both representational states and conative attitudes at the same time (this view has been accepted, in one form or another, by e.g. Dancy 1993, McDowell 1988, McNaughton 1988, Nagel 1979, Scanlon 1998, and Shafer-Landau 2003). The view claims that it is not only their representational content, but also their specific psychological nature that sets normative judgements apart from other kinds of judgements. This kind of view might be able to escape the normative attitude problem as presented later, but it does so at the significant cost of rejecting the Humean theory of motivation which is often regarded as our most plausible account for the role of psychology in the production of action. Of course, it is also an open question whether views of this kind actually *do* escape the normative attitude problem, as such accounts still owe an account of both the specific psychological nature and the representational contents of the relevant judgements in a way that satisfies the three constraints. For the purposes of the dialectic of this chapter, however, it will not be fruitful to delve into such issues. It is only relevant that a significant proportion of expressivism's dialectical rivals face a structurally similar problem to the normative attitude and that expressivists can draw on the ways in which these positions respond to that problem to address the normative attitude problem. Consequently, I will bracket theories of the above kind here, when I talk about representationalists.

specifically, of the kind of representational content that explains the nature of normative judgements.

Representationalists, like expressivists, can proceed in two ways. First, they can hold that accounting for the representational content of normative judgements requires introducing an additional type of fact into our ontology over and above those that are already the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements. Following this approach, representationalists will hold that normative facts consist (characteristically) in a distinctive, *sui generis* type of fact, which cannot be (completely) reduced to those types that are the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements. The second route for meta-normative representationalists is to hold that accounting for the representational content of normative judgements does not require introducing an additional type of fact into our ontology over and above those that are already the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements. Instead, the representational content of normative judgements can be completely accounted for in terms of facts that are the objects of non-normative descriptive judgements.

Furthermore, we can specify three conditions that representationalist accounts of normative judgements must satisfy, which mirror the three conditions expressivist accounts must satisfy. First,

**INFORMATIVITY:** The representationalist account of the representational content of normative judgements must be informative.

The justification for **INFORMATIVITY** also follows from the considerations that make it plausible that representationalists (like expressivists) must provide an account of normative judgements in the first place. Without such an account, representationalists have asserted, but not shown that we can account for the features of normative language and thought in terms of representational states with certain representational contents.

The second condition that needs to be satisfied is,

**NATURALISM:** The representationalist account of the representational content of normative judgements must be compatible with a naturalistic world-view.

Imposing **NATURALISM** on representationalist accounts of normative judgement can be

justified along the following lines: there is good reason to adopt a naturalistic world-view and one of the greatest challenges of contemporary meta-normative theory is to explain how normativity fits into such a framework. Dialectically speaking, representationalist views according to which the representational content of normative judgements does not fit into a naturalistic framework will, therefore, be at an explanatory disadvantage to expressivism or those representationalist views according to which the representational content of normative judgements does fit into a naturalistic framework. This is so because the former kinds of representationalist accounts will effectively either have to reject the truth of a naturalistic world-view, or posit an error-theory. So, representationalists should avoid rejecting NATURALISM.

The third condition is,

**PLAUSIBILITY:** The representationalist account of the representational content of normative judgements must, at least in clear cases, agree with competent speakers' intuitions about what is, and what is not, an instance of a normative fact.

The justification for imposing PLAUSIBILITY on representationalist accounts again mirrors the justification for imposing it on expressivist accounts: representationalism gives a systematic and informative analysis of a phenomenon we already have some (rough and mostly implicit) understanding of, an understanding exemplified by competent speakers' intuitions about possible cases. Since these intuitions are our best epistemic guide to this phenomenon, agreement with these intuitions is required just to avoid changing the subject: if the representationalist analysis were to disagree substantially with competent speakers' intuitions about the representational content of normative judgements, it would become plausible that the analysis is not one of the content of normative judgements, but of something else. So, the analysis should be in agreement with competent speakers intuitions, at least in clear cases. With these remarks in place, however, we can now generate the following dilemma.

If, on the first horn of the dilemma, representationalists claim that the representational content of normative judgements consists in irreducible, *sui generis* normative facts, they will be unable to satisfy INFORMATIVITY and NATURALISM: what can

someone taking this route say about the representational content of normative judgements? She can say that it is what is represented by normative language and thought and that because of this representational content normative judgements have a functional role that seems to be like that of both representational states and conative attitudes. However, as with the expressivist account, these claims are neither informative, nor do they satisfactorily explain any of the features of normative judgements (or of the facts they are about) that call for an explanation. For example, it merely presupposes, but does not explain, that there are facts which provide representational states about them with the functional role of both representational states and conative attitudes, nor does it explain *what* normative judgements are. As an explanatory account of how normative language and thought fit into a naturalistic world-view this is unsatisfactory and violates INFORMATIVITY and NATURALISM.

On the second horn of the dilemma, if representationalists take the second approach, they will be unable to satisfy PLAUSIBILITY. The OQA can be used again to support this claim: representationalists who take the second approach want to analyse the representational content N of instances of normative judgements in terms of the representational content D of certain non-normative descriptive judgements. Such an analysis succeeds, only if competent speakers hold the question “x is D, but is x M?” to be conceptually closed. But, it is plausible that for any representational content D of certain non-normative descriptive judgements, competent speakers will hold this question to be *open*. Absent further explanation of this divergence, representationalist analyses of the representational content of normative judgements in terms of the representational content of certain non-normative descriptive judgements will, therefore, fail. The second route will not satisfy PLAUSIBILITY.

It should be clear that this is exactly the dilemma that I have presented in the first chapter as providing motivation for expressivism. However, as I have already explained in the last chapter, meta-normative representationalists can respond to the second horn of their “normative attitude problem”, if it is pressed using the above version of the OQA, in at least two ways. It will now be worthwhile to elaborate on two prominent responses that representationalists have given to this problem.

First, consider the approach of some of the “Cornell Realists” as applied to



normative judgements (I will call this the “Cornell approach”).<sup>11</sup> According to this approach, we must take into account that two concepts  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  can refer to the same property  $\Pi_F$  not only because there is a reductive *analysis* of one in terms of the other, but also as a matter of synthetic *a posteriori* fact. If two concepts refer to the same property in the second way, however, this can be discovered *only* through empirical inquiry and *not* solely through competence with the concepts in question. Consequently, competent speakers will hold the question “ $x$  is  $F_1$  but is it  $F_2$ ?” to be conceptually open, although, as a matter of metaphysical fact, it is not. A good example here are the concepts WATER and  $H_2O$ : although WATER and  $H_2O$  refer to the same thing, this cannot be grasped solely by being competent with these concepts. Instead it was an *empirical* discovery that WATER and  $H_2O$  refer to the same thing. At least prior to this discovery, competent speakers would, therefore, have held the question “This is water, but is it  $H_2O$ ?” to be open, even though the two concepts, as a matter of empirical fact, refer to the same thing.

According to the Cornell approach as applied to normative judgements, the same can hold for normative concepts: it is possible that the properties normative concepts *refer* to are identical with properties certain kinds of non-normative descriptive judgements refer to, but that this is a synthetic *a posteriori* fact, *not* because there is a reductive analysis of normative concepts in terms of non-normative descriptive concepts. In this case, competent speakers will hold “ $x$  has non-normative property D, but does it have normative property N?” to be open, although as a matter of metaphysical fact it will not be. If this is true, however, the OQA is not damaging for reductionists. They can hold that the representational content of normative judgements is identical to facts that are already familiar as the representational content of certain kinds of non-normative descriptive judgements, but that competent speakers cannot determine this merely through reflection because it is an *a posteriori* matter. Which means, of course, that the reductionist’s proposal regarding

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<sup>11</sup> Proponents who apply the following approach to *moral* judgements are Boyd 1988 and Brink 1989: 163-167. Peter Railton also seems to accept such a view (see e.g. Railton 1986: 170-173 and Railton 1990: 157/158), although his view is not, strictly speaking, a form of “Cornell realism”, a label reserved for the views of a group of philosophers based in or closely affiliated with the Cornell University. Although Cornell realism for all normative judgements has not been defended in print, there is nothing that would prevent it from being applicable to all normative judgements.

the content of normative thinking cannot be tested with the OQA.

The second approach for reductionists to evade the OQA is to follow the approach that philosophers of the “Canberra-Plan” developed for moral judgements (I will call this the “Canberra approach”).<sup>12</sup> According to this approach, there can be a reductive analysis of some concept  $F_1$  in terms of another concept  $F_2$  the truth of which is *non-obvious*. On this account, any conceptual analysis of  $F_1$  will first aim at giving a characterization of that  $x$  that realizes  $F_1$  in purely non- $F_1$  terms (where  $x$  is e.g. a *property* if  $F_1$  is a predicative concept). We do this by observing that our concepts are plausibly seen as being characterized by our dispositions to apply them and that these dispositions should, consequently, reveal what we would, and would not, take to be a realization of the relevant concepts.<sup>13</sup> So, we start an analysis by testing how competent speakers apply  $F_1$  to real and hypothetical cases, trying to determine that set of conditions characteristic of the application of  $F_1$ . Call these conditions the “platitudes” that characterize the realizer of  $F_1$  and the set of platitudes central to our uses of  $F_1$  our “folk-theory of  $F_1$ ”. However, since how competent speakers use concepts might to some degree be inconsistent or rest on false assumptions, we should not aim through conceptual analysis to capture *every* way competent speakers apply  $F_1$ . Rather, we should aim to find an analysis that does the job of  $F_1$ , but is free from inconsistency, mistaken assumptions, etc. So, not only will we explicate the platitudes that characterize competent speakers’ use of  $F_1$ , but also try to fit these platitudes into a maximally coherent, systematic, and comprehensive framework. Call the set of platitudes that characterize that  $x$  which realizes  $F_1$  arrived at in this way our “mature folk-theory of  $F_1$ ”.

Having arrived at this mature folk-theory, we can transform it into a *non-circular* characterization of the realizer of  $F_1$  as follows. First, we reformulate the platitudes that constitute our mature folk-theory so that all mentionings of the realizer of  $F_1$

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12 The Canberra approach applied to moral judgements has been championed by Frank Jackson (Jackson 1998: 28-37) and Frank Jackson and Philip Pettit (Jackson and Pettit 1995: 20-40, 22-29). The approach develops ideas of David Lewis. See e.g. Lewis 1970a: 427-446, Lewis 1972: 249-258, and Lewis 1989: 113-137, 129-132. Although the Canberra approach for all normative judgements has not yet been explicitly defended in print, nothing in the approach prevents it from being applicable to all normative judgements.

13 For such views on concepts, see e.g. Lewis 1989: 129-132, Smith 1994a: 36-39, Jackson 1998: 28-37 and Jackson and Pettit 1995: 22-29.

come out as *names* (or noun-phrases). For example, if  $F_1$  is a predicative concept, we reformulate the platitudes in property-name style. Note that depending on the complexity of  $F_1$  we might have to introduce more than one name. For example, the platitudes surrounding our concept COLOUR will make reference to certain colours, mentionings of which need to be stripped out for the characterization of the realizer of COLOUR to be non-circular. To do so, however, we might need to introduce names for all such colours. In what follows I will only present how the approach proceeds in cases in which we need to introduce only one name, but keep in mind that, *mutatis mutandis*, it will also work for more complex cases.

Once we have reformulated the platitudes, we form a conjunction out of them, which can be represented as a relational predicate true of the realizer of  $F_1$ . Call this relational predicate “ $T_F$ ” and let “a” stand for the name we introduced to refer to the realizer of  $F_1$ . We can now formulate what Lewis called a “postulate” of our mature folk-theory of  $F_1$ , namely,

$$T_F[a]$$

The postulate characterizes the realizer of  $F_1$  in virtue of its relations to other things, namely, in virtue of how it satisfies  $T_F$ . This allows us to say that the realizer of  $F_1$  is *exactly that* phenomenon characterized by  $T_F$ :  $T_F$  gives us the *functional role* of the realizer of  $F_1$ . To get a *non-circular* characterization of the realizer of  $F_1$  we now exchange the name for a free variable “x”, which yields

$$T_F[x]$$

We then restate our theory of  $F_1$  with the following Ramsey-sentence:

$$\exists x\{T_F[x] \wedge (\forall x^*T_F[x^*] \leftrightarrow (x = x^*))\}.$$

According to the Ramsey sentence, there is one thing x which is such that it satisfies the functional role stated by  $T_F$  and any other thing  $x^*$  satisfies this functional if and only if it is identical with x. With this Ramsey-sentence, we have derived a description of what realizes  $F_1$  solely in non- $F_1$  terms. Indeed we can use the Ramsey-sentence to *define*  $F_1$  in non- $F_1$  terms. Most importantly, however, this description can be used to determine whether  $F_1$  is *realized* by some unique set of entities captured by a theory expressible in terms of some other set of concepts  $F_2$ . If it is, then there will be a true bi-conditional that identifies  $F_1$  with  $F_2$ . This way we will have provided a

reductive analysis of  $F_1$  solely in terms of another set of concepts  $F_2$ .

However, we should *not* assume that such reductive analyses can be tested in the way presupposed by the OQA, because the truth of such reductive analyses might be *non-obvious*. First, whether some characterization of the realizer of  $F_1$  in non- $F_1$  terms is appropriate can already be non-obvious: the dispositions that characterize our concepts need not be immediately accessible on reflection, just as the rules of grammar underlying our uses of language reveal themselves in our dispositions to use that language, but are not immediately explicable by competent speakers. Second, such a characterization can be non-obvious because it need not capture *every* way the concepts are used, but only their *core* in a way that is free from inconsistency, mistaken assumptions, etc. However, such a characterization might well appear false to competent speakers, both on first sight *and* reflection, since it sometimes yields different applications at odds with speakers' intuitions. Third, the possibility of an analysis of  $F_1$  in terms of  $F_2$  might be non-obvious if  $F_2$  is part of an *empirical* theory arrived at using only *a posteriori* means. In this case, competent speakers will be unable to determine on reflection that  $F_1$  is analysable in terms of  $F_2$ , although this is, in fact, possible.

So, there can be two sets of concepts where one is analysable in terms of the other, but where the equivalence is *non-obvious* to competent speakers, even upon reflection. If this is true, however, the OQA is not damaging for reductionists. They can hold that there is a true reductive analysis of the representational content of normative judgements in terms of the representational content of certain kinds of non-normative descriptive judgements but that, for reasons similar to those given above, this is *non-obvious* for competent speakers even upon reflection and so cannot be tested using the OQA. So, there can be a true reductive analysis of the representational content of normative judgements in terms of the representational content of non-normative descriptive judgements, even if no such analysis passes the OQA.

As we see, there are at least two ways representationalists can escape the second horn of the dilemma: they can say that the OQA does not damage their theory, because the identity postulated by this theory can either be synthetic *a posteriori* or be

a conceptual truth, but non-obvious. But, if representationalists can use these resources to escape the second horn of the dilemma given above, expressivists should also be able to use them to escape the second horn of the normative attitude problem. That is, I want to suggest that expressivists can use either of these approaches to argue that normative attitudes are identical to certain kinds of attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking. They can claim that this identity is either synthetic *a posteriori*, or that it *is* conceptual, but non-obvious. So, expressivists can, for example, use the resources of the Cornell approach and claim that the question after the specific nature of the normative attitude is a synthetic *a posteriori* question subject to discovery in the empirical sciences, e.g. psychology and cognitive science. What philosophers do is to work with the understanding we have of normative judgements and psychology and then propose as an *empirical hypothesis*, that whatever mature empirical psychology and cognitive science will discover about the nature of normative judgements, they will also discover that normative judgements are identical with some kind of conative attitude already part of our theory of non-normative thinking. Alternatively, expressivists can follow the Canberra approach and say that we can analyse the normative attitude in terms of certain attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking: they can hold that conceptual analysis allows us to derive a description of normative judgements in terms not mentioning normative judgement (which need not be obviously true) and then propose, as a *hypothesis*, that the mental states so characterized are realized by certain conative attitudes already part of the theory of non-normative thinking that will be developed by empirical psychology and cognitive science. In this case, there will be a true reductive analysis of normative judgements in terms of certain conative attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking, but it will be non-obvious.

Of course, in the last chapter I have also pointed out that even with these resources available, representationalists still face a modified version of the second horn of the above dilemma, based on predictions such views must make about normative *disagreement*. Following this, someone might worry that a modified version of the second horn of the normative attitude problem based on disagreement would be applicable to expressivists even after they have adopted either of the above

approaches. In fact, an argument *that* expressivists face similar problems with disagreement has already been suggested, namely, by David Merli, although he argues this only for the case of moral judgements, and he does *not* consider expressivist views that endorse either of the above approaches to moral judgement, but only considers approaches of a more traditional kind.<sup>14</sup> Adopting the objection to the case of normative judgements in general, one might use Merli's objection in our context as follows: the expressivist account of the attitudes which constitute normative judgements will make certain predictions about when two parties disagree in their normative judgements. But, so the suggestion goes, for any expressivist proposal that argues that normative attitudes are identical to certain kinds of attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking it seems plausible that people with those attitudes can agree or disagree *in the relevant normative judgements* with people who do *not* have the attitudes in question. In fact, Merli suggests that we can use a twin-earth case to argue for this (he suggests this for the case of moral judgements, but if the suggestion works it should work for normative judgement in general):

“[W]e might follow the example of Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons by constructing a sort of ‘Conative Twin Earth’ where people engaged in something very much like moral discourse without any tie to the expressivist’s mental state of choice. To do this, we would need to construct a twin-earth scenario in which the only differences between our home planet and its twin are those entailed by changing the conative state at the core of the Twin Earthers’ twin-moral practice. All other details remain the same. If, once the details are filled in, we think we have robust moral disagreement, rather than equivocal miscommunication, with our twins, the expressivist is in some trouble.”<sup>15</sup>

But now the worry is that if *representationalists* still face a problem with disagreement in twin-earth cases *after* they have employed the resources that deal with the original version of the OQA, then employing these resources will *also* not help expressivists to account for disagreement in such cases. So, a version of the second horn of the normative attitude problem prevails.

I should say that I am not fully convinced that this kind of worry is as

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14 See Merli 2008.

15 Merli 2008: 35.

damaging for the reductionist expressivist, as it is for the reductionist representationalist. Note, for example, that reductionist expressivism *still* would not close any substantive normative questions just in virtue of its account of the nature of normative judgements. Furthermore, it seems perfectly feasible for the reductionist expressivist to hold that her claim about normative judgements reducing to conative attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms is a *contingent* claim and that normative judgements might be realized by other kinds of mental states in other possible worlds. After all, it is already a common thesis that reductionists in the philosophy of mind should hold that the relevant identity—of mental states with brain states for example—is a *contingent* matter.<sup>16</sup> So why should a similar response not be feasible for reductionist accounts that want to reduce one kind of mental state to another? For reductionist representationalists, however, it seems that it is not an option to say that it is a contingent matter which properties fully describable in non-normative terms are represented by normative concepts: representationalists plausibly have to see normative concepts as rigid designators, representing the same things in all possible worlds. This means, though, that there is an important disanalogy regarding the force a twin-earth case would have against either approach.

However, we can also think of these problems as motivating an alternative expressivist response to the normative attitude problem that I personally find quite attractive. I want to suggest that in addition to the above approaches to the second horn, the resources representationalists made available open up another route for expressivists to escape the normative attitude problem: expressivists can use those resources to treat normative attitudes as *sui generis* attitudes which are not reducible to attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking, but nevertheless fit into a naturalistic framework. Such an approach has at least three advantages. First, it allows expressivists to evade suspicions about normative judgements being reducible to conative attitudes already part of our theory of non-normative thinking. Second, it helps capture the impression that normative judgement ‘is what it is and not another thing.’ Third, it should enable expressivists to escape the worry that expressivist accounts of the nature of normative judgement face twin-earth type objections. So, if

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Chalmers 1996, Jackson 1998: 13, Lewis 1966, Lewis 1972, and Lewis 1995, Papineau 1993, and Smart 2007.

we find expressivism attractive, but think that reductionists have a problem with the worries presented further above, this should motivate us to follow this alternative route to an expressivist account. To show that such approaches are, in fact, feasible and to provide some license for optimism regarding the chances of success along this route for expressivists, I will explain in the next section how one such account, based on the Canberra approach, might proceed.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. *SUI GENERIS* NORMATIVE ATTITUDES FOR EXPRESSIVISTS

Let me start by noting that it is not necessary for an expressivist account of normative judgements to be compatible with naturalism that it can account for normative judgements in terms of *other* mental states. Instead, it is sufficient that an informative and non-circular characterization of normative judgements can be given that allows us to single out normative judgement as a phenomenon and to show that the mental states so characterized *fit into our best naturalistic philosophical theories of psychology*. So, to vindicate that an expressivist account on which normative judgements are *sui generis* is feasible, I will explain how such an account can give the relevant kind of characterization and how it can show that normative judgements so characterized fit into our best naturalistic philosophical theories of psychology.

#### 3.1. CHARACTERIZING NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS

I take it that a characterization of normative judgements needs to provide two things. First, a characterization of the distinctive kinds of normative judgements (that is each kind that is *not* reducible to other kinds of normative judgements plus other

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to using the Canberra approach, expressivists might, to provide an account of *sui generis* moral attitudes, also draw on Nicholas Sturgeon's work, a Cornell Realist who argues that moral facts are *irreducible natural* facts (see e.g. Sturgeon 1988). According to Sturgeon entities are *natural* entities, if and only if they play an ineliminable role in our best explanatory account of the world. Using this principle, expressivists could argue that normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes as follows. First, normative psychology and the entities it postulates, namely, normative judgements, play an explanatory role in our best explanatory account of human behaviour and mental life. Second, these entities cannot be fully accounted for in terms of mental states introduced by our account of non-normative thinking. So, normative psychology and the entities it postulates play an ineliminable role in our best explanatory account of the world. However, so the final step of the argument goes, normative psychology provides good reasons to see normative judgements as consisting in conative attitudes. Therefore, normative judgements consist in naturalistically respectable *sui generis* attitudes. To satisfy INFORMATIVITY we might then argue that normative psychology will make interesting discoveries about these attitudes.



relevant kinds of judgements, for example, descriptive or modal judgements), e.g. thinking that something is morally wrong, thinking that something is prudentially required, thinking that something is what we have all things considered reason to do, etc. Second, a characterization of normative judgement in general, namely, of what the distinctive kinds of normative judgements have in common in virtue of being normative judgements. How do we give the relevant characterization? We can do so, by using exactly that style of conceptual analysis developed by the Canberra approach. Clearly we already *have* an understanding of normative judgement in general and of the different kinds of normative judgements, although this understanding is mostly implicit and rough. This is our “folk-theory of normative judgement”. Using our folk-theory of normative judgement, we can derive a characterization of normative judgement in general and of the different kinds of normative judgements, the *functional role* of normative judgement. This should be possible, even if normative judgements are *sui generis*. However, if we follow the Canberra approach, the functional role is all we need for the kind of characterization we are looking for. So, as long as the Canberra approach to normative judgements can be developed, we should be able to give the relevant kind of characterization, even if normative judgements are *sui generis*. To vindicate that such an approach to normative judgements can be developed, I will now flesh out the details of how the necessary steps for doing so are to be carried out.

### 3.1.1. EXPLICATING THE PLATITUDES

The first crucial step in carrying out the Canberra approach to normative judgements is to explicate our implicit understanding of normative judgement in general and the different kinds of normative judgements, making explicit the claims that—according to our folk-theory—characterize them. These are the “platitudes” that characterize normative judgement in general and the different kinds of normative judgements in particular. In explicating these platitudes, we must bear in mind that we are explicating our *pre-theoretic* understanding of normative judgements. Since we should abstain from thinking that our folk-understanding of normative judgements has strong implications favouring one philosophical theory over another,

we should, consequently, formulate the platitudes as theory-neutral as possible, especially regarding the theories relevant for the inquiry at hand, namely, meta-normative representationalism and expressivism.

Candidates for platitudes characterizing normative judgement in general would be, e.g.

- (a) For any  $x$ , judging that  $x$  is morally wrong, judging that  $x$  is prudentially required, judging that  $x$  is what we have all things considered reason to do, ..., are instances of normative judgement.
- (b) Any instance of normative judgement can stand in the rational and inferential relations expressed by the logical and sentential connectives with all other mental states that can so stand.

Taking as an example judgements of the form “ $x$  is morally wrong”, candidates for platitudes that characterize *particular* modes of normative judgement would be e.g.

- (c) For any  $x$ , someone can judge  $x$  to be morally wrong, only if  $x$  is an action, intention, ..., desire.
- (d) For any  $x$ , if someone judges  $x$  to be morally wrong, then she will *ceteris paribus* be disposed to avoid  $x$ , to be angry with those who  $x$ , ..., to feel guilty for  $x$ .
- (e) For any  $x$ , the mental state of judging  $x$  to be morally wrong can stand in all the rational and inferential relations expressed by the logical and sentential connectives with all other mental states that can so stand.

To avoid problems that will become manifest shortly, I suggest the following procedure for the explication of the relevant platitudes: begin with explicating platitudes surrounding atomic instances of normative judgements, what I will call “atomic normative judgements”, and platitudes surrounding normative judgement in general, in so far as those concern only atomic normative judgements. As I said in the first chapter, I take atomic normative judgements to be those normative judgements expressed by normative sentences that can no longer be broken down into logically less complex sentences. Examples of atomic normative judgements might be “ $x$  is morally wrong”, “ $x$  is what we have all things considered reason to do”, etc. If we

want to use the Canberra approach to give a characterization of normative judgements, our theoretical purposes require that all platitudes be formulated so that all mentionings of normative judgements come out as *names* (or noun-phrases) for mental states. It does not really matter at which stage of our investigation we do this: we can do it when we first explicate the platitudes, or reformulate them later when all other theoretical work is done and we are about to form the Ramsey-sentence. For convenience's sake, however, let me say at this stage how this should be done for mentionings of normative judgement in general and of atomic normative judgements.

We can refer to normative judgement as a general phenomenon by using the name “normative judgement”. But how do we refer to atomic normative judgements using only names? We do not, of course, want to introduce a new name for any  $x$  and for any kind of atomic normative judgement one could make about  $x$ , so that e.g. we have to introduce a distinct name for judging murder to be morally wrong, judging stealing to be morally wrong and judging stealing to be what there is all things considered reason to do. My suggestion to avoid this is the following: we treat atomic normative judgements as *relational states* between subjects (the subjects making those judgements) and objects (broadly speaking, meaning whatever the respective kinds of normative judgements can conceivably be about; the relevant restriction will be determined by platitudes surrounding those modes).<sup>18</sup> And we refer to atomic normative judgements by introducing names for these relational states. We must, thereby, treat each distinctive kind of atomic normative judgement as a distinctive

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18 This notational treatment is inspired by Lewis' suggestion that functional role accounts of beliefs treat beliefs as relations between subjects and propositions to avoid the problem of having to introduce a new noun-phrase for any proposition which can be believed (see Lewis 1972: n. 13). Note that on notational treatments of this kind the platitudes about the states so characterized will contain universally quantified variables—variables standing for propositions on views like Lewis' or objects on my notational treatment. Although inspired by Lewis' proposal, let me emphasize that my proposal is *not* supposed to come with philosophical commitments about the nature of the objects to which moral thinking relates subjects. For example, a common philosophical assumption is that we can only be related to, or quantify over, things that *exist* (or *vice versa* that we are committed to the existence of everything we quantify over or say we stand in relation to). My account is not supposed to share this assumption, because “objects” are supposed to be “whatever normative judgements could conceivably be about”, where this is determined by our *folk-theory* of what these modes could be about and it is implausible that our folk-theory is committed to robust philosophical assumptions. So, “objects” could be things the existence of which is only possible or even metaphysically impossible, if the folk are committed to that (which might even be philosophically feasible. See e.g. Salmon 1989 and Soames 2007).

relational state, introducing a distinct name for each. On this notational treatment, the platitudes about atomic normative judgements (taking again the example of judgements about something being morally wrong) would look as follows:

- (c\*) For any x, someone can be in *the state of making a moral wrongness judgement* with regard to x, only if x is an action, intention, feeling, ..., desire.
- (d\*) For any x, if someone is in *the state of making a moral wrongness judgement* with regard to x, then she will, *ceteris paribus*, be disposed to avoid x, to be angry with those who x, ..., to feel guilty for x.
- (e\*) For any x, *the state of making a moral wrongness judgement* with regard to x can stand in all the rational and inferential relations expressed by the logical and sentential connectives with all other mental states that can so stand.

It should be noted that this notational treatment is theory-neutral: expressivists can claim that the states so characterized are realized by conative attitudes towards the relevant objects, while meta-normative representationalists can claim that they are realized by representational states towards incomplete propositions, where incomplete propositions are functions from the relevant objects to full propositions.

With the question of how to refer to atomic normative judgements using only names resolved, we must now address further difficulties that arise when we explicate the platitudes surrounding those judgements. According to some of those platitudes, atomic normative judgements can stand in the rational and inferential relations expressed by logical and sentential connectives such as negation, disjunction, modal operators, etc. with other mental states. The following, e.g. will be platitudes about the state of judging something to be morally wrong:

- (f) For any x, judging x to be morally wrong is inconsistent with judging x to be not morally wrong.
- (g) For any x, and any descriptive concept F, judging x to be morally wrong or F is inconsistent with judging x to be not morally wrong and judging x to be not F.
- (h) For any x, judging x to be morally wrong and prudentially required

is inconsistent with judging  $x$  to be not morally wrong or judging  $x$  to be not prudentially required.

There will obviously be many platitudes of this kind for any kind of atomic normative judgement.<sup>19</sup> These platitudes do two important things in the context of developing a Canberra approach for normative judgements. First, they introduce mentionings of logically complex mental states into our platitudes, e.g. *judging  $x$  to be not morally wrong*, *judging  $x$  to be morally wrong or  $F$* , *judging  $x$  to be wrong and prudentially required*, etc. Roughly speaking, logically complex mental states are states expressed by complex sentences formed by means of logical and other sentential connectives. Any such mental state stands in certain inferential and rational relations to other mental states, namely, those mental states expressed by the parts of the sentence that expresses the logically complex mental state. Call mental states expressed by the parts of sentences that express logically complex mental states the “parts” of the logically complex states.<sup>20</sup>

The second important thing such platitudes do is to reveal that for any *kind* of logically complex thought (thoughts expressed by negation, thoughts expressed by disjunction, etc.) there can be logically complex mental states of that kind of which atomic normative judgements are parts.

These two features of such platitudes are important in our context, because they generate two complications for the kind of characterization of normative judgements the Canberra approach aims at. The first complication arises because we can use the Canberra approach to give a non-circular characterization of normative judgements only if we can substitute *any* reference to normative judgements in our final characterization for a variable. This is achieved by using names to refer to

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19 We might reduce the number of platitudes about logically complex mental states required for a characterization of normative judgement, by giving recursive compositional rules for mental states instead of listing one-by-one in what rational and inferential relations atomic normative judgements can stand to what mental states (see e.g. Davis 2005: 222-226). Going into detail about how this might work, however, is beyond this chapter's scope.

20 Note that by calling mental states “logically *complex*” and others their “*parts*” I do *not* want to commit myself to the picture that mental states expressed by logically complex sentences are constituted by, or constructed out of, combinations of mental states which are *literally* the parts of those states. Instead, my calling mental states “logically complex” or “parts” is merely supposed to pick out that they stand in certain rational and inferential relations to other mental states. Specifically, rational and inferential relations of a kind such that they are legitimately expressed by logically complex sentences in the former and rational and inferential relations of a kind that they are legitimately expressed by the parts of logically complex sentences in the latter case.

normative judgements. Mentionings of logically complex mental states with atomic normative judgements as parts, however, make reference to normative judgements that must be stripped out of the final characterization for the characterization to be non-circular, namely, to the atomic normative judgements that form their parts. For example, mentioning the logically complex state “Judging x to be not morally wrong” makes reference to the atomic normative judgement “Judging x to be morally wrong” in a way that cannot appear in the final characterization of normative judgements, if it is to be non-circular. And the crucial question is how to strip away such references. It would be *very* bad if we could only do this by removing any reference to logically complex mental states *themselves*: that would require introducing a name for every possible logically complex thought that has an atomic normative judgement as its part, making the number of names required for our characterization of normative judgements grow out of hand. So, we need a different way to address this issue. The second complication is that some logically complex mental states will *themselves* be normative judgements. For example, the thought “If someone lies, then they did something morally wrong” seems to be a normative judgement. So, some logically complex mental states will be among the things that a theory of normative judgements needs to characterize.

How do we deal with these two complications? Before I explain how this is done, let me first make some crucial preliminary remarks about the *role* of logically complex thoughts in our theory of normative judgements. It is important to note that while some logically complex mental states will be characterized by a theory of normative judgements, certain logically complex mental states (e.g. logically complex *non-normative* thoughts), as well as the general nature of logically complex thoughts, will play a role within our theory of normative judgements *only* as things *characterizing* normative judgements. This has an important consequence, namely, that our characterization of normative judgements will successfully *pick something out*, only if we have a robust theory of logically complex mental states. After all, functional characterizations identify phenomena in virtue of their relations to other things. So, without knowing what these other things are, we cannot identify the phenomena we are after.

It is unlikely, of course, that representationalists and expressivists will subscribe to the same theory of logically complex mental states. Note, however, that in giving the *characterization* of normative judgements we do not need to presuppose such a robust theory of logically complex mental states. After all, even without a *robust* theory of logically complex thoughts, we should be sufficiently aware of the connections between normative judgements and logically complex thoughts and of the characteristics of logically complex thoughts relevant in the context of giving an account of normative judgements. We only need to keep in mind two things when using logically complex mental states in giving a characterization of normative judgements. First, that we need to do so in a way compatible with all plausible theories of the nature of logically complex thoughts and second, that our characterization of normative judgements has to be supplemented with a robust theory of logically complex mental states before we can determine what states realize our theory of normative judgements. With these remarks out of the way, let me now explain how to handle the two complications with logically complex thoughts, starting with the first.

The first thing needed to handle the first complication is a theory-neutral characterization of logically complex mental states. Let us call logically complex mental states “commitments”. “Commitment” is here to be read as weakly as possible. A *commitment* is any mental state C being in which rationally commits someone to be (or not be) in a set of other states  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$  in the sense that being in C and failing (or continuing) to be in  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$  when one could (and perhaps believes one could) would manifest irrationality. There will be a distinct kind of commitment for each distinct logical or sentential operator. This characterization should be compatible with any plausible approach to the nature of logically complex mental states.

We can now use this notion of a commitment to treat logically complex mental states as relational states relating subjects and mental states (that is whatever states are the parts of the relevant logically complex thought). Note that this treatment is neutral between different approaches to the nature of logically complex mental states: representationalists can say that commitments are realized by representational

states towards incomplete propositions (where here these are functions from propositions of the parts to the relevant logically complex propositions), but commitments understood along these lines should also be realizable by whatever states expressivists identify as the thoughts expressed by logically complex sentences.

The important thing about this treatment of logically complex states for developing a characterization of normative judgements using the Canberra approach is that it allows us to treat normative judgements as the relata of commitments when we formulate the platitudes about normative judgements that involve logically complex mental states. This will enable us to strip out all mentionings of atomic normative judgements in those platitudes and to substitute them for variables, without having to strip out mentionings of logically complex mental states themselves. For example, the platitudes about how atomic normative judgements can stand in rational and inferential relations I gave above can now be formulated as follows:

- (g\*) For any  $x$ , being in a state of making a moral wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$  is inconsistent with being in a negation commitment with regard to the state of making a wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$ .
- (h\*) For any  $x$ , and any state of descriptive thinking  $F$ , being in a disjunction commitment with regard to the state of making a moral wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$  and  $F$  is inconsistent with being in a negation commitment with regard to the state of making a moral wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$  and a negation commitment with regard to  $F$ .
- (i\*) For any  $x$ , being in a conjunction commitment with regard to the state of making a moral wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$  and the state of making a prudentially required judgement with regard to  $x$  is inconsistent with being in a negation commitment with regard to the state of making a moral wrongness judgement with regard to  $x$  or being in a negation commitment with regard to the state of making a prudentially required judgement with regard to  $x$ .



And as we can see, these formulations allow us to strip out all mentionings of atomic normative judgements and substitute them for variables, without having to strip out mentionings of logically complex mental states themselves. This deals with the first complication.

How do we deal with the second complication, namely, that some commitments are normative judgements? First, we need a notational treatment that allows us to separate instances of a kind of logically complex judgement that are normative judgements from those which are not.<sup>21</sup> Let us call logically complex *normative* judgements “normative commitments” and logically complex *non-normative* judgements “non-normative commitments”. So, we will have, e.g., *normative* and *non-normative* negation commitments, *normative* and *non-normative* conjunction commitments, etc. Normative commitments—like commitments in general—can, thereby, be treated as relational states between subjects and other mental states. Note that this notational treatment is *not* supposed to suggest that the logical and sentential connectives are ambiguous: it only serves, for our theoretical purposes, to identify and separate a subclass of those states we have called “commitments”. Indeed, there will be platitudes about normative commitments sharing those features with their non-normative counterparts necessary to make them instances of the same kind of

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21 Let me now return to a question I already raised in footnote seven in the first chapter, namely, the question how we actually *distinguish* normative from non-normative logically complex mental states. Previously, I claimed that answering this question would actually be part of the project that meta-normative theories engage in. I now want to give a rough suggestion of how meta-normative theories could go about answering this question, if they followed the proposal given here. On the approach presented here, what distinguishes normative and non-normative logically complex mental states will be determined by explicating our folk-theory of normative judgement. It seems clear to me that we have an intuitive grasp on what distinguishes normative from non-normative judgements in general and normative from non-normative logically complex thoughts in particular, since it is often clear whether to categorize thoughts (logically complex or not) as normative or non-normative. So, our folk-theory of normative judgement includes platitudes regarding what characterizes normative judgements in general and distinguishes them from non-normative judgements, as well as regarding what characterizes normative logically complex mental states and distinguishes them from non-normative logically complex thoughts. In the case of normative logically complex mental states, a candidate for such a platitude is, e.g., that someone in them is, *ceteris paribus*, disposed to praise those sharing them, be angry with those not sharing them, feel guilty for not adjusting their mental states in accordance with them, etc. It is *these* platitudes that determine how to distinguish normative from non-normative logically complex thoughts and have to be considered to settle unclear cases. Of course, interesting questions can be raised about this proposal, especially about the extent to which it works. Answering such questions, however, is beyond this chapter’s scope and not required for its purposes, given that difficulties with systematically distinguishing normative from non-normative thinking are problematic for expressivists and representationalists alike.

logically complex judgement.

With this notational treatment in place, we can now, in our characterization, single out those commitments that need to be characterized by our theory of normative judgements, namely, the normative commitments, and start collecting the platitudes surrounding those commitments. Among these will be platitudes regarding which features distinguish normative commitments from their non-normative counterparts, platitudes about the relations between normative commitments and other kinds of mental states, general platitudes about the nature of logically complex thoughts and the characteristics normative commitments have in virtue of being such thoughts, and so on. Because normative commitments, like all commitments, are treated as relational states, we should, consequently, have no difficulties to refer to normative commitments by introducing names for these relational states, which can later be substituted for variables. This deals with the second complication. Given that we now know how the platitudes about normative judgements are to be explicated, let me explain how a Canberra approach to normative judgements proceeds from here.

### **3.1.2. DERIVING OUR MATURE FOLK-THEORY OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS**

Once we have collected all the platitudes surrounding atomic normative judgements, normative commitments and what characterizes any of these modes of thinking as instances of normative judgement in general,—our “folk-theory of normative judgements”—the next step of a Canberra approach to providing a characterization of normative judgements is to subject these platitudes to our best epistemological methods, fitting them into a coherent and systematic framework and working out any principles underlying and general connections between them. This will enable us to give a more specific and systematic characterization of normative judgements in general and the distinctive kinds of normative judgements, help to eliminate errors underlying our assumptions about these phenomena and enable us to derive claims about them we might not have been aware of when we started the analysis. Subjecting our implicit understanding to this treatment makes sense: since we regard our implicit understanding as an epistemic device to get at the

phenomenon in question, applying our best epistemological methods to our implicit understanding of the relevant phenomenon will provide a much *deeper* grasp and understanding of that phenomenon and help to prevent errors we would otherwise have made.

The coherent and systematic framework of platitudes derived this way is our “mature folk-theory of normative judgements”. With this framework in hand we can now give the characterization of normative judgements we are looking for.

### 3.1.3. GIVING A NON-CIRCULAR AND INFORMATIVE CHARACTERIZATION

The first thing to do is to form a conjunction out of the platitudes that form our mature folk-theory. This conjunction can be represented as a relational predicate that is true of normative judgements in general and the various distinctive kinds of normative judgements in particular. Let us call this relational predicate “ $T_N$ ” and let  $n_1, n_2, \dots, n_n$  stand for the names we introduced for normative judgement in general and for the various kinds of normative judgements. We can now formulate the postulate of our mature folk-theory of normative judgements, namely,

$$T_N[n_1, n_2, \dots, n_n]$$

The postulate characterizes normative judgement in general and the different kinds of normative judgements in virtue of their relations to each other and other things, namely, in virtue of how they satisfy  $T_N$ . This allows us to say that normative judgements are *exactly that* phenomenon characterized by  $T_N$ :  $T_N$  gives us the functional role of normative judgements. To get a *non-circular* characterization of normative judgements we now exchange all the names for mental states with free variables, which yields

$$T_N[x, y, \dots, n]$$

We then restate our theory of normative judgements with the following Ramsey-sentence:

$$\exists x \exists y \dots \exists n \{T_N[x, y, \dots, n] \wedge (\forall x^*, \forall y^*, \dots, \forall n^* T_N[x^*, y^*, \dots, n^*] \leftrightarrow (x = x^*, y = y^*, \dots, n = n^*))\}.$$

With the transformation of our mature folk-theory of normative judgements into this Ramsey-sentence, there will now be no mentioning of normative judgement

in general or the distinctive kinds of normative judgements in our theory of normative judgements. Indeed we can *define* normative judgement in general or any of the distinctive kinds of normative judgements with the Ramsey-sentence. The characterization given by this Ramsey-sentence or any definition derived from it will, thus, be non-circular: we define normative judgements in terms that do not mention normative judgements.

Will this characterization be informative? I think it is very plausible that it will be. Obviously, generating the relevant characterization of normative judgements requires substantial philosophical work. Coincidentally, I think this is a project meta-normative theorists are already partially engaged in, namely, identifying the features of normative judgements in general and the particular features of the distinctive kinds of normative judgements. However, the kind of philosophical work required is very insightful. First, explicating our implicit understanding of some phenomenon often itself yields surprising results about (and grants deep insights into) the phenomenon in question. The history of philosophy is replete with examples: Hume's discovery of the problem of induction plausibly resulted from his explication of our implicit understanding of causality, and Plato's discovery of the Euthyphro dilemma seems to have derived from an explication of our implicit understanding of moral concepts. Second, if we subject our implicit understanding to an exhaustive process of inquiry using our best epistemic methods, this will likely yield a far better understanding of the phenomena in question than would have been obtained through mere reliance on implicit understanding. Again, the history of philosophy supports this: consider, for example, the growth in our understanding of the concept KNOWLEDGE that the post-Gettier debate produced, or how much our understanding of the nature of mental states has improved since the days of behaviourism. Such considerations strongly support that the theory we will have arrived at will be informative in any reasonable sense of the word. Thus, it seems possible to give a non-circular and informative characterization of normative judgements that allows us to single them out as a phenomenon, even if one thinks that normative judgements are constituted by a distinctive, *sui generis* type of mental state.

### 3.2. FITTING NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS INTO OUR BEST THEORIES OF PSYCHOLOGY

Importantly, however, all of this theorizing leaves one task unfulfilled: expressivists must show that normative judgements so characterized are constituted by *conative attitudes*. How can they show this? I will not endeavour to carry out this major research program here, but as an application for a license for optimism, let me note the basic structure I think it should take.

In my view, expressivists can establish that normative judgements as characterized by the Ramsey-sentence are constituted by *conative attitudes* by doing two things. First, by developing a plausible, empirically informed, and naturalistic philosophical theory of psychology that gives (i) a characterization of the general nature of conative attitudes and what features they can have in principle, (ii) a characterization of the general nature of representational states and what features they can have in principle, and (iii) a theory of the psychological laws governing the interaction between these two kinds of mental states, their interaction with other relevant kinds of mental states, and the role of mental states in the production of action. Second, by arguing on the basis of this theory that, given the characterization of normative judgements derived by philosophical theorizing, the best account of normative judgements is to regard them as constituted by a distinctive kind of conative attitude. This will be the place, for example, at which expressivists need to show that they can give a plausible *general* theory of logically complex thoughts that coheres with their thesis about normative judgements. To do so, they need plausible theories about the nature of commitments in general and the nature of non-normative commitments in particular and they need to explain how these theories fit with their thesis about the nature of normative judgements. Expressivists have several options here, namely, all of the options given to solve the Frege-Geach Problem, but this dissertation is neither the place to go into detail with regard to, nor to argue for, any of these options.<sup>22</sup>

Note, however, that on this approach it will *not* be necessary for expressivists that they can point out any specific kinds of familiar conative attitudes as candidates for normative judgements in order to establish that the best account of normative

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<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Blackburn 1988, Gibbard 1992: 83-102, Ridge 2006a, and Schroeder 2008a.

judgements as characterized by the Ramsey-sentence is to regard them as being constituted by a distinctive kind of conative attitude. Instead, it will be sufficient to show that conative attitudes can *in principle* have the characteristics possessed by normative judgements and that—given our characterization—it is more plausible to think of normative judgements in terms of conative attitudes than in terms of representational states. Indeed, certain ways in which expressivists have proceeded are already compatible with this approach: their arguments often do not require that normative judgements consist in e.g. desires or plans, but only that they are *desire-like* or *plan-like*, meaning that their behaviour can be explained by pointing to ways that conative attitudes could *in principle* behave. For example, Blackburn’s and Gibbard’s solutions to the Frege-Geach problem (however plausible they are) do not require that normative judgements *consist* in those mental states they claim can stand in the relevant inferential relations, but could be merely used to show that conative attitudes, and so normative judgements if they were conative attitudes, can *in principle* stand in those relations.

Once this further task in the philosophical theory of psychology is completed, expressivists who hold that normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes will have done everything necessary to answer the question after the nature of those conative attitudes that constitute normative judgements. They will have done so by giving a characterization of normative judgements and then by arguing that the mental states so characterized can only be a kind of conative attitude. A remaining question is whether—and by what natural facts—these mental states are realized. But this task is for psychology, cognitive science and neuroscience, not philosophy. Nevertheless, if we establish, based on a plausible naturalistic philosophical theory of psychology, that there can be attitudes that satisfy the characterization of normative judgements, we can be optimistic that normative judgements will be realized by natural facts.

#### 4. SUMMARY

In this chapter I have argued for two conclusions. First, that there is an important symmetry between the normative attitude problem and a problem meta-

normative representationalism faces, and that this symmetry puts expressivists and representationalists on an equal footing regarding important theoretical resources they can use to address these problems. Second, that those resources allow expressivists not only to take the normative attitude problem by its second horn—holding that normative thinking is reducible to attitudes fully describable in non-normative terms—, but also to take it by its first horn—holding that normative thinking consists in *sui generis* attitudes. To support this contention, I sketched just enough of one such non-standard expressivist position to both vindicate that adopting such an approach is feasible and to provide some “license for optimism” regarding the chances of success along this route for expressivists.

## CHAPTER III: EXPRESSIVISM AND *ALL THAT*

### 0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter and the next two are concerned with a neglected challenge to a particular expressivist project: quasi-realism. Part of this project is to show that expressivism is fully compatible with certain assumptions underlying our ordinary practice, namely, that normative thought and discourse are *truth-apt* and that normative judgements are *beliefs*. While quasi-realists have suggested ways in which expressivists can allow normative sentences and judgements to be truth-apt and normative judgements to be beliefs, they have generally neglected a central phenomenon in this context. These are those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents. In this chapter and the following two I will develop an expressivist friendly, *deflationist* account of those uses of *that*-clauses. In this chapter I both explain in greater detail why quasi-realists require an account of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses and discharge worries meta-normative theorists might have that such an account is in principle impossible. In the fourth chapter I develop a deflationist account of *that*-clauses on which the relevant attributions of *that*-clauses to normative *sentences* are compatible with expressivism. In the fifth chapter I explain how this account can be generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in attributions of belief and other propositional attitudes.

The present chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section, I present the challenge according to which expressivism undermines central assumptions underlying our ordinary practice, namely, the assumptions that normative sentences and judgements are truth-apt and that normative judgements are beliefs. In the second section, I explain what the quasi-realist project is and introduce the standard package which quasi-realists use to respond to the challenge. In the third section, I explain why the quasi-realist needs an account of certain uses of *that*-clauses to fully respond to the challenge. In the fourth section, I remove worries that it is *in principle* impossible for expressivists to give such an account which satisfies the quasi-realist's theoretical demands. This clears the way for the account given in the fourth and fifth



chapter. Finally, in section five, I outline my strategy for what follows.

## 1. EXPRESSIVISM, TRUTH-APTITUDE AND BELIEF: THE PROBLEM

One major worry about expressivism is that it undermines certain central assumptions underlying our ordinary practice, namely, those that lend support to some form of meta-normative realism.<sup>1</sup> I take any view to be a form of *meta-normative realism* (or just “realism” in what follows) if and only if it subscribes to

**REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** The mental states which constitute normative judgements consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

**SUCCESS-THEORY ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** At least some substantive normative judgements are true.<sup>2</sup>

and

**OBJECTIVITY OF NORMATIVE FACTS:** At least some substantive normative judgements are true independently of our beliefs, attitudes, social norms or conventions.

Two assumptions underlying our ordinary practice that seem to support realism that expressivism allegedly undermines are

**TRUTH-APTITUDE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:** Normative sentences and judgements can be true.

and

**NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS ARE BELIEFS:** Normative judgements are beliefs and assertoric use of normative sentences conventionally expresses beliefs.

Indeed, in the past expressivism was often *defined* as the view which *denies* these

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1 This kind of objection to expressivism is pressed by e.g. Brink 1989, Cuneo 2006 and Cuneo 2007, Enoch 2011, Shafer-Landau 2003, Smith 1994a, and Wedgwood 2008.

2 The restriction to “substantive” normative judgements is supposed to rule out that views would count as forms of realism just in virtue of accepting that tautological judgements involving normative concepts or negative judgements such as “There are no practical reasons to give to charity” can be true. Of course, it is difficult to determine how we should distinguish “substantive” from “non-substantive” normative judgements. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, our rough intuitive understanding should suffice.

assumptions.<sup>3</sup> This was based on three assumptions about truth, truth-aptitude, and belief that used to go mostly unchallenged in meta-normative theory. First, that what it is for the assertoric use of declarative sentences or judgements to be true *is* for those utterances or judgements to correctly represent—in some theoretically robust sense—the world as being a certain way. Second, that, consequently, what it is for sentences or judgements to be truth-apt *is* for them to potentially represent the world as being a certain way. Third, that what it is for mental states to be beliefs just *is* for them to be representational states.

However, expressivists deny that the meaning of normative sentences, or the nature of normative judgements, are to be explained in terms of those sentences or judgements standing in some theoretically significant representation relation to the world. So, given the above assumptions, expressivists must hold that normative judgements and normative sentences are not even in the business of being true and that normative judgements are not beliefs.

Note that these assumptions strongly embody representationalist commitments. Since declarative sentences plausibly just are the sentences that are truth-apt and beliefs just are the judgements expressed by the assertoric use of declarative sentences, the above assumptions fit exactly with representationalist commitments: that declarative sentences and the judgements their assertoric uses express are to be accounted for in terms of some robust representation relation. Acceptance of such commitments on *both* sides of the debate explains why expressivism has been *defined* as the view which denies that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and that normative judgements are beliefs.

## 2. EXPRESSIVISM, TRUTH-APTITUDE AND BELIEF: QUASI-REALISM TO THE RESCUE

While these assumptions have long shaped meta-normative theory and expressivism, they have come under attack. Simon Blackburn's project "quasi-realism" has led the way in providing a challenge to these assumptions.<sup>4</sup> *Quasi-Realism* aims to show that expressivism is fully compatible with those central assumptions underlying our ordinary practice that seem to support realism. The project is born

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Gibbard 1992, Smith 1994a, Smith 1994b or Smith 1994c, and Wright 1992.

<sup>4</sup> The first occurrences of quasi-realism are in Blackburn 1984a and Blackburn 1984c.

out of the methodological maxim that the best philosophical underpinning of our ordinary practice is the one that best preserves the legitimacy of that practice at the least theoretical cost. Quasi-realism promises to undermine realism's claim to supremacy regarding the preservation of our ordinary practice, while preserving these assumptions without any of the theoretical costs of realism.

A crucial tool in the quasi-realist's tool-box is to apply a three-step strategy I call the "quasi-realist manoeuvre" to those assumptions expressivism allegedly undermines. The first step of this strategy is to point out that meta-normative debate aims to provide a philosophical underpinning of the phenomena characterizing our *ordinary* normative practice. When one debates whether some meta-normative theory accounts for, or undermines, certain commitments underlying that practice, this means that one needs to proceed on a sufficiently theory-neutral understanding of the issues in question. After all, which philosophical understanding of these phenomena underlies our ordinary practice is exactly what is at issue in this debate. So, one needs to avoid begging any questions with the characterizations one gives of the phenomena that meta-normative theories are supposed to capture. Rather, meta-normative debate must start from a platitudinous understanding of the commitments in question, and then look for the best theoretical underpinning of this understanding. This is even more important, as it is simply implausible to assume from the outset that our ordinary practice comes with any robust theoretical assumptions.

The second step is to point out that to determine whether *expressivism* is incompatible with any assumptions underlying our ordinary practice, what needs to be considered is how these assumptions would have to be understood *if expressivism were true*. At this point, expressivists refuse to let representationalists dictate how to understand terms such as "true" when assumptions like

***TRUTH-APTITUDE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** Normative sentences and judgements can be true.

are under consideration. Instead, they urge that one consider whether there are plausible accounts of the relevant notions on which expressivism is compatible with these assumptions. Note again that the target notions here are the notions *as they figure*

*in our ordinary practice.* After all, the relevant assumptions are assumptions underlying our ordinary practice and so, need to be understood as they are understood in that practice.

The final step of the quasi-realist manoeuvre is to give an account of the notions at play in the problematic assumptions on which expressivism is in fact compatible with those assumptions. At least with regards to truth, truth-aptitude, and belief, the standard approach for quasi-realists here is one that fits very naturally with expressivism, namely, to endorse a mix of what I am going to call “deflationist” and “minimalist” accounts of the relevant notions.<sup>5</sup> Let me quickly explain for what kinds of approaches I will use the labels “deflationist” and “minimalist” in this context.<sup>6</sup>

Deflationist and minimalist approaches share a commitment to “deflating” certain kinds of linguistic phrases that it is tempting to read in theoretically very committing ways. According to deflationists and minimalists, the more conventional “inflationary” approaches to these phrases should be avoided, because they entail strong ontological commitments and bring with them unnecessary theoretical problems. Rather, everything that needs accounting for when it comes to these phrases can be accounted for on ontologically and theoretically slim grounds. This is why these approaches are natural partners for expressivism: not only do they offer a way to make expressivism compatible with certain relevant assumptions, but they do so in a way that connects to expressivism’s theoretical sentiments. After all, expressivism itself is committed to a similar project—accounting for problematic

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5 Blackburn originally suggested a non-deflationist account for truth that was supposed to allow the expressivist to say that normative judgements and sentences can be true (Blackburn 1984a), but has since changed his view to an endorsement of a deflationary account of truth, combined with a minimal account of truth-aptitude (Blackburn 1998a). Michael Ridge has suggested that hybrid expressivists can, in fact, remain neutral regarding the account of truth they accept, although he does endorse a minimalist account of truth-aptitude as well (Ridge Forthcoming). Horgan and Timmons have suggested an account of belief which is not minimalist, but which nevertheless is compatible with expressivism (Horgan and Timmons 2006).

6 Of course, the labels “deflationism” and “minimalism” are used in a variety of ways in the philosophical debate (for example, Crispin Wright and Paul Horwich use the label “minimalism” in different ways (see Horwich 1998a and Wright 1992)), and my use of these labels might sometimes cut across the use of other people. The characterization that follows is supposed to capture what I take to be the most important distinction between two kinds of “non-inflationary views” and a distinction that is important for my purposes. While it is desirable, to avoid confusion, to try to capture the same views with those labels that others are trying to pick out, I find it much more important for reasons of clarity to fix specific meanings for these terms than to have a use for the labels that overlaps to the largest degree with the use of others. When I use those labels I will do so to pick out the positions characterized in what follows.

linguistic phrases, namely, the normative ones, on ontologically and theoretically slim grounds. However, deflationary and minimalist approaches differ from each other in the way in which they approach this project.

*Deflationary accounts* reject the representationalist order of explanation for the phrases in question. Recall that on the representationalist order of explanation, questions about the facts a domain of thought and discourse represents are given explanatory priority when it comes to accounting for the nature of that domain of thought and discourse. According to a deflationary account of some phrase, the best account of that phrase does *not* proceed in terms of invoking any entities which that phrase functions to represent. Instead, a deflationary explanation has two parts. First, an account of the patterns of use that characterize the phrase in question in our linguistic practice, where those patterns can be characterized by a limited number of platitudes that can be specified *without* invoking any entity that is represented, in some theoretically robust sense, by that phrase. For example, these platitudes might only characterize an *intra-linguistic* role that is played by the phrase. Such platitudes *exhaust* what can be said by means of analysis about the phrase.<sup>7</sup>

Second, this account of the patterns of use of the phrase is combined with an account of why our vocabulary includes this phrase, which proceeds in terms of some *non-representational function*. According to deflationists we can completely explain what function the relevant phrase has in our linguistic practice *without* invoking any entity that is represented, in some theoretically robust sense, by that phrase. The account of the non-representational function will explain why and vindicate that the phrase in question is exhaustively characterized by the platitudes surrounding that phrase. It

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<sup>7</sup> It is sometimes assumed, inspired by the most well-known form of deflationism—deflationism about the truth-predicate—, that deflationism is characterized by being committed to these platitudes taking a certain *form*. Specifically, it is sometimes assumed that any form of deflationism about *any* concept must be able to identify some sort of equivalence schema similar to the schema that famously governs the truth predicate. Such a tendency can, for example, be observed in Cuneo 2013 and Dunaway 2010. However, I do not think that holding some sort of equivalence schema to be central to the relevant concept should be seen as a characterizing feature of deflationism. Rather, what is important for a view to be deflationist, is that the platitudes characterizing the concept have the named characteristics. This could be possible, even if we cannot identify a schema of the kind that governs truth as governing the concept in question. As an example for forms of deflationism which do not operate by way of such schemas, but with a limited set of platitudes about inference schemas take some other form, see e.g. Michael Williams' deflationary reading of Sellars' account of modal claims (Williams 2010: 324) or Stephen Schiffer's deflationary account of propositions (Schiffer 2003).

will also explain why those platitudes are limited in number and why they do not invoke any entity that is represented, in some theoretically robust sense, by that phrase. This leads deflationary accounts to be ontologically conservative regarding the relevant phrase: adding that phrase with all its theoretical commitments to our vocabulary does not expand our ontological commitments, or expands them only conservatively.

Does this mean that if the target of a deflationary account is a predicate, for example, that the account has to deny that there is a property corresponding to that predicate? Deflationists can take different approaches here. First, they can deny that—despite appearances—the target phrase is a genuine predicate.<sup>8</sup> Second, deflationists can accept that the predicate is a genuine predicate, but hold that it is misguided to talk about the property it corresponds to, or that doing so is only a convenient way of speaking that can be rephrased without theoretical loss so that no property is mentioned.<sup>9</sup> Third, they can hold that the predicate corresponds to an “insubstantial” property. This might then be cashed out, e.g. in terms of the property playing no fundamental explanatory role.<sup>10</sup>

*Minimalist accounts*, on the other hand, endorse the representationalist order of explanation for the phrase in question. However, on minimalist accounts, the theoretical requirements for the represented entity to be instantiated will not be very theoretically demanding, and the entity will not be of a kind that would be an interesting object of investigation for science or metaphysics. Rather, the theory will assign those features to the entity that explain why the relevant phrase has those features any plausible theory of that phrase must account for *and will go no further*. So, while minimalist accounts will not be ontologically conservative, their theoretical demands will be minimal.

Note that of these two kinds of approaches, deflationary approaches are even more natural allies for expressivists than minimalist approaches. Both expressivists

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8 This is, for example, what pro-sentential theories of truth do, since they deny that the truth-predicate is a genuine predicate. For pro-sentential theories of truth, see e.g. Brandom 1988 and Belnap, Camp, and Grover 1975.

9 Certain kinds of “fictionalist” versions of deflationism might fall into this camp. See e.g. Woodbridge 2005. Hartry Fields’ position about propositions as articulated in Field 2001b might also be understood along these lines.

10 This is the position of Paul Horwich (Horwich 1998a: 37-40).

and deflationists hold that it is wrong to adopt the representationalist order of explanation for all phrases that are of special interest to philosophers and both approaches highlight the importance of paying attention to *non-representational* functions of areas of thought and discourse in accounting for their nature. More specifically, both expressivist and deflationist approaches suggest that we should approach problematic vocabulary by focusing on language and thought in that respective domain *first*, rather than metaphysics. In a sense, they can be seen as extensions into different domains of the same project. This is the project which gives priority to questions about language and thought when it comes to accounting for vocabularies that are of distinctive philosophical interest and which urges us to provide non-representational accounts for those vocabularies for which a representationalist order of explanation runs into significant problems. With this cleared up, let me present what I take to be the standard quasi-realist package regarding our ordinary notions of truth-aptness and belief.<sup>11</sup>

Let's begin with truth-aptness. Combining expressivism with the assumption that normative judgements are truth-apt requires two things. First, an account of the truth-predicate on which expressivists can allow its application to normative sentences and judgements. Second, an account of truth-aptness on which expressivists can allow normative sentences and judgements to be truth-apt. Let us consider the truth-predicate first.

Regarding the truth-predicate, quasi-realists are normally deflationists.<sup>12</sup> *Deflationism about truth* consists in a family of theories sharing two assumptions.<sup>13</sup> First, that the truth-predicate is characterized by patterns of use that can be fully captured by the "equivalence schema". According to the *equivalence schema*, for any  $p$  assessable in terms of truth, all (non-paradoxical) instances of

(T)  $\langle p \rangle$  is true if and only if  $p$ .

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11 The "standard package" is accepted at least by Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard, who are the prime proponents of quasi-realism (see e.g. Blackburn 1998a and Gibbard 2003).

12 A notable exception here is Mike Ridge, who has argued that his hybrid expressivism can remain neutral regarding the correct account of the truth-predicate (see Ridge 2009a or Ridge Forthcoming).

13 For proponents of deflationary theories of truth, see e.g. Ayer 1935 and Ayer 1963, Belnap, Camp, and Grover 1975, Brandom 1988 and Brandom 1994, Field 1972, Frege 1891, Horwich 1998a, Quine 1970, Ramsey 1927 or Ramsey 1991, Strawson 1949 and Strawson 1950, and Williams 1999.

hold.<sup>14</sup>

Second, that the truth predicate exists because of its *non-representational* functions.<sup>15</sup> One such function, for example, is as a syntactic device that allows certain kinds of quantifications and generalizations.<sup>16</sup> Due to the equivalence schema, for any declarative sentence S asserting that S is true is equivalent to asserting S. This allows to use the truth predicate to assert a number of sentences by quantifying over them and asserting that they are true. This way the truth predicate enables us e.g. to report acceptance of a number of sentences without having to list them or to accept sentences *without knowing what those sentences are*.

These commitments lead deflationary theories of truth to ontological conservativeness: adding the truth-predicate to our vocabulary does not expand our ontological commitments, or only expands them conservatively. On the question whether there is a truth-property, different deflationists then take one of the above named responses.

This account of truth is very attractive for quasi-realists. First, it does not require judgements and sentences to be robustly representational for the truth-predicate to apply to them. In fact, on this account attributing truth to judgements brings with it no more robust theoretical commitments than making those judgements themselves. Second, deflationism offers an account of the truth-predicate on which our ordinary practice would need the truth-predicate, *even if expressivism were true*. For example, it will often be quite useful to be able to quantify over normative sentences or judgements in the way the truth predicate allows.

What about truth-apptitude? Here it is best to proceed in two stages, considering first the quasi-realist's account of truth-apptitude for sentences and then her account of the truth-apptitude of normative judgements. This is best, because the quasi-

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14 The brackets here stand for an appropriate device to mention those things that can be assessed in terms of truth (e.g. quotation marks in the case of declarative sentences or the operator “the proposition that x” in the case of propositions) and “p” stands for that declarative sentence by means of which we can represent *p* (e.g. the declarative sentence “Manfred is a welder.” in the case of the proposition MANFRED IS A WELDER or the declarative sentence “Manfred is a welder.”).

15 Certain early proponents of versions of deflationism about truth actually held that the truth-predicate is *redundant*. See e.g. Ayer 1935, Frege 1891, Ramsey 1927, and Ramsey 1991. This view, however, is no longer endorsed, after deflationists realized that the truth-predicate, even if it is characterized by the limited patterns of use deflationists identified, can perform very useful functions. See e.g. Horwich 1998a, Quine 1970, and Strawson 1950.

16 See e.g. Quine 1970 and Horwich 1998a: 122/123.



realist's account of truth-aptness for normative judgements proceeds via her account of how normative judgements can be beliefs, which rests on her account of truth-aptness for sentences.

Regarding the truth-aptness of sentences, the standard quasi-realist move is to endorse "disciplined syntacticism", a minimalist approach to truth-aptness.<sup>17</sup> According to *disciplined syntacticism* only two features are jointly *necessary* and *sufficient* for sentences to be truth-apt. First, they need to have the right *syntactic form*, namely, the syntactic form of paradigmatic instances of truth-apt sentences, which is that syntactic form possessed by *declarative sentences*. Among other things, this means that the sentence be embeddable under negation, in conditionals, in propositional attitude ascriptions, and so on. Second, the sentences need to be *disciplined* which is being governed by sufficient norms that regulate appropriate and inappropriate usage of those sentences. According to disciplined syntacticism, these two features are all that is required for sentences to be truth-apt.

Again, this account is attractive for the quasi-realist. Disciplined syntacticism does not *require* that sentences stand in some theoretically significant representation relation to the world for those sentences to be truth-apt. At least it is *in principle* compatible with all kinds of sentences being truth-apt, the meaning of some of which might not be best explained in representationalist terms. And the challenge that disciplined syntacticism requires the quasi-realist to address to allow normative sentences to be truth-apt is the Frege-Geach Problem, which expressivists are committed to addressing anyways.

Of course, disciplined syntacticism only provides the quasi-realist with an account of truth-aptness for normative *sentences*. What, however, about the truth-aptness of normative judgements? While normative judgements might be truth-apt for other reasons, I take it that the quasi-realists' approach is to establish that normative judgements are truth-apt *because* they are *beliefs*.<sup>18</sup> After all, beliefs are the

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17 See e.g. See Blackburn 1998b, Lenman 2003, Ridge Forthcoming, and Sinclair 2006. Disciplined syntacticism is a position that is also endorsed by authors who are not expressivists (or not expressivists in the sense as I have defined it). See e.g. Boghossian 1990, Divers and Miller 1994 and Divers and Miller 1995, Price 1988 and Price 1998, and Wright 1992: 24-28; the label "disciplined syntacticism" was introduced by Jackson, Oppy, and Smith 1994: 293-295.

18 It might be open for expressivists to hold that normative judgements are truth-apt, even though they are not beliefs. This seems, for example, the strategy originally taken by Blackburn in *Spreading*

paradigmatic examples of truth-apt mental states. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that even with disciplined syntacticism in place expressivists cannot allow normative *sentences* to be truth-apt unless they allow normative judgements to be beliefs. This is so, because of a platitude that connects the truth-aptitude of sentences with belief. Here is Crispin Wright on the relevant platitude:

“Assertion has the following analytic tie to belief: if someone makes an assertion, and is supposed sincere, it follows that she has a belief whose content can be captured by means of the sentence used.”<sup>19</sup>

Michael Smith puts the same point as follows

“Everyone agrees that a sentence that is truth-assessable, if uttered sincerely, is an assertion. And everyone agrees that the function of an assertion is to convey the fact that the utterer believes that what the sentence uttered says is so is so.”<sup>20</sup>

I take it that the platitude Wright and Smith have in mind is

**ASSERTION AND BELIEF:** The mental state conventionally expressed by assertoric use of a truth-apt sentence is a belief, such that the content of the belief is the content of the sentence.

If this is correct, truth-aptitude for sentences and those sentences expressing belief are so closely connected that quasi-realists will be unable to allow normative sentences to be truth-apt, unless they have shown that they can allow that normative judgements—the states conventionally expressed by assertoric use of normative sentences—are beliefs. So, what can quasi-realists say about belief?

Disciplined syntacticism and *ASSERTION AND BELIEF* provide the resources for a minimal account quasi-realists can use.<sup>21</sup> According to minimalism about belief,

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*the Word* (Blackburn 1984a). I take it, however, that this is a line of argument that quasi-realists currently would not want to take, because I assume that the assumption underlying our ordinary practice is that normative judgements are truth-apt *because* they are beliefs.

19 Wright 1992: 14. For the same platitude, see also Divers and Miller 1994 and Divers and Miller 1995, Jackson, Oppy, and Smith 1994, Lenman 2003, and Smith 1994b and Smith 1994c.

20 Smith 1994b: 3.

21 The account was first explicitly suggested by Neil Sinclair (Sinclair 2006), although hints of it can be found in other places too (see e.g. Blackburn 1998a: 70/71 or Gibbard 2003: 180-184). An alternative suggestion to this minimal account is given by Michael Ridge (Ridge 2009b). According to Ridge, we should see the term “belief” as it figures in our ordinary practice as a *natural kind* term that should be given a semantics along the lines first suggested by Saul Kripke and Hillary Putnam (see Kripke 1980 and Putnam 1975). Following this proposal, we would say that the prime commitment underlying our use of the term “belief” is that beliefs are whatever natural kinds causally govern our use of that term, where the natural kinds in question are those that figure in a mature psychology or cognitive science. However, so Ridge argues, cognitive science might discover that our use of the term “belief” is actually governed by two different natural kinds, namely,

mental states are beliefs if and only if they can be conventionally expressed by assertoric use of truth-apt sentences:<sup>22</sup> those characteristics that mental states need to possess to be suitable for conventional expression by the assertoric use of a truth-apt sentence are *necessary* and *sufficient* for those mental states to be beliefs.

Minimalism about belief is attractive for the quasi-realist, because it does not require beliefs to be representational states. As long as it can be shown that the use of truth-apt sentences can conventionally express non-representational states, non-representational states can be beliefs. And again, what this requires quasi-realists to address is that the relevant characteristics of declarative sentences can be explained in terms of assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally expressing non-representational states. This is the Frege-Geach Problem, a challenge expressivists are committed to addressing anyways. However, minimalism allows expressivism to be *in principle* compatible with normative judgements being beliefs, and, consequently, for them to be truth-apt.

Of course, once expressivists accept that normative judgements are beliefs, expressivism can no longer be characterized along traditional lines. Specifically, it cannot be characterized as the view according to which the difference between descriptive and normative judgements is that the former are beliefs, while the latter are desires—at least not in the ordinary senses of “belief” and “desire”. Someone used to this traditional characterization might worry how expressivism is then to be characterized. However, my characterization in the first chapter already suggests that these worries are misplaced. Expressivists should merely characterize their view about

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representational states and those states which, according to expressivists, constitute normative judgements. It is not a given, however, that in this event ordinary speakers would revise their usage of the term “belief”, as long as the states still have sufficient features in common (as was the case when it was discovered that our use of the term “jade” is actually governed by two natural kinds). And in this case, expressivists can legitimately hold that normative judgements are beliefs.

22 Note that this account is compatible with the fact that even if not all beliefs are representational states, all representational states are beliefs, and is also compatible with representational states being *paradigm examples* of beliefs, even though by itself it does not explain this latter fact (for explanations why representational states are paradigm examples of beliefs, even though they are not the only kinds of mental states that are beliefs, see Lenman 2003, Sinclair 2006, and Ridge 2006b). On this account, the only difference between beliefs that are representational states and beliefs that are not is that beliefs that are representational states are beliefs in the sense given by minimalism about belief *and* have some additional property R, where R is *that* property which, according to expressivists, the mental states paradigmatically expressed by descriptive sentences have but the mental states paradigmatically expressed by normative sentences lack. So, R just is the property of standing in some theoretically robust representation relation to the world.

normative judgements as consisting in two theses, namely,

***NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements do *not* consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

***CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements (at least partially) consist in conative attitudes.

And they should say that what makes states representational states or conative attitudes, in the senses mentioned in these theses, is cashed out in terms of a robust theory of psychology, not in terms of our ordinary notions of “belief” or “desire” as they figure in folk-psychology.<sup>23</sup>

This completes my presentation of the standard quasi-realist package for combining expressivism with

***TRUTH-APTITUDE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** Normative sentences and judgements can be true.

and

***NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS ARE BELIEFS:*** Normative judgements are, and assertoric use of normative sentences conventionally expresses, beliefs.

This package comes with a significant commitment to solving the Frege-Geach Problem. Even bracketing this commitment, however, the package is incomplete in a problematic way, as I will explain in the next section.

### 3. WHY QUASI-REALISTS NEED AN ACCOUNT OF *THAT*-CLAUSES

It is important to highlight that the quasi-realist package is only successful in combining expressivism with *TRUTH-APTITUDE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS* and *NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS ARE BELIEFS* if two conditions hold. First, the package provides plausible accounts of our ordinary notions of truth, truth-aptitude and belief and second, all of the commitments that a plausible account of truth, truth-aptitude, and belief

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<sup>23</sup> This is also suggested by Gibbard 2003, Ridge 2006b and Sinclair 2006.

brings with it are compatible with expressivism. However, a plausible account of our ordinary notions of truth, truth-aptness, and belief at least needs to capture all of the platitudes characterizing these notions. But, there are platitudes characterizing belief and truth-aptness that make mention of a phenomenon for which no account has been given yet for how it fits with expressivism. Consider again,

**ASSERTION AND BELIEF:** The mental state conventionally expressed by assertoric use of a truth-apt sentence is a belief, such that the content of the belief is the content of the sentence.

This platitude points towards further claims about belief. For example, it implies

**BELIEF IS A PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE:** Belief is a state with content.

It also implies

**BELIEF, ASSERTION AND CONTENT:** The content of a belief is the content of any declarative sentence assertoric use of which conventionally expresses that belief.<sup>24</sup>

and

**DECLARATIVE SENTENCES HAVE CONTENT:** If a sentence is truth-apt, then the sentence has a content.

These platitudes make reference to the contents of sentences and beliefs, or more specifically to what I will call their “propositional contents”. What do I mean, in this context, by the “propositional contents” of sentences and beliefs? It should be clear from the outset that “propositional content” is a technical term. Insofar as *ASSERTION AND BELIEF*, *BELIEF IS A PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE*, *BELIEF, ASSERTION AND CONTENT*, and *DECLARATIVE SENTENCES HAVE PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT* are assumptions that underly our ordinary practice, they are technical ways of capturing certain phenomena surrounding belief, assertion, and declarative sentences. I take these roughly to be the following.

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<sup>24</sup> While *BELIEF, ASSERTION AND CONTENT* is regarded as a platitude in meta-normative theory, it is worthwhile to highlight that there is actually a debate in the philosophy of language about the question whether the assertoric content of the utterance of a sentence (*what is said* by use of that sentence) and the semantic content of a sentence (its meaning in the sense relevant e.g. for compositionality) are the same thing (that these come apart is defended by e.g. Michael Dummett (e.g. Dummett 1973 or Dummett 1991), Dilip Ninan (Ninan 2010), Brian Rabern (Rabern 2012), Jason Stanley (Stanley 1997 and Stanley 2002), and Seth Yalcin (Yalcin 2007)). This dissertation is not the place to go into this debate. Given that the dissertation moves in a dialectic in which *BELIEF, ASSERTION AND CONTENT* is generally accepted, I will do so, in what follows, as well.

First, that belief is a propositional attitude. Where there is belief there is something *that is believed*, which is something that can also be the object of other propositional attitudes, such as hopes, desires, fears, etc. For example, if we say of someone that they believe that there are monsters hiding in the closet, we say that *what they believe is that there are monsters hiding in the closet*, which is also what someone hopes, when they hope *that there are monsters hiding in the closet* or what someone fears, when they fear *that there are monsters hiding in the closet*.

Second, that for any meaningful declarative sentence, there is something *that this sentence means*, which is also *what is said by* literal assertoric use of this sentence. For example, “There are monsters hiding in the closet” means *that there are monsters hiding in the closet*, and when I use “There are monsters hiding in the closet” literally, what I say is *that there are monsters hiding in the closet*.

Third, that when someone expresses a belief by asserting a sentence, there is something that belief and assertion have in common: *what is said* and *what is believed* are the same. So, for example, when I sincerely say, “There are monsters hiding in the closet” what I say is *that there are monsters hiding in the closet*, and I also express a belief in something, namely, *that there are monsters hiding in the closet*.

All of these phenomena point to certain uses of *that*-clauses: those uses that people employ when they attribute literal meaning to declarative sentences, specify what is said by use of a sentence, and which they use in the context of belief-attributions and propositional attitude ascriptions more generally. These are (a subset of) the uses that philosophers associate with the attribution of “propositional contents”. Because of the aforementioned connections of such uses of *that*-clauses to our ordinary notions of belief and truth-aptness, quasi-realists require an account of these uses of *that*-clauses, that is, an account of what goes on when people employ *that*-clauses in these ways. Only then can quasi-realists legitimately claim to have given an account that can capture all of the platitudes characterizing these notions, and to have done so in a way that is compatible with expressivism.

However, the standard quasi-realist package does not provide an account of these uses of *that*-clauses. Consequently, quasi-realists have failed to give an account of how expressivism is compatible with the assumption that normative judgements

are beliefs with such contents or the assumption that assertoric uses of normative sentences have such contents. In this respect, the quasi-realist package is incomplete, and must be supplemented with an account of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses.

It is crucial to note that *for an expressivist* this account has to take a specific form. The expressivist wants to explain the meaning of sentences in terms of the mental states expressed by their use. So, she has to give us an account of the contribution *that*-clauses make to the mental states expressed by sentences in which they figure. This is no trivial challenge, and one quasi-realists often neglect when it comes to “earning the right” to certain ordinary assumptions. For example, quasi-realists have long tended to not be very explicit on the question what mental state is expressed by truth-attributions and only recently suggestions have been made.<sup>25</sup> Such a neglect is problematic, insofar it leaves unclear whether acceptance of the conjunction of deflationism and expressivism forces one to endorse assumptions that are significantly more problematic than mere acceptance of deflationism. I take it that a neglect of this challenge for *that*-clauses would be problematic for similar reasons, and that to fully discharge our theoretical requirements, an account of the contribution of *that*-clauses to the mental states expressed by use of sentences that employ them needs to be developed. Before I can turn to developing such an account, however, I should first remove worries about the very possibility of an expressivist account that preserves our ordinary practice regarding the use of *that*-clauses in the context of normative thought and discourse.

#### 4. EXPRESSIVISM AND ALL THAT: CLEARING THE WAY

Many philosophers working in meta-normative theory will be (and have been) surprised by the suggestion that expressivism *could* even be compatible with our

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<sup>25</sup> Simon Blackburn has made at least a rough suggestion for the mental state expressed by truth-attributions in Blackburn 2010. More detailed proposals of the contribution which the truth-predicate makes to the mental state expressed by use of sentences in which it figures have been given by Michael Ridge (Ridge 2009a and Ridge Forthcoming) and Mark Schroeder (Schroeder 2010b). Note that while Blackburn and Schroeder give an account of truth-predicate on a deflationary reading, Ridge actually gives an account of the truth-predicate that is supposed to be compatible with any conception of truth. Note also that the requirement is only particularly pressing for the expressivist if he adopts a deflationary, rather than a minimalist, account of some notion. For minimalist accounts, the expressivist can just be a representationalist with regards to the contribution the notion makes to the mental states expressed by sentences in which it figures.

ordinary practice of assigning meaning to normative sentences using *that*-clauses and specifying *what is believed* by someone with a normative belief using a *that*-clause. In fact, for many this will be as much a surprise as the thesis that expressivism could be compatible with our ordinary practice of taking normative judgements to be beliefs and normative thought and discourse to be truth-apt. These worries derive from two sets of assumptions common in meta-normative theory: assumptions about the relevant uses of *that*-clauses and assumptions about expressivism's theoretical commitments.

Further above I mentioned that philosophers tend to associate the relevant uses of *that*-clauses with propositional contents. More specifically, the common assumption among meta-normative theorists, and philosophers in general, is that *that*-clauses *designate* propositions.<sup>26</sup> According to this view, what we attribute to propositional attitudes when we use *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions are propositions as the contents of those propositional attitudes. And what we attribute to declarative sentences when we use *that*-clauses to attribute meaning to them are propositions as well. That *that*-clauses designate propositions is, thereby, assumed to make best sense of our ordinary employment of *that*-clauses: it is supposed to be a view about the use of *that*-clauses in our ordinary practice.<sup>27</sup> So, why would one be surprised by the suggestion that expressivism could be compatible with this practice? This requires further explanation.

One major part of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses in ordinary practice is the attribution of meaning to declarative sentences. What I have in mind here are the ways of talking at play when we—in ordinary discourse—interpret what a sentence means in our own language, or some closely related idiolect, or when we try to figure out how to translate one sentence from one language into another. These are the ways of talking that employ sentences of the form

(M) “S” (in language L, at time *t*) means *that* p.

It seems plausible that when we engage in these ways of talking we employ *that*-

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<sup>26</sup> I use the term “designate” because there is a debate about the question whether *that*-clauses *refer* to propositions or stand in some other relation to them. Following Matthew McGrath (who follows Jeffrey King (King 2002)) I will “use the term ‘designate’ as a catch-all covering any sort of semantic association between a linguistic item and an entity.” McGrath 2012.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Horwich 1998a, McGrath 2012, Schroeder 2013b, and Schiffer 2003.



clauses to assign *literal meanings* to sentences in one language in another language competence with which is presupposed (which can, of course, be the same language). And it is natural to say that by doing this speakers are specifying the *content* of (or, in other words, *what is meant by* and *what was said by* use of) the sentence in question. In fact, it seems that the notion of “content” itself plays at least some role within this practice, as something that is attributed with a *that*-clause or made explicit when we try to figure out which *that*-clause corresponds to the literal meaning of some sentence.

It is very tempting for philosophers to associate this practice with the more theoretical approach to meaning called “semantics”. *Semantics* is a project in which certain branches of linguistics engage, but some of the theories philosophers develop to account for the meaning of sentences also fall into this project. This project is concerned with specifying the literal meaning of sentences in natural languages. In semantics those literal meanings are called the “semantic contents” of the sentences in question. However, semantics aims at giving an account of the literal meanings of sentences in natural languages with the central aim of systematically explaining the compositionality of natural languages. Recall that *compositionality* is the feature that natural languages allow, with only a finite amount of resources, to form an infinite number of meaningful sentences.

It is easy to see why it is tempting to view semantics as just a more sophisticated and theoretically fleshed out version of the practice we engage in when we, in ordinary practice, specify the meaning of sentences using *that*-clauses. After all, this ordinary practice approach aims at specifying and explicating the literal meanings of sentences and semantics aims at the same thing. So, perhaps semantics should be seen as trying to *unpack*, *explicate* or provide an *analysis* of those notions at play in our ordinary practice, with the aim of illuminating those notions further and making their full explanatory potential accessible.<sup>28</sup>

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28 Note that this view of semantics is fully compatible with the fact that semantics does not fully explicate the semantic notions in non-semantic terms. What semantics would be engaged in, on this view, is not to provide a *reductive* analysis of the semantic terms, but rather an analysis that tries to explain some semantic terms in terms of others which are taken as fundamental. This kind of approach would be more similar to the kind of analysis John Rawls offers, when he unpacks “justice” in terms of “unfairness”, rather than the kind of analysis certain types of utilitarians offer, when they try to unpack “good” in terms of “maximizes hedonic pleasure”.

However, the most common, almost orthodox, way to pursue this project is *truth-conditional semantics*. Part of any approach in semantics is a theory of interpretation. Given that natural languages are messy, clearer meanings need to be assigned to the sentences of the natural language for which one is developing a semantics. To do this, one has to give an interpretation of the relevant language, the “object-language”, in a way that eliminates ambiguities, unpacks context-sensitivity, etc. to derive a version of that same language that wears its literal meanings on its sleeve. One then uses another language, the “meta-language”, competence with which is presupposed, to specify the *semantic contents* of singular terms, predicates, and logical and sentential connectives in a way that allows us to compute the semantic contents for any arbitrary sentence from the semantic contents of its parts and how they are arranged.

What is characteristic of *truth-conditional semantics*, is that on this approach the semantic contents of sentences are their *truth-conditions*, and that the semantic values of singular terms, predicates, and the logical and sentential connectives are the contributions they make to the *truth-conditions* of sentences. For example, what a truth-conditional approach might specify in the meta-language is what the singular terms *refer to*, what the *extension* of predicates is, and how the truth-conditions of sentences are determined by the semantic values of their parts. Of course, different approaches to truth-conditional semantics will cash out the notion of a “truth-condition” differently. A very powerful approach, however, is to understand this in terms of *propositional contents*.

The problems for expressivists start with the assumption that expressivism is *incompatible* with this approach in semantics. Recall that expressivism’s first distinctive claim is

**PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING:** The meaning of declarative sentences is to be explained in terms of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

In the first chapter I suggested that this claim situates expressivism within the tradition of ideationalism, according to which the meaning of meaningful linguistic items is explained by those linguistic items being related via linguistic conventions

with certain mental entities. How is this commitment to be understood *exactly* though? In meta-normative theory it is generally assumed that the expressivist's acceptance of *PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING* commits her to the view that the mental states conventionally expressed by declarative sentences *themselves* are the semantic contents of those sentences, rather than propositions. That is, the best interpretation of *PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING* in the expressivist's mouth is held to be

***PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS***: The semantic content of declarative sentences are the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

This is how Gideon Rosen, for example, characterizes expressivism:

“The centerpiece of any quasi-realist ‘account’ is what I shall call a psychologistic semantics for the region: a mapping from statements in the area to the mental states they ‘express’ when uttered sincerely.”<sup>29</sup>

Ralph Wedgwood gives a similar characterization of expressivism:

“According to an expressivist account [...] the fundamental explanation of the meaning of [normative] statements and sentences is given by a *psychologistic semantics*. According to a plausible version of the principle of *compositionality*, the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meaning of the terms that it is composed out of, together with the compositional structure of the sentence (perhaps together with certain features of the context in which that sentence is used). So assuming this version of the compositionality principle, this expressivist approach will also give an account of the particular terms involved in these sentences in terms of the contribution that these terms make to determining what type of mental state is expressed by sentences involving them.”<sup>30</sup>

And, it is also how Mark Schroeder thinks it is best to understand expressivism:

“On the picture to which expressivists are committed [...] [t]he primary job of the semantics is to assign to each atomic sentence a mental state—the state that you have to be in, in order for it to be permissible for you to assert that sentence. [...] [The] primary semantic values of the sentences are the states that are *expressed* by the sentences, in the minimal sense advocated by the interpretation of expressivism as assertability semantics [...].”<sup>31</sup>

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29 Rosen 1998: 387.

30 Wedgwood 2008: 35/36.

31 Schroeder 2008a: 33. In fact, Schroeder has explicitly developed a form of expressivism under the assumption that expressivism is committed to this claim. See, for example, Schroeder 2008a,

What is the problem with *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS* in our context? If semantics is (at least partially) a theoretical extension of our ordinary practice and our best semantic theories tell us that ordinary speakers attribute propositions by means of *that*-clauses, then expressivism is not only incompatible with our best semantic theories, but also with our ordinary practice. The expressivist has to assume that this practice is, at least partially, mistaken.

This problem extends to belief, because of the assumption that the propositional contents of declarative sentences and of the beliefs their uses conventionally express interact very closely. More specifically, those contents are supposed to be the same. That this is a widely held view was already clear in the quotes by Michael Smith and Crispin Wright that I gave further above. However, if the expressivist has to deny that normative sentences have propositional contents, she also has to deny that what we attribute with a *that*-clause to a normative belief is a propositional content. Again, this seems to conflict with our ordinary practice.

It should be relatively obvious that if there is a problem here for expressivism it is generated by the assumption that expressivists are committed to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. The crucial question though is whether expressivism *should* be seen as committed to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. Note that it cannot not be mere acceptance of ideationalism that entails this commitment. This comes out clearly when one considers that it is thought that expressivists must only deny that normative sentences have propositional contents. It is conceded that expressivists could allow *descriptive sentences* to have propositional contents, which they would derive from the representational states they express. Consequently, if you thought that both normative and descriptive sentences express representational states, you could hold that the content of a declarative sentence is a proposition, which it derives from being appropriately related to a judgement with that same content.<sup>32</sup> This kind of approach would be perfectly compatible with truth-conditional semantics. So, it must be expressivism's distinctive *meta-normative* commitments which generate commitment to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. Specifically, it must be assumed that expressivism's distinctive commitments about the nature of normative judgement block this kind of move.

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Schroeder 2008b and Schroeder 2009: 264.

32 See e.g. Jackson and Pettit 1998: 244/245 and Schroeder 2008a: 24/25.

Why would it be assumed that expressivism's meta-normative commitments bring with it such a commitment though? There are many explanations for why people have *assumed* that expressivism is committed to this. First, some of the remarks expressivists have made over the years read like a commitment to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. For example, Allan Gibbard says things like

“Roughly the normative content of a statement is the set of fully opinionated states one could be in and still accept the statement.”<sup>33</sup>

or

“We can represent the meaning of a claim by asking in which such hyperstates a person would agree with it and in which she would disagree.”<sup>34</sup>

These remarks read very naturally as an endorsement of *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*.

Second, *prima facie* the very idea that expressivists could allow normative sentences to have propositional contents actually appears puzzling. How, for example, would this proposition interact with the attitude which determines the sentence's meaning? It seems that the expressivist cannot follow the straightforward line and say that the content of the attitude *is* the content of the sentence. But how do the proposition and the attitude interact then? In the normative case it seems much more straightforward for the expressivist to claim that the attitude *is* the content of the sentence. If the expressivist accepts this, however, she is forced to accept *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*, which applies to all declarative sentences. This is because the expressivist needs to give a unified account for the contents of normative and descriptive sentences, in order to account for how they contribute to the semantic contents of mixed complex sentences, that is complex sentences that have both normative and non-normative parts.

The question though, is whether the best way to read expressivism is as committed to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. In what follows, I suggest that the answer to this question is “No”, because there is a much more plausible understanding of expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of language. As it will turn out, on this interpretation expressivists need not commit themselves to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*.

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33 Gibbard 1992: 94.

34 Gibbard 2003: 140.

#### 4.1. EXPRESSIVISM: SEMANTIC OR META-SEMANTIC?

The starting point is to distinguish semantics from another project in the philosophy of language, namely, “meta-semantics”.<sup>35</sup> Recall that both semantics and our ordinary practice which employs meaning-attributions, proceed to give the literal meanings of sentences in terms of *another language* which is *presupposed* as meaningful (namely, the meta-language). They also use semantic notions such as “content”, “reference”, “truth”, “extension”, etc. at least some of which are taken as theoretical primitives by these approaches for the sake of their investigation. In contrast, *meta-semantics* attempts to give a deeper explanation of the phenomenon “literal meaning”, preferably in terms making no reference to literal meanings at all. This involves two projects. First, giving an account *in virtue of what* linguistic items have the literal meanings or contents that they do. On this project one gives an account of those properties—let us call them the “meaning-constituting properties”—in virtue of which terms, sentences, and phrases have the literal meanings they do.<sup>36</sup> It involves second, trying to cash out the semantic notions, in semantics and insofar as they figure in our ordinary practice, in non-semantic terms as far as this is possible. Not only do meta-semantic accounts explain in virtue of what sentences have their literal meanings, but they will also tell us something about what is attributed when literal meanings are assigned, truth-conditions or propositional contents specified, extension fixed, etc.

With this distinction in view, it should become apparent that even if expressivism is understood as a theory in semantics, it has to make at least some commitments in meta-semantics. *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS* itself is such a commitment in particular, one about how to cash out the semantic notions. The crucial question, however, is whether this is the best way to interpret expressivism’s commitment to

***PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING:*** The meaning of declarative sentences is to be explained in terms of the judgements uses of those sentences express.

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<sup>35</sup> For authors who draw the same distinction, see e.g. Chrisman 2013 and Chrisman 2012, Lewis 1970b, Ridge Forthcoming, Speaks 2010, Suikkanen 2009, and Williams 1999. Meta-semantics is the same approach which Jeff Speaks calls “foundational theory of meaning” (see Speaks 2010).

<sup>36</sup> I borrow the phrase “meaning-constituting properties” from Paul Horwich. See Horwich 1998b: 5.

After all, there is another option on the table, namely, to see expressivism's commitment to *PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING* primarily as a commitment with regards to the *first* question relevant in meta-semantics, the question *in virtue of what* sentences have their meanings. Understood in this way, expressivism's commitment in the philosophy of language would be

***PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS***: Declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

which is quite different from *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS*. An expressivist who accepts this interpretation of *PSYCHOLOGIZED THEORY OF MEANING* would hold that the difference between normative and descriptive sentences lies in the properties in virtue of which they have their meaning, their meaning-constituting properties. On this account, descriptive sentences have their meaning in virtue of having the property that their assertoric uses conventionally express representational states. Normative sentences, on the other hand, have their meaning in virtue of having the property that their assertoric uses conventionally express non-representational states. Note that on this interpretation of expressivism, expressivism *by itself* seems to come with no *positive* commitment regarding how the notion of a "literal meaning" is to be cashed out. It could be propositions or something else entirely. The same goes for all other semantic notions. Expressivism only comes with at least one negative commitment: the semantic notions cannot be cashed out in a way that makes normative sentences representational, in some theoretically robust sense.

What this reveals is that there are at least two forms of expressivism: "semantic expressivism" which is committed to *PSYCHOLOGIZED SEMANTICS* and "meta-semantic expressivism" which is committed to *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS*. Which of these two forms of expressivism is more plausible? Let me be clear that this is not a question about how expressivism is most often understood in meta-normative theory. First, many authors are often remarkably unclear how they think expressivism is to be understood.<sup>37</sup> Second, while this exegetical question is interesting, the answer to it is

<sup>37</sup> Of course, there are notable exceptions to this rule. For example, as already mentioned above Gideon Rosen (Rosen 1998), Mark Schroeder (M. Schroeder 2008a or M. Schroeder 2010a), and Ralph Wedgwood (Wedgwood 2008) make very explicit that they understand expressivism as a view in *semantics*. On the other hand, Matthew Chrisman (Chrisman 2012 and Chrisman 2013),

not relevant in the systematic context of this dissertation. Here the aim is to figure out what form of expressivism is *most plausible*.

In answer to that question: meta-semantic expressivism is more plausible, for at least three reasons.<sup>38</sup> First, ideationalism in the philosophy of language—which I suggested as the natural home for expressivism in the first chapter—is much more plausibly read as a meta-semantic view of this kind.<sup>39</sup> Adopting meta-semantic expressivism would align expressivism closely to this respectable philosophical tradition, marking its distinctive position within the ideationalist camp only regarding the distinction it draws between declarative and normative sentences. This makes expressivism far less radical than it might initially appear.

Second, any form of expressivism actually *has* to endorse

**PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS:** Declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

given the dialectic in which it is situated. Expressivism's dialectical rival is meta-normative representationalism. According to representationalism, the representationalist order of explanation is correct for normative thought and discourse. It seems, however, that any view committed to the representationalist order of explanation for a domain of thought and discourse is, at least in part, a view *in virtue of what* declarative sentences in that domain have their meaning. On such a view, those declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of standing in some theoretically significant representation relation to the world. Since expressivism denies the appropriateness of the representationalist order of explanation for normative sentences, it must be a view about the meaning-constituting properties of those sentences.

Third, it should not be the case that one must call the legitimacy of truth-conditional semantics into question just in virtue of accepting expressivism, a *meta-*

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Michael Ridge (Ridge Forthcoming), Nate Charlow (Charlow Forthcoming), Alex Silk (Silk 2013), and Jussi Suikkanen (Suikkanen 2009), make explicit that they understand expressivism as a meta-semantic view.

38 Here I follow arguments given by Matthew Chrisman and Mike Ridge. See e.g. Chrisman 2012 and Ridge Forthcoming.

39 See e.g. Davis 2003, Grice 1989, Schiffer 1972, and Speaks 2010.



*normative* view. Truth-conditional semantics is a powerful, highly fruitful, and widely accepted research program not only in philosophy, but also in linguistics. A commitment to the rejection of this program would be a significant theoretical cost. But, *semantic* expressivism has to reject the legitimacy of this research program, and so it would be preferable if expressivism as a meta-normative theory was not *committed* to semantic expressivism. Instead, it would be best if expressivism came with as few commitments about semantics as possible.<sup>40</sup> Of course, meta-semantic expressivism still comes with commitments about semantics, namely, regarding how the semantic notions are *not* to be interpreted. By itself, however, this is surely neither problematic, nor does it entail semantic expressivism or the denial of the legitimacy of truth-conditional semantics.

Or does it? At this point, we should consider the worry that the distinction between meta-semantic and semantic expressivism breaks down. Even if one concedes that meta-semantic expressivism is the most plausible form of expressivism, so the worry goes, expressivism would still not be saved from being committed to semantic expressivism. To see whether this worry could be well founded, we need to ask why we should think that meta-semantic expressivism *has* to be committed to semantic expressivism. Although it is true that meta-semantic expressivism will have *some* implications about semantics, why should it be seen as having such theoretically robust implications? Two possible reasons come to mind.

The first reason would be that meta-semantic expressivism is committed to a variant of what Nate Charlow has called “meaning reductionism”.<sup>41</sup> Specifically, it

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40 This is not to say that calling truth-conditional semantics into question cannot be legitimate or fruitful. As certain semantic expressivists have argued, pursuing expressivism as a semantic project can often yield powerful explanations in areas in which truth-conditional semantics seems to fail. This is, for example, what expressivists about epistemic modals, such as Seth Yalcin, have argued (Yalcin 2007). Mark Schroeder has also argued that semantic expressivism has some fruitful applications, e.g. when it comes to giving a semantics for a deflationary truth-predicate (Schroeder 2010b).

41 Charlow 2011: 207/208. According to Charlow, meaning reductionism is the claim that “If things of kind *K* are fundamental in a theory of  $\Phi$ ’s meaning (i.e. the “basic” theory of meaning is given in terms of *K*’s), any facts about  $\Phi$ ’s meaning must be explained by appeal to features of *K*’s.” Charlow himself identifies this as explaining why expressivism is often held as being committed to semantic expressivism. While I agree mostly with Charlow, I do not think it is best to specify the relevant claim in terms of facts about the semantic contents of sentences being *explained by appeal* to the mental state *in virtue of which* sentences have the meanings that they do. It seems quite plausible that certain facts could be fundamentally explained in terms of other facts, without those facts being identical or reducible to the facts in terms of which they are explained. Denying this seems to

would have to be assumed that expressivists are committed to

**SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM:** If things of kind *K* explain in virtue of what  $\Phi$  has the semantic content that it does, then  $\Phi$ 's semantic content is *definable* in terms of *K*'s.

If expressivists were committed to this, then meta-semantic expressivism would be committed to semantic expressivism.

However, expressivists can resist any commitment to *SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM*. First, it is not the case that any plausible view has to accept *SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM*, as there are many plausible views that *deny SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM*. Thus denying *SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM* is a viable option.<sup>42</sup> Given that denial of *SEMANTIC REDUCTIONISM* is a viable option, however, it is unclear why specifically an *expressivist* should be committed to this view. It is surely neither part of expressivism's characterizing theoretical commitments, nor does it follow from them.

The second reason why meta-semantic expressivism could be committed to semantic expressivism, is that semantic expressivism is *the only* option—or at least the *best option*—for meta-semantic expressivists. Maybe, for example, meta-semantic expressivism rules out any plausible alternative semantic program, except for semantic expressivism. Specifically, it could be that meta-semantic expressivism is incompatible with truth-conditional semantics, making semantic expressivism the next best thing. What would make one inclined to hold this view about expressivism though?

I can think of only one possible reason to hold this view. Meta-semantic expressivism comes with at least one *negative* commitment: the semantic notions cannot be cashed out in a way that makes normative sentences, in some theoretically robust sense, representational. Hence, for semantic expressivism to be the best option for meta-semantic expressivists, all other plausible semantic approaches must violate this restriction. More specifically, the objection would have to be that *in semantics* the notion of a propositional content is cashed out in terms that *are* robustly

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commit us to an overly strong reductionism about *explanation*. Rather, it is best to understand the relevant kind of reductionism in terms of facts about the semantic contents of sentences being *definable* in terms of the facts in virtue of which sentences have their semantic contents.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Field 2001b, Greenberg and Harman 2007, Horwich 1998b, O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price 1996, Sellars 1974, Williams 1999, and Williams 2010.

representational.

This reason, however, holds no water. Although it is tempting to do so, we must not read too many theoretical assumptions into theories in semantics. Specifically, we must not assume that theories in semantics are *committed* to a *robustly representational* understanding of their core concepts. For example, when notions such as “reference”, “extension”, “truth-condition”, “proposition”, etc. figure in semantics it is tempting to read them in some robustly representational way. This, however, is a mistake. To read such terms in this way is to make *meta-semantic* assumptions about the nature of semantics. And while the success of the best semantic theories might only be *explainable* via such meta-semantic assumptions, this is obviously something that we cannot presuppose, but must *argue* for. After all, there are legitimate ways of reading the relevant concepts that leave the legitimacy of truth-conditional semantics as an explanatory project intact, but do not require that we understand them as robustly representational.<sup>43</sup> So, while meta-semantic theories must explain the success of semantic frameworks, we should not assume that engaging in semantics requires taking on particular meta-semantic assumptions: for the purposes of semantics, the semantic notions should, as far as possible, be read in a way that is *primitive* and neutral between different meta-semantic readings of those notions.

Of course, whether meta-semantic expressivism is *in fact* compatible with truth-conditional semantics depends on whether the semantic notions can be cashed out in expressivist friendly terms. So far, however, I can see no *in principle* objection to the possible success to this project. Meta-semantic expressivism, thus, has at least a chance to avoid the theoretical costs that come with rejection of truth-conditional semantics. Therefore, it is the more promising view. With this established, let us return to the question of whether expressivism is incompatible with our ordinary practice which employs *that*-clauses.

#### 4.2. EXPRESSIVISM AND THAT-CLAUSES

As we can see, there is no argument from truth-conditional semantics to an incompatibility of expressivism with our ordinary practice of employing *that*-clauses.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Davidson 1990, Field 1994 and Field 2001b, Horwich 1998b, Price 1988, Schiffer 1996 and Schiffer 2003, Sellars 1974, and Williams 1999.

Because expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of language are *in principle* compatible with truth-conditional semantics, expressivism should also be compatible with this practice. In fact, now that we understand expressivism as *meta-semantic expressivism*, it should be clear that completely independently of any question regarding truth-conditional semantics expressivism should be, at least *in principle*, compatible with the use of *that*-clauses in ordinary practice. It should be compatible with such use even when they are used to assign meaning to normative sentences or contents to normative judgements. This is so, because expressivism is mostly silent with regard to what goes on in this practice. Expressivism only implies that we *cannot* interpret this practice in a way that commits ordinary speakers to normative sentences and the judgements they express being, in some robust sense, representational.

Consequently, there would only be a problem if our ordinary practice *presupposed* that to attribute meaning to a normative sentence with a *that*-clause or to attribute a content to normative belief this way is to treat them as representational in some theoretically robust sense. However, we cannot assume that our ordinary practice presupposes this. After all, when we are engaged in meta-normative debate, we are not entitled to make such robust theoretical assumptions about our ordinary practice. We can only assume that our ordinary practice is committed to a number of claims about *that*-clauses that we should read in a platitudinous, theoretically *uncommitted* way. Everything else would be question-begging to the quasi-realist who wants to provide an alternative theoretical underpinning of our ordinary practice. When we engage with the question of whether expressivists can allow those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents, we, consequently, cannot *presuppose* that to attribute meaning to a normative sentence with a *that*-clause or to attribute a content to normative belief this way is to treat them as representational in some theoretically robust sense. Rather, we need to ask ourselves first how *that*-clauses, as they figure in our ordinary practice, have to be understood *on an expressivist framework*.

This, of course, is nothing more than another application of the quasi-realist manoeuvre. Once the availability of this manoeuvre is visible, however, it should be clear that there is no *in principle* incompatibility between meta-semantic expressivism

and our ordinary practice of explaining meaning in terms of *that*-clauses, or any of the other relevant uses of *that*-clauses. Of course, showing that such a view is not impossible does not yet discharge the quasi-realist's burden to provide an account of *that*-clauses in their relevant uses that fits with expressivism. Before I turn to my proposal for what account expressivists should endorse, let me first make a note about the relationship between this account of *that*-clauses in our *ordinary practice* and semantics.

When I introduced the worry that expressivism is incompatible with the way we employ *that*-clauses in our ordinary practice, I assumed a particular view about the relationship between ordinary practice and semantics. On this view, semantics is just a more sophisticated version of the way we assign meaning via *that*-clauses in our ordinary practice. If we accept this picture, any theory in meta-semantics that has the terms at play in our ordinary practice as its targets will also have those of semantics as its targets. I do not think that this is problematic for the view about *that*-clauses I develop in the next two chapters. However, now that I have shown how expressivism would be compatible with the ordinary practice which employs *that*-clauses even if this assumption is accepted, I want to note that it is not a significant problem if it is rejected.

The main aims of semantics and our ordinary practice of specifying meaning are quite different. While semantics aims to explain *compositionality*, the main aim of using *that*-clauses to talk about meaning in our ordinary practice is to enable the interpretation and translation of linguistic items. And it seems that the resources required to achieve these aims will, in the end, be quite different: semantics requires a framework that can perfectly mirror the underlying complex structure of natural languages. In fact, on a plausible construal of semantics, the semantic words that figure in it function as *theoretical* terms which semanticists introduce *specifically* to account for compositionality. This is why semantics can plausibly be seen as a *theoretical modelling exercise* set up specifically to capture very specific features of sentences in natural languages. The aim of the ordinary practice use of *that*-clauses in the context of attributions of meaning, on the other hand, requires a framework that provides fruitful heuristics, which allow speakers to feed on their existing linguistic

competence for the purpose of interpretation and translation.

So, while the approaches are superficially similar, it should not surprise us when the notions semanticists introduce and those that have developed in our linguistic practice for the purpose of assigning meaning are quite different and not (fully) translatable into each other. Although many of the same words are at play in ordinary practice and semantics (e.g. “content”, “truth”, “reference”, etc.), it seems that those words mean quite different things on these two approaches. For example, according to the way “reference” is used in truth-conditional semantics, *all* words have denotations, even words such as “is”, “very”, or “not” which we would not regard as referring terms in ordinary practice.

Of course, even if all of this is true, there might still be ways to hook up the technical terms of semantics with those that figure in our ordinary practice. *But*, it should neither be a requirement that this is possible, nor a requirement that how those notions “hook up” supports the picture of the relation between ordinary practice and semantics presented further above.<sup>44</sup> In consequence, we can—and should—for our purposes stay *neutral* on the question of whether expressivist accounts of *that*-clauses as they figure in our ordinary practice have implications for semantics and *vice versa*. I will conclude this chapter by laying out what kind of view I want to develop in what follows, and how I will develop it in the following two chapters.

## 5. EXPRESSIVISM AND ALL *THAT*: THE PLAN

My plan in what follows is to investigate the prospects of developing a *deflationary* view of *that*-clauses that fits the quasi-realist’s purposes. While recent work by Mark Schroeder and Michael Ridge has opened a space of alternative options for quasi-realists, the prospects of combining expressivism with a deflationary view about propositions have been mostly unexplored.<sup>45</sup> In fact, so far quasi-realists have not developed such an account in any satisfying way. This is surprising for at least two

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<sup>44</sup> An author who thinks that we can “hook” up our ordinary notions with the technical notions used in semantics is Max Kölbel (Kölbel 2008). An author who denies this is Seth Yalcin (Yalcin 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Schroeder and Ridge each have argued for two alternative options for the expressivist (Ridge Forthcoming and Schroeder 2008a and Schroeder 2013b). While their accounts differ in many significant details, they have in common that they allow expressivists to be *realists* about propositions, as long as they accept a relatively unorthodox view about propositions (in Ridge’s cases this is a modified version of Scott Soames’ view (Soames 2010)).

reasons. The first reason is that certain remarks by well-known quasi-realists such as Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard suggest that this is the option that they would want to take when it comes to giving an account of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses.<sup>46</sup> If they think that this is the way expressivism can be made compatible with the relevant uses of *that*-clauses though, why have they not explained how this is supposed to work? This is a surprising theoretical lacuna to say the least. The second reason is that a deflationary account of *that*-clauses actually seems to be the most natural view for a quasi-realist. I take it that it is no accident that the standard quasi-realist package for “truth”, “truth-aptness”, and “belief” proceeds by giving deflationary or minimalist accounts of these notions. Rather, this reflects theoretical sentiments that underly quasi-realism, sentiments shared by minimalist, and especially deflationary accounts.

First, these accounts share expressivism’s commitment to deflating notions at play in our ordinary practice that tempt representationalist inclined philosophers to expand our ontology in often problematic ways. The quasi-realist’s credo is that mostly all is well with ordinary practice, and that this practice is far less ontologically committed than philosophers often claim. A deflationary view about *that*-clauses would fit quite well with this sentiment.

Second, looking at the bigger picture, deflationary and minimalist approaches to those notions that seem to bar expressivism from preserving the “realist sounding” surface features of ordinary practice open the door for what Huw Price has called “functional pluralism”.<sup>47</sup> *Functional pluralism* is the view that declarative sentences and judgements can legitimately play functions other than that of representing reality. Deflationary and minimalist approaches open the door for functional pluralism, by removing any representationalist commitment from exactly those notions characteristic for declarative sentences and the judgements they express: they leave the legitimacy of the surface features intact without tying that legitimacy to representationalism. But, expressivists should be sympathetic to functional pluralism, as it is natural to assume that expressivists should accept non-representational

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46 See e.g. Blackburn’s remarks in Blackburn 1998a and Blackburn 1998b and Gibbard’s remarks in Gibbard 2003.

47 E.g. Price 2011 or Price 2013.

accounts for domains other than the normative. After all, expressivists are *expressivists* because they think that the representationalist order of explanation encounters significant problems in the case of normative thought and discourse. And, it is likely that the same holds for other domains as well.<sup>48</sup> However, the quasi-realist credo should also apply across the board: quasi-realist expressivists should have accounts of the notions characteristic for declarative sentences and the judgements they express which preserve their legitimacy *independently* of the underlying functional story. Again, a deflationary account of *that*-clauses would fit well with this requirement.

Third, I take it that a deflationary account would be more attractive from the outset than a minimalist account. Even if we want to “deflate” *that*-clauses, we still need to admit that they do play an important role in our ordinary practice. Given that the minimalist is still committed to the representationalist order of explanation, she must account for this role in terms of features of the entities designated by *that*-clauses. However, it is not obvious that a minimalist account could hold its promise of only introducing a theoretically “minimal” entity into our ontology while still preserving all that needs to be accounted for when it comes to *that*-clauses. On the other hand, an account that proceeds along non-representationalist terms promises exactly that. Again, a deflationary account of *that*-clauses is the place to look. For these reasons I think that it is a mistake that quasi-realists have not explored this theoretical option, a mistake which I aim to rectify in what follows.

I will develop this view as follows. The aim is to give an expressivist friendly account of certain relevant uses of *that*-clauses. I think that it will be best to approach this project by first focusing on a clear case of such uses. I will start by focusing on the role of *that*-clauses in contexts in which they are used to attribute meaning. I will give an account of *that*-clauses in such uses that not only makes expressivism compatible with such attributions to normative sentences, but also enables expressivists to allow normative sentences to have propositional contents. I will undertake this task in the next chapter. The account I give draws on the work of Wilfried Sellars. Sellars has

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<sup>48</sup> Some expressivists have already argued this. Simon Blackburn, for example, has expressed sympathy for functional pluralism and has defended non-representationalism about a variety of other domains, including causal judgements, probability judgements, counterfactuals and modal judgements (see e.g. Blackburn 1973, Blackburn 1984a, Blackburn 1998a, and Blackburn 1998b). Allan Gibbard has defended non-representationalism about indicative conditionals (Gibbard 1980).



not developed an account of how his view can be generalized to the role of *that*-clauses in the attribution of mental content though. This is what I will do in the fifth chapter. I will argue that there is an ideationalist framework that allows us to generalize the Sellarsian account and in which expressivism can also be situated. This way the Sellarsian account benefits from being combined with expressivism, as this allows to generalize the account to uses of *that*-clauses in the context of propositional attitude ascriptions.

## 6. SUMMARY

Quasi-realists hold that expressivists can allow normative thought and discourse to be truth-apt and normative judgements to be beliefs. In this chapter I have argued that in order to allow this, expressivists must give an account of how certain uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositions fit with expressivism. I have then explained how an expressivist can escape concerns that such an account is impossible, by seeing expressivism as a meta-semantic, rather a semantic, theory. I have then outlined my plan for developing a deflationist account of such uses.

# CHAPTER IV: EXPRESSIVISM AND ALL THAT. ILLUSTRATING WHAT WE MEAN

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Quasi-realists need an account of certain relevant uses of *that*-clauses to make good on their claim that expressivism is fully compatible with normative thought and discourse being truth-apt and normative judgements being beliefs. In this chapter and the next, I will develop such an account. Specifically, I will set out to develop a *deflationary* view of *that*-clauses on which our ordinary usage of *that*-clauses to attribute meaning to normative sentences and content to normative beliefs is fully compatible with expressivism. I will begin in this chapter by giving a deflationary account of *that*-clauses in the context of attributing meaning to declarative sentences. I will complete the account in the next chapter by explaining how this account can be generalized to the role of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions.

This chapter proceeds as follows: I will start, in the first section, by taking a closer look at the role of *that*-clauses when they are used to attribute meaning. This will give us a clearer view of the phenomena that a plausible account of *that*-clauses in such uses needs to account for. In the second section I introduce a view about *that*-clauses that accounts for these phenomena. Here I also show that on a plausible reading this account *is* a deflationary account of *that*-clauses. I also give an account of the sense in which *that*-clauses can be said to attribute propositional contents on this account, and explain how the account's claims about meaning relate to expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of language. In the third section I will then give an account of the contribution *that*-clauses make to the mental state expressed by the sentences in which they figure.

## 1. The Role of *That*-Clauses in Attributions of Meaning

Not all uses of *that*-clauses can plausibly be seen as relevant for our ordinary notions of "belief" and "truth-aptitude". That is, not all uses of *that*-clauses are such that they will be associated with the attribution of propositional contents. However,

there is at least one paradigmatic example for such a use, namely, the use of *that*-clauses in the context of attributing meaning. These are the uses found at play in *translation*, for example.

Translation is a situation in which one faces a sentence in a foreign language and tries to assign meaning to it. In other words, it is a case in which one tries to determine whether two sentences in two different languages *mean the same thing*. In such contexts *that*-clauses are used as follows:

- (1) “Heinrich ist ein Imker” (in German) means *that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper.

Note that the use of *that*-clauses in such contexts is not different for the translation of descriptive sentences such as in (1) and of normative sentences, such as in

- (2) “Abtreibung ist moralisch erlaubt” (in German) means *that* abortion is morally permissible.

What is going on in these contexts is that we mention a German sentence and then give its meaning by introducing a *that*-clause. Specifically, we consider a sentence in a language to be assigned meaning to—the *object language*. In our cases, the object language is German. We then assign meaning to that sentence by pairing it with a sentence in the language in which meaning is to be assigned—the *meta-language*. The meta-language is English in our cases. But, we do not pair those sentences in just *any* way. Rather, in the meta-language we assign a sentence *modified by a that-clause* to the sentence in the object language. And, it seems that it is exactly *this modification* which allows the sentence in the meta-language to play its *meaning-giving* role. Neither merely mentioning nor using the sentence would straightforwardly do the job. Consequently, in this kind of situation *that*-clauses play a purely *intra-linguistic* role, as a tool for semantic ascent. Their role is to allow assignment of sentences of the meta-language to sentences in the object language in a *meaning-giving* way.

What goes for translation goes for *interpretation* generally. When interpreting what certain sentences mean in the mouth of other speakers of English, we can assign meaning in the same way. For example, when we interpret another speaker of English, call her “Helene”, we can do so again by employing *that*-clauses. Interpreting her utterances will look as follows:

- (3) “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” (in Helene’s idiolect) means *that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper.

Note that here *that*-clauses also play the same role when we assign meaning to descriptive sentences such as in (3), as they do for assigning meaning to normative sentences such as in

- (4) “Abortion is morally permissible” (in Helene’s idiolect) means *that* abortion is morally permissible.

Again, these are cases in which we consider sentences in an object language and then assign meaning to them by pairing them with a sentence modified by a *that*-clause in a meta-language. And, once more it seems that it is exactly *this modification* that allows the sentence in the meta-language to play its *meaning-giving* role. So, in the case of interpretation *that*-clauses play a purely *intra-linguistic* role as well, as a tool for semantic ascent. Their role is to allow to assign sentences in the meta-language to sentences in the object language in a way that is *meaning-giving*.

In what follows I will call sentences that employ *that*-clauses in this way “meaning-attributions”. A *meaning-attribution* is any sentence of the form

- (M) “S” (in language L, at time *t*) means *that p*.

in which a *that*-clause is used to give the meaning of another sentence. Meaning-attributions partially answer what role *that*-clauses play in ordinary practice, namely, they play an intra-linguistic, meaning-giving role in the context of translation and interpretation. This answer is only partial, of course, because I have not considered other relevant roles *that*-clauses might play. It seems quite clear, however, that the role *that*-clauses play in the context of translation and interpretation is one of the more *central* and *characterizing* roles of talk invoking *that*-clauses, at least as they are used in ordinary practice.

Having identified this role the first step towards developing a deflationary account of *that*-clauses has been made. It should be clear, at least *prima facie*, that the theoretical requirements for *that*-clauses to play this role are quite minimal and should be compatible with a deflationary account of *that*-clauses. Furthermore, it also seems, again at least *prima facie*, that there is nothing in this role of *that*-clauses which might prevent an expressivist from allowing their use when the target sentence is a

normative one. Of course, these are only promises. To cash them out a substantial account of *that*-clauses is still required.

This account must satisfy at least four desiderata. First, it needs to account for the role *that*-clauses (and meaning-attributions generally) play in the context of translation and interpretation (this is just a general condition of adequacy on accounts of *that*-clauses and meaning-attributions). Second, the account must be compatible with *that*-clauses playing their role in some non-representational fashion. So, the account given of *that*-clauses should in no way make reference to *that*-clauses standing in some robust representation relation to certain entities. Third, the account must fit with functional pluralism, and in particular be compatible with quasi-realist expressivism about normative discourse. This means that the account should allow the legitimacy of meaning-attributions to declarative sentences, *independently* of whether the deeper meta-semantic account for those declarative sentences is representationalist or non-representationalist. Fourth, to be fully compatible with expressivism, the account needs to proceed in terms of the contribution of *that*-clauses to the mental state expressed by sentences in which they figure.

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to giving an account that ticks these boxes. I proceed in two stages. First, in the second section, I introduce a deflationary account of *that*-clauses that satisfies the first three desiderata, and then, in the third section, I provide additional details that allow the account to satisfy the fourth desideratum. I will, consequently, go from a more general account, compatible with all kinds of meta-semantic theories, to a more specific version of that account explicitly designed to fit with expressivism. Because I am interested in those kinds of uses of *that*-clauses of which their use in meaning-attributions is a paradigmatic example, my strategy will, thereby, be to focus first on meaning-attributions in each case. This will make it easier to give an account of *that*-clauses in their relevant uses, as it allows for a focus on how they figure in such sentences.

## 2. DEFLATIONISM ABOUT *THAT*-CLAUSES

Let me start with the type of account of meaning-attributions that a deflationist about *that*-clauses needs to avoid. To get to that account, consider the following

question: if one sets out to give an account of meaning-attributions, what kind of account is one trying to give? An answer can be given by looking back at the projects involved in meta-semantics. Recall that meta-semantics involves two projects. First, giving an account *in virtue of what* linguistic items have the literal meanings they do. Second, trying to cash out the semantic notions, in semantics and insofar as they figure in our ordinary practice. The project of giving an account of meaning-attributions is part of the second meta-semantic project. It attempts to understand what goes on when we, in our ordinary practice, attribute literal meanings by means of *that*-clauses and tries to cash out the notion of a “literal meaning”.

This notion of a “literal meaning” is already associated with certain kinds of properties of sentences though. A suitably theory-neutral description of these properties can be given in terms of the role meaning-attributions play in our ordinary practice. We use meaning-attributions to give translations and interpretations, and it seems very plausible to say that a meaning-attribution is *correct* or *true* just in case the interpretation or translation it offers is correct. So, a good, theory-neutral way of characterizing the properties associated with “literal meaning” is in terms of interpretation or translation.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I take it that the properties associated with “literal meaning” are those properties of sentences that have the following feature: for any sentence  $S_1$  there is some relevant sub-set  $M$  of those properties possessed by  $S_1$  such that some sentence  $S_2$  is a good translation or interpretation of  $S_1$  if and only if  $S_2$  has  $M$ . I will call these properties the “meaning-explananda”.

One way to account for the meaning-explananda is by introducing an entity that is the *meaning* of the relevant kinds of sentences and which accounts for the meaning-explananda because of its various features. Because it is *that*-clauses which attribute meaning, *that*-clauses would have to stand in some theoretically robust representation relation to this entity. “Means” would then function to tell us that whatever entity is picked out by the *that*-clause *is* the meaning of the sentence in

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, taking interpretation and translation to be the central starting points for an investigation into meaning is not new. In fact, it is very common in philosophy. It goes back at least to Quine’s book “Word and Object” (Quine 1960). Other authors who have taken these phenomena to be central to the explanation of meaning are e.g. Donald Davidson (Davidson 1973) and David Lewis (Lewis 1974). Given the centrality of interpretation and translation for the phenomenon of meaning, it should also be no surprise that semantic theory often takes the form of a *theory of interpretation*.

question. A deflationary view of *that*-clauses must reject this view. On such a view, the “literal meaning” of sentences cannot be something to which *that*-clauses stand in some theoretically significant representation relation.

However, even on a deflationary account there should be something that accounts for the meaning-explananda, which should be fully describable in terms that do not mention contents or meanings. This might, for example, be certain use properties of sentences, maybe how they are normally used by competent speakers of the language in question. I will call the properties that do all of the relevant explanatory work on an account on which the meaning-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms not making mention of literal meanings, the “basic explanatory properties”. It is important to keep in mind that commitment to a view of this kind is perfectly compatible with commitment to the following claims. First, that explanations of the meaning-explananda that mention meaning are perfectly legitimate. Second, that such explanations are the best explanations (currently or ever) available to us (given our cognitive and other epistemic limitations, time constraints, etc.).<sup>2</sup> Third, that we could never engage in the practice of interpretation or translation solely in terms mentioning only basic explanatory properties instead of using terms mentioning meaning. Fourth, that ordinary speakers could never fully spell out what those properties are. All that this view amounts to is that what accounts for the meaning-explananda *fundamentally* are facts fully describable in terms not mentioning meaning.

If you have a view of this kind, however, what should you think about meaning-attributions? A first possibility is *reductionism*: facts about literal meanings are nothing but facts about the relevant basic explanatory properties. A second option is *error-theory*: literal meanings do not exist, and the practice of meaning-attributions should be abandoned for the practice of interpreting and translating by specifying the basic explanatory properties of sentences. From the perspective of our project, namely, of developing a deflationary account of *that*-clauses, neither of these approaches is appealing. However, another approach is possible towards meaning-

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<sup>2</sup> So, for example, this view is compatible with it being completely legitimate to carry out semantics in terms of the semantic notions, and also with such an enterprise being the best project that is available to us to account for the compositionality of natural language sentences.

attributions. This is an approach based on the account of meaning-attributions given by Wilfried Sellars in his paper “Meaning as Functional Classifications.”<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1. SELLARS’ ACCOUNT OF MEANING-ATTRIBUTIONS

It is plausible to read Sellars as adopting a view on which the meaning-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms not mentioning meanings, namely, in terms mentioning only rules about and patterns of linguistic behaviour.<sup>4</sup> However, Sellars did not doubt the legitimacy of meaning-attributions and the way they figure in translation and interpretation. Instead, he thought that this legitimacy could be accounted for *without* expanding the metaphysical and theoretical commitments already made by his explanatory account. How did he think this can be achieved?<sup>5</sup>

On Sellars’ account, meaning-attributions are *illustrating sortals*: “Means that p” is a sortal phrase which illustrates particular basic explanatory properties and in this way allows to classify sentences in accordance with those properties.<sup>6</sup> What does this

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3 Sellars 1974. Of course, Sellars does not call the sentences that are the targets of his account “meaning-attributions”. However, Sellars is still interested in the same phenomenon, namely, in how we can attribute meanings to sentences by means of employing *that*-clauses.

4 See e.g. Sellars 1954a, Sellars 1954b and Sellars 1974.

5 Let me note two things about my presentation. First, the account Sellars develops is fully general in being an account that is applicable to *all* linguistic items (words and sentences). So, his account is not only an account of how we use *that*-clauses to give the meaning of declarative sentences, but also an account of similar ways in which we give the meaning of words. However, since I am only interested in the meaning-giving role of *that*-clauses to declarative sentences, I will consider Sellars’ account only as an account of those. Second, Sellars himself phrases the account in terms of his own theory about the basic explanatory properties, but the account is fully general in the sense that it could *in principle* be combined with many different views about the basic explanatory properties. In what follows I will present the account in its general form and not the specific formulation that Sellars gives.

6 One question we might ask about this proposal is whether it is committed to “means” being ambiguous, since the account implies that the sense of “means” in sentences such as “Blood on his hands means that he committed the murder” differs from the sense in sentences such as “‘Heinrich ist ein Imker’ means that Heinrich is a bee-keeper”. Such a commitment might be thought problematic since brute ambiguity does not seem entirely plausible for this case. However, I do not think that a Sellarsian is committed to “brute” ambiguity. While she needs to say that “means” means different things in these different contexts, she could tell a genealogical story about why we have the phrase “means” which relates these two uses to each other. Although a full-blown account would lead us too far astray, let me sketch shortly how such an account might look. “Means” in meaning-attributions functions as a specialized copula on Sellars’ account. In sentences such as “Blood on his hands means that he committed the murder”, on the other hand, it seems plausible that “means” is appropriately understood along the lines of “is a sign”, “indicates”, or “shows”. How could those two usages be connected? Suppose language developed so that we could indicate something about ourselves, e.g. our mental states. In this case, “means” might originally have been used purely to mean “indication”, where a sentence following the “means” was used to make clear what was indicated. As certain uses of *that*-clauses became more refined as a way to pick out basic



mean? On Sellars' account, meaning-attributions allow us to attribute basic explanatory properties to sentences without having to or even being able to explicitly specify the properties in question.<sup>7</sup> They do this by *illustrating* what the relevant basic explanatory properties are, by using a particular sentence in the meta-language (competence with which is presupposed) *as an example* for a sentence with those very same basic explanatory properties. Let me cash out a little bit more how this is supposed to work.

According to this account, meaning-attributions are a tool for semantic ascent: by use of a meaning-attribution we introduce a meta-linguistic phrase (“means that p”) that allows us to classify sentences in the object language as having certain basic explanatory properties. These are those (or at least relevantly similar) basic explanatory properties as possessed by the sentence in the meta-language we have transformed into a *that*-clause. However, meaning-attributions play this role *not* by explicitly telling us what the relevant basic explanatory properties are. Rather they do this by *illustrating* these basic explanatory properties using the sentence that has these basic explanatory properties in our language *as an example*. It is the role of *that*-clauses in this context to *pick out* the basic explanatory properties of *sentences*. To transform a declarative sentence S into a *that*-clause, is to transform it into a *meta-linguistic* predicate that picks out the basic explanatory properties that S has in our language, where S serves as an *illustration* for the basic explanatory properties relevant in that context. So, on Sellars' account, *that*-clauses are linguistic tools that provide an easy way to pick out the properties that determine whether one sentence would provide a proper interpretation or translation of another sentence. The word “means” in a meaning-attribution, according to Sellars, functions merely as a special copula that

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explanatory properties though, “means” in connection with such uses of *that*-clauses slowly transformed into a copula. This explains how the two uses of “means” are related, while upholding the claim that these two uses have different meanings.

7 On Sellars own view, it is always at least *in principle* possible to fully spell out the basic explanatory properties of terms (for example, Sellars says “Notice that instead of ‘giving’ the complex function of ‘und’ (in German) by using an illustrating functional sortal, we could, instead, have listed the syntactical rules which govern the word ‘und’ in the German language. In general the rule governed uniformities which constitute a language (including our own) can be exhaustively described without the use of meaning statements [...]” Sellars 1974: 431). However, this commitment is optional for Sellars' view of meaning-attributions, as long as there are other ways of picking up on the basic explanatory properties that terms have. Because the view Sellars develops can itself stay neutral on this issue, I will not assume that it is committed either way in what follows.

tells us *that* the sentence in the object language has the basic explanatory properties picked out by the relevant *that*-clause.

Let me make all of this clear with an example. Take again,

- (1) “Heinrich ist ein Imker” (in German) means *that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper.

On the Sellarsian account, this sentence classifies the German sentence “Heinrich ist ein Imker” as having certain kinds of basic explanatory properties (i.e. it serves to attribute certain basic explanatory properties to that sentence). The sentence does this by using the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” as an example to *illustrate* the basic explanatory properties in question. Indicating that this is what the sentence is used for is the job of transforming the sentence into a *that*-clause. More specifically, by transforming the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper”, we are introducing a predicate that serves to pick out the relevant basic explanatory properties, by using the sentence as an illustrative example. “Means” in this context, then merely functions to attribute those properties to the German sentence.

It is important to note that while Sellars’ account is compatible with a reductionist understanding of how *that*-clauses play their role, it does *not* entail that *that*-clauses or meaning-attributions *reduce to statements about or are analysable in terms of* the basic explanatory properties they pick out or assign. This is so, because of the particular relation in which *that*-clauses stand to those properties. On Sellars’ account, *that*-clauses *illustrate* the relevant basic explanatory properties by using a sentence in some presupposed language as an example for something with those basic explanatory properties. This means that they pick out the relevant basic explanatory properties via *similarity relations* that are identified in a quasi-demonstrative way: *that*-clauses pick out basic explanatory characteristics of sentences not via covert or explicit descriptions, but by example. Consequently, they function comparably to how we tell people about the appearance of a person unknown to the audience by pointing to a particular person that has sufficiently similar or identical characteristics than it is to giving a description of that appearance. However, it is an open question whether it is best to understand this in terms of reduction or in terms of some other relation. In fact, as I will argue later, there are good reasons to *not* understand this in

terms of reduction. For our purposes we only need to consider the non-reductionist version of Sellars' account, which I will call the "Sellarsian account" in what follows.<sup>8</sup>

Because meaning-attributions allow us to assign basic explanatory properties in this rough and ready way on the Sellarsian account, they provide resources to talk about those properties (and all this involves), without having to *explicitly* invoke them. Given that ordinary speakers' knowledge of the basic explanatory properties of sentences will mostly be *implicit*, meaning-attributions, consequently, play a valuable and, most likely, indispensable role in our ordinary practice. This can be seen as the *raison d'être* of meaning-attributions, as Sellars himself notes:

"In practice, the use of meaning statements (translation) is indispensable, for it provides a way of mobilizing our linguistic intuitions to classify expressions in terms of functions which we would find it difficult if not (practically) impossible to spell out in terms of explicit rules."<sup>9</sup>

We now know the details of the Sellarsian account of meaning-attributions and *that*-clauses. How does this account help in the search for a deflationary account of *that*-clauses though? Let's investigate.

## 2.2. DEFLATIONISM

The Sellarsian account satisfies at least the following two of our desiderata. First, it accounts for the role *that*-clauses play in the context of translation and interpretation. In fact, I take it that for someone who wants to preserve the legitimacy of this practice, but who thinks that the fundamental explanatory work is done in other terms, an account like Sellars' is the best option. The account connects the ordinary practice of translation and interpretation with the basic explanatory properties in a way that gives that practice some independent and legitimate work. It seems that something in this ballpark must be right, if a deflationary account of *that*-clauses in this context is correct.

Second, the account fits with functional pluralism, and in particular, with quasi-realist expressivism about normative discourse. Indeed, even though I have not

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<sup>8</sup> I use the label "Sellarsian" to indicate that Sellars himself should not be seen as committed to a non-reductionist version of his view.

<sup>9</sup> Sellars 1974: 432.

mentioned this, the account was *explicitly designed* to fit with functional pluralism, as Sellars himself was committed to that view.<sup>10</sup> That the account fits with functional pluralism should be clear: it allows the legitimacy of meaning-attributions to declarative sentences, *independently* of whether the deeper meta-semantic account for these declarative sentences is representationalist or non-representationalist. All that is required for us to employ meaning-attributions within an area of discourse, is that sentences in this area take the form of declarative sentences. And as we already know, this requirement is *in principle* compatible with different kinds of deeper explanations for different domains of thought and discourse.

What about the third requirement though, namely, that the account must be compatible with *that*-clauses playing their role in some non-representational fashion? Nowhere in the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses are entities mentioned in a way that would play into a representationalist's hand. The only entities mentioned on the Sellarsian account are basic explanatory properties. However, *that*-clauses stand in a relation to basic explanatory properties, which is such as to foreclose a reduction of *that*-clauses in terms of those properties. So, *that*-clauses do not stand in the relevant representation relation to basic explanatory properties. But, the Sellarsian explanation of *that*-clauses makes no mention of any other entities either! Consequently, while we can give an account of *that*-clauses in terms of how they function, this function will not be the kind of function a representationalist about *that*-clauses would assign to them. According to the Sellarsian account, the best explanation of *that*-clauses makes no reference to *that*-clauses functioning to represent, in some theoretically significant sense, entities of some sort.

Note also, that on the Sellarsian account, there will be no informative analysis of *that*-clauses. All that we can do is characterize *that*-clauses in a relatively platitudinous way similar to the way I did in section three of the last chapter and in the first section of this chapter. The same goes for the verb "means" in the context of meaning-attributions. While "means" functions as a specialized form of the copula in a meaning-attribution, it will not be the case that "means" can be *analysed* in terms of

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Sellars rejected the representationalist order of explanation for modal statements, causal statements, and (arguably) normative statements and gave explicitly non-representationalist accounts for these statements (see in particular Sellars 1958).

this function. So, according to the Sellarsian account, there will not be much of an informative answer to the question what it is that is assigned to the sentence “Helene is a great cook” in

(5) “Helene is a great cook” means *that Helene is a great cook*.

except for the answer that *that Helene is a great cook* is assigned to “Helene is a great cook” *as its meaning*.

What this means, of course, is that the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses is a deflationary view about *that*-clauses. We have found what we were looking for. How about propositional contents on this view though? The view on the table does not make reference to such contents *at all*. Does this mean that the view is a form of eliminativism about propositional contents? Not so fast.

Let me first note that the Sellarsian view is perfectly compatible with *that*-clauses legitimately functioning syntactically as referential terms.<sup>11</sup> On the Sellarsian account, *that*-clauses pick out basic explanatory properties by using some sentence *as an example* for something with those very same (or relevantly similar) properties. This has the consequence that what will be most salient in the context of using a *that*-clause are those features of sentences relevant for its having particular basic explanatory properties. Thus, *that*-clauses will behave in a way that is structurally isomorphic to the basic explanatory properties of the sentence following the “that”. This has two important consequences.

First, as long as we are competent with the language in question, we can use sentences modified by *that*-clauses as *stand-ins* to talk about and think about basic explanatory properties. This significantly increases the expressive power of *that*-clauses as a means to talk and think about basic explanatory properties. After all, short of talking or thinking about basic explanatory properties *directly*, the best thing to talk or think about those properties is to use stand-ins that behave structurally isomorphic to those basic explanatory properties. This ties up nicely with the *raison d'être* of meaning-attributions, namely, to provide a convenient tool to assign basic explanatory properties to sentences. Most of the work that is done by meaning-

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<sup>11</sup> There is some linguistic evidence that *that*-clauses in those uses we are interested in do actually work linguistically like referential singular terms. See, for example, Horwich 1998a: 86-90, McGrath 2012, and Schiffer 2003: 11-15.

attributions is done by the way that *that*-clauses function to pick out basic explanatory properties. “Means” only pins down the purpose for which those properties are picked out. But, the better *that*-clauses allow us to engage with those basic explanatory properties the better they can serve this function in the context of meaning-attributions.

Let us turn to the second consequence of *that*-clauses behaving in a way that is structurally isomorphic to the basic explanatory properties of the sentence following the *that*-. This is that in this case *that*-clauses will behave linguistically exactly like referential singular terms that refer to something that supervenes on, but does not reduce to, basic explanatory properties. Consequently, the Sellarsian account offers an explanation of why *that*-clauses function syntactically this way, even though the explanation of why *that*-clauses are in our vocabulary makes no reference to such entities. Furthermore, even though *that*-clauses function syntactically as referential singular terms, there will be no informative account of the kinds of entities to which *that*-clauses refer. At most we can give platitudinous answers that derive from the characteristics of *that*-clauses and their intra-linguistic role in the context of interpretation and translation.

If *that*-clauses linguistically behave like referential singular terms that refer to something that supervenes on basic explanatory properties though, we can introduce other ways of talking about what *that*-clauses refer to. In particular we can use the label “propositional contents” to refer to what is attributed by *that*-clauses. So, for example, rather than saying

(M) “S” (in a language L, at time t) means *that p*.

we might now, at least in some contexts, be able to say

(C) “S” (in a language L, at time t) has the content *that p*.

We might even be able to say, at least in some contexts,

(P) “S” (in a language L, at time t) expresses the proposition *that p*.

It is important to note, however, that claims made by sentences such as (C) or (P) will not go beyond what is claimed by sentences such as (M). For example, the way in which sentences such as (C) or (P) figure in giving the meaning of sentences must be derivative from the way sentences such as (M) figure in giving the meaning of

sentences. In fact, it does not seem too far fetched to say that in contexts in which it is appropriate to use (C) or (P), they simply provide alternative ways of saying what is said by (M).

What should we say about the status of these “propositional contents”, however? I take it that we have two options. First, we can hold that talk of such contents is useful and harmless in many cases, but that we should be cautious not to think that such talk has *any* metaphysical implications.<sup>12</sup> Talk of propositional contents is generally OK, because it can be a useful way of speaking. It is also dangerous though if we start to take it too seriously. Thus, it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Second, we could hold that propositional contents are “insubstantial” entities, the “shadows” of declarative sentences, which have no “interesting metaphysical nature”. We might cash this out further by claiming that such contents play no independent or fundamental explanatory role.<sup>13</sup>

Of these two options I prefer the first for two reasons. First, recall that we are giving an account of *that*-clauses as they figure in our *ordinary* practice. Talk of “contents” or “propositions”, however, is not prevalent in our *ordinary* practice. Consequently, I find that a view on which talk of propositional contents is merely a convenient way of speaking fits much better with our ordinary practice.<sup>14</sup> Second, the view avoids tricky questions regarding what it even *means* to say of an entity that it is “insubstantial”, “metaphysically boring” or a “shadow”. Of course, there might be ways of cashing this out, e.g. in terms of explanatory or causal roles. However, such questions take us too far from the main topic. Consequently, for the sake of this dissertation, I will take the first stance towards propositional contents.

With the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses, we now have a general deflationary account of *that*-clauses in place, one that even allows talk of propositional contents. Furthermore, this account has no particular commitments that would rule out that *that*-clauses or propositional contents could be attributed in a meaning-giving way to normative sentences even if expressivism was true. One remaining question is how

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<sup>12</sup> I take that this is the position taken by Hartry Field regarding propositional contents (see e.g. Field 2001b).

<sup>13</sup> This seems to be position of Stephen Schiffer (see e.g. Schiffer 1996 and Schiffer 2003).

<sup>14</sup> This also fits quite nicely with the picture of semantics as a modelling exercise. At least insofar as we believe that scientific models are plausibly understood as being useful fictions.

this account can be combined with *meta-semantic* expressivism. The Sellarsian account brings with it particular commitments about meaning, and it is an open question how these relate to expressivism's commitments about the nature of the meaning-constituting properties. I address this in the next section.

### 2.3. SELLARSIAN MEANING-ATTRIBUTIONS AND META-SEMANTIC EXPRESSIVISM

How does the Sellarsian account of meaning-attributions combine with expressivism's claims about meaning? In the last chapter I argued that expressivism is best understood as a view about the meaning-constituting properties, the properties in virtue of which sentences have their meaning. This form of expressivism subscribes to a particular claim in the theory of meaning, namely,

**PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS:** Declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

On the Sellarsian account of meaning-attributions, meaning-attributions are a tool that allows us to pick out basic explanatory properties and assign them to sentences without being able to specify them. In particular, the function of *that*-clauses in such sentences is to pick out these basic explanatory properties. The basic explanatory properties are, thereby, properties that are fully describable in terms not mentioning meaning, and in terms of which all of the meaning-explananda can be fully explained. If we accept this account of meaning-attributions then what is the relation between the meaning of sentences, their basic explanatory properties, and their meaning-constituting properties though?

On the Sellarsian account, the meaning of a sentence does not reduce to its basic explanatory properties. Nor will it reduce to *anything* that is fully describable in terms that do not mention meaning.<sup>15</sup> However, the meaning of a sentence *will supervene on* the basic explanatory properties of that sentence. This makes these basic explanatory properties the most plausible candidate for those properties for which it is

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<sup>15</sup> That we can say that the meaning of a sentence is a propositional content, and then give its meaning in those terms is not incompatible with this, as on this account to "reduce" a sentence's meaning to its content is not, strictly speaking, reducing it to something describable in terms not mentioning meaning.



true that a sentence has its meaning *in virtue of* those properties. Consequently, the relationship between the meaning of a sentence, its basic explanatory properties, and its meaning-constituting properties is that the sentence's basic explanatory properties just are its meaning-constituting properties. In what follows, I will, consequently, use the labels "basic explanatory properties" and "meaning-constituting properties" interchangeably.

That the basic explanatory properties and the meaning-constituting properties turn out to be identical on the Sellarsian account is good news in our context, as it is now clear how we can combine this account of meaning-attributions and *that*-clauses with meta-semantic expressivism. On the combination of those two accounts, the meaning-explananda of declarative sentences would be fully accounted for in terms of the mental states that assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express. *That*-clauses would then have the function of picking out the mental states conventionally expressed by the assertoric use of those sentences followed by the *that*-. Meaning-attributions would be a means to use *that*-clauses to assign the property of expressing a mental state to sentences. However, the *meaning* of a declarative sentence, on this account, would consist in a propositional content, where this is to be understood along deflationary lines as presented in the last section. Furthermore, the sentence will have this propositional content *in virtue of* its assertoric use conventionally expressing a mental state, which means that the property of expressing a mental state will be the meaning-constituting property of that sentence.

It should be very clear, however, that on this account an expressivist can easily allow normative sentences to have propositional contents which constitute the meaning of those normative sentences. So, it seems that the Sellarsian account can be combined with expressivism in a way that yields the desired result. Of course, to complete combining those two accounts, we still need to see what account of the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions an expressivist could give and of the contribution which *that*-clauses make to this mental state. I will turn to this in the next section.

### 3. THAT-CLAUSES AND THE MENTAL STATE EXPRESSED BY MEANING-ATTRIBUTIONS

If an expressivist adopts a Sellarsian account of meaning-attributions, what should she say about the mental state constituting thinking about the meaning of sentences in terms of *that*-clauses? Obviously, the role of this mental state will be to *categorize* sentences as having certain relevant meaning-constituting properties (which, it turns out, are also their meaning-constituting properties). Specifically, it will be a mental state which does two things. First, it directly picks out the meaning-constituting properties of some sentence in our own language. Second, it then categorizes other sentences in accordance with whether they have the same (or relevantly similar) meaning-constituting properties. The crucial question is how exactly to flesh this out. Before I turn to my answer to this question though, let me get a couple of issues out of the way first.

First, I take it that the central issue here is *not* whether meaning-attributions express *beliefs* or some other kind of mental state. If the project is successful, then meaning-attributions just will, on the Sellarsian account, express beliefs with a *sui generis* content. Of course, this would not tell us much about those mental states. So, the issue must be something else. I take it that the central issue is how we are to characterize those mental states in terms of that robust theory of psychology that also serves the expressivist to distinguish normative and descriptive beliefs. Here, I am going to assume that this comes down to specifying the *functional role* of the mental states in question (it will become clearer in the next chapter why I choose this path).

Second, there is actually significant debate about whether meaning *itself* is normative. This question can be understood both as a question about the nature of meaning itself, or about the nature of the meaning-constituting properties (i.e. the project of specifying either of those).<sup>16</sup> Of course, even if meaning *is* normative, it is plausible that judgements about meaning will not be *practically* normative. So, at least for the purposes of this dissertation, we need not be committed to *expressivism* about meaning-attributions (in the sense that we need to be committed to the claim that

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<sup>16</sup> For authors who can plausibly be understood as arguing that meaning is *normative*, in some sense of “normative”, see e.g. Boghossian 1989, Gibbard 2012, and Kripke 1982. For authors who can plausibly be understood as arguing that meaning is not normative, see e.g. Horwich 1998b and Lewis 1970b. For an overview over the debate whether meaning is normative, see Glüer and Wikforss 2010.

meaning-attributions do not express judgements which consist in representational states such that the judgements is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true and which do consist in conative attitudes).<sup>17</sup> Independently of this though, it would be best to stay as neutral as possible on the matter of whether meaning is normative. In what follows I will thus try to formulate my account in terms that are as neutral as possible on this issue. Again, I will do this by specifying the nature of the mental states involved in meaning-attributions in terms of their functional role only, a functional role for which it is an open question whether or not it is most plausibly understood as constituting the functional role of a normative judgement (and which should even be compatible with expressivism about meaning-attributions, if cashed out further along appropriate lines). With these remarks out of the way, let us consider the nature of the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions.

The mental state expressed by meaning-attributions is a particular mode of thinking about *pairs* of sentences. First, a sentence  $S_1$  to be given a meaning. Second, a sentence  $S_2$  that, modified in a particular way by being transformed into a *that*-clause, is to give the meaning of the other. The relevant and distinguishing part of that mode of thinking about such pairs of sentences seems to reside in how one is thinking of  $S_2$  as being *meaning-giving* for  $S_1$ . And thinking this involves two parts: the special way in which one is thinking about  $S_2$  on the one hand. And how one is then thinking about  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  *in relation to each other*, on the other. Specifically, thinking of  $S_2$  as being *meaning-giving* for  $S_1$  involves a particular way of picking out certain properties by thinking about  $S_2$  in a distinct way *and* of assigning those properties to  $S_1$  by thinking of  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  as standing in a particular relation. This gives us a starting point to spell out further what is going on with this thought.

Let me start by considering how to cash out the special way in which this mode of thinking picks out properties. We know that the properties in question are meaning-constituting properties on the Sellarsian account. The crucial question is,

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, even if an expressivist had to be committed to expressivism about meaning or content, this result need not be problematic, as has been argued e.g. by Allan Gibbard (Gibbard 2012) or Teemu Toppinen (Toppinen Forthcoming). In fact, some remarks by Simon Blackburn read, as if he has been committed to such a version of expressivism for quite some time now (see e.g. Blackburn 1998a: 51-59).

consequently, in what special way meaning-attributions pick out these meaning-constituting properties. As I have been saying, on the Sellarsian account, we pick out meaning-constituting properties by taking  $S_2$  as an illustrating example. So, on this account of meaning-attributions, the way in which thinking about  $S_2$  picks out properties should be akin to the way in which the more general state of *taking as an example of* picks out properties. This is the model along the lines of which I want to understand that part of meaning-attributions that consists in the special way of thinking about  $S_2$ . The investigation should, consequently, turn first to clearing up what is involved in the state of *taking as an example of*.

First, taking some  $x$  as an example of some  $F$  always seems to be taking  $x$  as an example of some general kind of thing, as a member of a set of things that have certain relevant properties in common. Assume, for example, that one takes the papers of David Lewis as an example of the class of papers that have a high chance to get published in high quality philosophy journals. This is to take the papers of David Lewis to be a member of a set of things that have certain relevant properties in common, namely, those properties a paper requires in order to have a high probability to get published in a high quality philosophy journal.

Second, to take some  $x$  as an example of some  $F$  is to be in a state where certain aspects of  $x$  are *salient* to oneself as those features something has in virtue of being an instance of  $F$ . Take again the case where one takes David Lewis' papers as an example of papers with a high chance of getting published in high quality philosophy journals. In this case certain aspects of David Lewis' papers will be salient to one as those features that papers have in virtue of having a high chance of getting published in high quality philosophy journals. What, however, is involved in certain aspects of an object being "salient" to oneself as those properties something has in virtue of being an instance of some general kind, when one is in the state of *taking as an example of*? It means that one is disposed to give a special role to *those* aspects of the object in determining whether *other* objects are members of the same general kind (the kind the first object is being taken as an example of). This special role is to treat those aspects of the object as a *reference-point* in determining whether other objects fall within that general kind. This means that one's judgements about objects being

identical (or relevantly similar) to  $x$  in these aspects will have some weight in settling one's judgements with regards to whether some object falls within the relevant kind. Of course, what weight one gives to these judgements in particular cases can vary. This tracks nicely that the particular role the state of *taking as an example of* plays in our thought processes varies as well: in some situations one might already have extensive and explicit knowledge of the properties that instances of a general kind have and so needs to consider examples as reference-points only as a way to confirm one's judgements about a particular case. For example, as a big fan of board games I have a very good idea of the properties that a board game should have to qualify as a so-called "Eurogame": it should involve little luck, emphasize strategy, have high quality components, and not have player elimination. Nevertheless, to confirm whether a particular game is a Eurogame, it will sometimes be useful for me to compare it to paradigm examples of such games. In other cases, however, the *only way* one can explicitly think about a certain general kind is via certain reference-points. This could be the case, for example, when one's knowledge of the properties that characterize instances of that kind is implicit and very rough, or when one is still in the process of learning about that kind. In such cases, the relevant aspects of some object picked out by taking it as an example of an instance of the relevant kind will have a major role in settling one's judgements.

This latter kind of case brings me to an important third feature of the state of *taking as an example of*. Consider someone who is in the state of *taking as an example of*, and who takes certain aspects of an object as a reference-point in her judgements with regards to whether certain things belong to a general kind. In such a case, it need not be accessible to that person on reflection what those aspects are that she takes as a reference-point, nor need the person be able to explicate what those properties are. That is, one can take aspects of an object as a reference-point in the sense described above, without being able to explicate—in language or thought—what those aspects are. There is nothing mysterious about this feature of the state of *taking as an example of*: our ability to pick up on features and aspects of objects is certainly far more extensive than our ability to make explicit, both in language and in thought, what those features and aspects are. To take an extreme case, so-called

“chicken-sexer”, for example, can pick out features of newborn chicks that reliably allow them to determine whether they are male or female. However, these individuals can do this while being unable to explicate, both to themselves and to others what those features are they pick out. There are other cases as well though that should be more familiar: educated philosophers, for example, are often quickly able to identify features that determine the quality of undergraduate papers, but have a much harder time making explicit what those features are. Or, to take another case, we can often correctly pick out quite quickly the emotional state of other people, without being able to explicitly specify on the basis of what features we have made our judgement.<sup>18</sup>

What the state of *taking as an example of* does, is to feed on abilities such as these to reliably pick out certain features of objects to provide resources for new and often quite economical ways of thinking and talking about those features. Here I just want to name two of those resources provided by this state, two resources that also play a relevant role in meaning-attributions. First, the state actually makes it *easier* for us to deliberate about and determine whether some object *x* belongs to some general kind *F*. As long as we can rely on certain reference-points with regards to that general kind, we can determine whether *x* is an *F* by determining whether *x* is identical or sufficiently *similar* to the reference-points in relevant respects. Second, the state makes it possible (via its expression or the invitation to others to come to be in that state) to *communicate* to others that some *x* belongs to a general kind *F*, even when we cannot spell out the features shared by instances of *F* or the features of *x* in virtue of which it is an instance of *F*. The only thing required is that one can presuppose a common reference-point, or give others a common reference-point by pointing out an object in which, for example, the relevant features are easier to pick out than in *x*. Proceeding from there one can then rely on one’s audience’s abilities to pick out similarities to lead them to the conclusion that *x* is indeed an *F*.

Let me end this short sketch of the relevant features of the state of *taking as an*

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18 Of course, in many of such cases people’s judgements regarding some object *x* belonging to a general kind *F* will already be based on their judgements regarding *x*’s identity or relevant similarity with regards to certain features to another object *y* supposed to belong to *F*. However, it still seems that in such cases people will still be quite bad at making explicit what the relevant features of the relevant *reference-point* are, even though those very same features seem to play a significant role in their judgements about the identity or relevant similarity.

*example of* with a fourth feature of this state that is worth highlighting in our context. Given that the state of *taking as an example of* functions in the ways presented here, it will not be appropriate to think that this state can be reductively analysed in terms of the properties that are picked out by that state. The relationship that holds between instances of *taking as an example of* and the properties picked out by instances of this state is importantly different from the relationship between ordinary descriptive beliefs and the properties they pick out. Consequently, the former state is actually not well understood in terms of a reductive analysis in terms of the properties indicated. Of course, there might be other ways of making explicit what properties are picked out by—and are communicated by expression of—the state of *taking as an example of*. However, sentences that express this state, for example, will not be open to informative *analysis*.

Why is this feature worth highlighting in our context? Further above I said that there is actually a very good reason to read Sellars' account in a non-reductive way. I am now in a position to say what this reason is. If the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions on Sellars' account is well understood along the lines of *taking as an example of*, then the most plausible version of that account is a non-reductive one. In this way the detour we took, on behalf of the expressivist, through the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions, consequently, gives us important information about the best account of meaning-attributions within a Sellarsian framework.

With these remarks in place, let us now turn back to meaning-attributions. Recall that the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions is a particular mode of thinking about *pairs* of sentences  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , namely, thinking of  $S_2$  as being *meaning-giving* for  $S_1$ . This involves two parts. First, the special way in which one is thinking about  $S_2$  and second, how one is thinking about  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  *in relation to each other*. I proposed that the special way in which one is thinking about  $S_2$  that is involved in meaning-attributions is akin to being in the state of *taking as an example of*. Since we now know more about what is involved in being in the state of *taking as an example of*, we are now in a better position to understand what this means.

In one respect, the particular way of thinking about the sentence  $S_2$  that is used to *give* the meaning of another sentence  $S_1$  just *is* an instance of the more general

state of *taking as an example of*: in a meaning-attribution the sentence that is used to *give* the meaning of another sentence serves as a *reference-point* for a particular set of properties. However, sentences might be taken as examples for all sorts of general kinds, for example, as instances of things governed by conventions. In a state of a *meaning-attribution* though the sentence *always* and *only* serves as a reference-point for a particular set of *meaning-constituting properties*. What set of meaning-constituting properties this is will, thereby, be contextually specified depending, for example, on the language that is presupposed as known in the relevant context. Again though, note that to be able to use sentences as reference-points in this way does not presuppose either on the part of the speaker or on the part of the audience that individuals are able to *spell out what the relevant meaning-constituting properties are*. All that it requires is that they have implicit knowledge of the meaning-constituting properties and can reliably track similarity with regards to meaning-constituting properties. This accounts for how meaning-attributions give us the ability to communicate and think about meaning-constituting properties, without being able to explicitly spell out what those properties are. Given that we will be often (maybe even always) unable to explicitly spell out the meaning-constituting properties of the sentences in our language, this makes meaning-attributions a very useful tool for thinking and talking about meaning-constituting properties. And, of course, on the Sellarsian account that they are such tools just is part of the *raison d'être* for the existence of meaning-attributions.

This gives us an account of the first feature of the state expressed by meaning-attributions, namely, the particular way in which thinking about the sentence  $S_2$  picks out meaning-constituting properties. What about the second feature of the particular way of thinking involved in meaning-attributions, namely, how one thinks of the two sentences *in relation to each other*? This can be cashed out relatively straightforward along the following lines: in a meaning-attribution, the relation in which we see  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  standing is just the relation of some thing belonging to a *kind* of which another thing is an *example*. When in the state expressed by a meaning-attribution, we see  $S_2$  as an example for things of a relevant kind, namely, things with certain meaning-constituting properties. And we think of  $S_1$  as belonging to whatever kind  $S_2$  is an



example of, so as being a thing with those same meaning-constituting properties. It is in *this* way that  $S_2$  is *meaning-giving* for  $S_1$ : it is *meaning-giving* in just the same way in which something that is *taken as an example of* some general kind functions to assign properties to other things when those things are seen as belonging to the same kind.

Let me sum up what I have said so far, in order to give a clearer picture of the account on offer. The functional role of the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions is to provide a unique way of thinking about pairs of sentences  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ . This is a way of thinking that allows us to pick out the meaning-constituting properties of  $S_2$  whose meaning-constituting properties we already have (implicit) knowledge of and to assign those properties to  $S_1$ . This way of thinking allows us to do this first by picking out the meaning-constituting properties of  $S_2$  in the same way in which the state of *taking as an example of* picks out properties in general. And second by assigning those meaning-constituting properties to  $S_1$  in the same way that we assign properties by thinking of something as being of a kind of which another thing is an example.

Again, let me illustrate this with an example. On this account of the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions, the sentence

- (1) “Heinrich ist ein Imker” (in German) means *that Heinrich is a bee-keeper*.

will express the following mode of thinking. First, it will express that one is thinking of the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” as an example of something that belongs to a particular kind, namely, the kind of sentences with certain meaning-constituting properties. Second, it will express that one is thinking of the German sentence as being an instance of that kind, and in this way assign the relevant meaning-constituting properties to that sentence. With this picture about the state expressed by meaning-attributions in place, we can now specify what contribution *that*-clauses make to this state. This will allow us to draw general conclusions about the nature of *that*-clauses.

The attentive reader should by now have realized what the contribution of *that*-clauses must be to the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions. *That*-clauses contribute the unique way in which such thoughts *pick out* meaning-constituting

properties by taking  $S_2$  as an example. Specifically, the role of *that*-clauses in meaning-attributions is to contribute a mode of thinking about sentences *as an example of* something with particular meaning-constituting properties. As I have argued above, the particular way in which meaning-attributions pick out properties is just a particular instance of the way in which *taking as an example of* picks out properties. What is particular about meaning-attributions is that the sentence that is taken as an example *always* and *only* serves as a reference-point for a particular set of *meaning-constituting properties*. It should be clear by now that this is so, *because* of the *that*-clause: it is the presence of the *that*-clause, because of which the sentences that are taken as an example in meaning-attributions *always* and *only* serve as a reference-point for a particular set of meaning-constituting properties.

This paves the way for a hypothesis about the nature of the relevant uses of *that*-clauses, not only in meaning-attributions, but as parts of other kinds of sentences as well: what *that*-clauses contribute to the mental state expressed by sentences in which they figure is a mode of thinking about the sentence  $S$  transformed into the *that*-clauses *as an example of* things with particular meaning-constituting properties. In particular, *as an example of* things with those meaning-constituting properties one takes  $S$  to have in one's own (or some other relevant presupposed) language. So, *that*-clauses function as illustrating sortal terms that pick out meaning-constituting properties in a specific way, namely, in that way in which one picks out properties by taking something as an example for some general kind. The distinctive feature of meaning-attributions is just that in uttering such sentences (or forming the mental state expressed by such sentences) one not only picks those properties out by means of a *that*-clause. Rather, one also explicitly assigns them to another sentence *as* that sentence's meaning-constituting properties. This is achieved through the word "means". In a meaning-attribution this word functions to express a way of thinking that relates the sentence to be assigned meaning-constituting properties and the *that*-clause. In particular, it relates them in just the same way that thinking of something  $x$  as being of a kind of which another thing  $y$  is an example relates  $x$  and  $y$ .

This concludes my account of the mental state expressed by meaning-attributions and the contribution *that*-clauses make to this mental state. I take it that

with this account we have an account both of *that*-clauses and of meaning-attributions that is fully compatible with expressivism's commitments. Furthermore, the account will allow normative sentences to have propositional contents on an expressivist framework, propositional contents which give the meaning of those normative sentences. The crucial question is, whether and how this account could be generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions in a way that fully earns the expressivist the right to say that normative judgements are beliefs. Answering this question will be the subject of the final chapter.

#### 4. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have started developing a deflationary account of those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents. The strategy I proposed was to first give an account for a clear case of such uses and then see how this account generalizes to other relevant uses. I followed this strategy by focusing on uses of *that*-clauses in meaning-attributions. I introduced and elaborated on Wilfrid Sellars' account of *that*-clauses in such uses and argued that on a plausible understanding this account *is* a deflationary account of *that*-clauses. The Sellarsian account, I have argued, fits the expressivist's purposes well, as it is compatible with the claim that expressivists can allow the relevant uses of *that*-clauses in meaning-attributions when applied to normative sentences and that they can allow normative sentences to have propositional contents. I concluded the chapter with an account of the contribution *that*-clauses make to the mental state expressed by sentences in which they figure, to complete my argument that nothing speaks against combining expressivism with the Sellarsian account.

# CHAPTER V: EXPRESSIVISM AND ALL THAT. BELIEF AND PROPOSITIONAL MENTAL CONTENT

## 0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the last in a series of chapters concerned with developing a deflationary account of those uses of *that*-clauses that are relevant for the expressivists' ability to make sense of how normative thought and discourse is truth-apt and normative judgements are beliefs. These are those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents, which we find in meaning-attributions and attributions of contents to propositional attitudes. In the last chapter, I gave a deflationary account of the use of *that*-clauses in meaning-attributions. This was the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses as illustrative sortals. In this chapter I will now consider whether—and how—this account can be generalised to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions and other propositional attitude ascriptions in a way that can serve the expressivist's purposes. Sellars himself never developed a detailed account of how his theory could generalize to the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude attributions.<sup>1</sup> The discussion here should, consequently, be of interest not only for those concerned with expressivism, but also for those who have sympathies for or an interest in Sellars' account of propositional contents as they figure in the theory of meaning and mental content.

I will proceed as follows. In the first section I will explain how the Sellarsian account can be generalised so that it can account for the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions. As we will see, the question of whether the Sellarsian account can be generalised to account for such use, can only be answered

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<sup>1</sup> In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* Sellars makes the suggestion that to say of someone that they think that *p*, is to say that they are disposed to exhibit the patterns of behaviour characteristic of someone who says that *p* (see Sellars 1956: 186-189. See also DeVries 2011). While this account might work for ascriptions for whatever state is expressed by use of “*p*”, it cannot straightforwardly explain what role *that*-clauses—insofar they mean the same thing in those contexts, which seems very plausible—would play in the attribution of other propositional attitudes. While the account I offer below will, in some respects, resemble Sellars' suggestion, it will differ insofar as it makes commitments about the meaning-constituting properties that might conflict with Sellars' commitment and in that it will be constructed in a way that is supposed to explain how *that*-clauses operate generally in propositional attitude ascriptions.

relative to an account of the meaning-constituting properties. I will then set out to give an expressivist account of the meaning-constituting properties that will allow a suitable generalization of the Sellarsian account—one which allows the expressivist to say that normative judgements are beliefs. I will start developing this account, in the second section, by making clear how the expressivist’s commitments about the meaning-constituting properties should *not* be understood. These commitments need to be formulated, so I argue, in terms of a robust theory of psychology. In the remainder of the chapter, I will then offer such a theory and argue that it fits the expressivist’s purposes perfectly.

### 1. HOW TO GENERALIZE THE SELLARSIAN ACCOUNT

Can the Sellarsian account be generalized to the uses of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions, in a way that is compatible with an expressivist allowing normative judgements to be beliefs? To answer this question, we should first consider the following question: what exactly is the phenomenon that is at issue here and in what kind of project is one involved when one is trying to account for it by giving a deflationary account? To answer this question, it will be good to start with taking a look at belief-attributions.

I take *belief-attributions* to be all sentences of the form:

(B)      A believes *that* p.

Sentences of this kind serve to attribute instances of a particular type of mental state to a person, namely, instances of that type picked out by “believes”. These sentences do not just tell us that the relevant person is in a state of this general kind though. Rather, they tell us in what specific instance of that state the person is in. This is done by the *that*-clause. It is, thereby, plausible to think of the *that*-clause as specifying the *content* of the belief attributed (or *what is believed* by the person with the belief), with “believes” being a verb, a “propositional attitude verb”, which picks out a relation in which the person stands toward that content (after all this is why belief is regarded as a “propositional attitude”). An account of the role of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions should, consequently, be plausible as an account of attributions of *contents* to beliefs.

“Believes” is only a special case of how *that*-clauses can be combined with

propositional attitude verbs to attribute particular instances of types of mental states though. There are many other propositional attitude verbs, such as “desires”, “hopes”, “fears”, etc. that do exactly the same.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, we would expect that an account of how “believes” functions in combination with *that*-clauses to be generalizable to the case of the other propositional attitude verbs. As it seems plausible that the *that*-clause serves to specify the *content* of these other propositional attitudes in such cases (or *what is desired*, *what is hoped*, *what is feared*, etc.), an account of the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions must, therefore, be plausible as an account of attributions of *propositional mental content* in general.

The uses of *that*-clauses that are at issue here are, of course, such uses as they figure in our ordinary practice. As it is their use relevant in the context of attributing mental states that is of concern in this context, the project concerned with accounting for such use is, hence, concerned with the role of *that*-clauses in our *folk-theory of psychology*. More specifically, the project is situated within the meta-theory of content-attributions—talk and thought about the contents of propositional attitudes—as they figure in our folk-theory of psychology. While other forms of content-attributions might play a role in our folk-theory of psychology, I will use the label “content-attributions” in what follows, for simplicity’s sake, only for attributions of propositional contents and the label “mental content” only for *propositional mental content*, the content of such attitudes.

Just as for the case of the contents of sentences, one can distinguish two projects that would be of concern for the meta-theory of content-attributions. The first project is the project of giving an account *in virtue of what* mental states have the contents they do. This will be the project of giving an account of the *content-constituting properties* of mental states, the properties in virtue of which they have their

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2 It is worthwhile to note that unlike “believes”, these other attitude verbs cannot only take propositional complements, but also *to*-clauses or words which refer to objects. For example, we cannot only fear that there are monsters hiding in the closet, but also fear the monsters who are hiding in the closet, as well as fear to meet the monsters hiding in the closet. Here, I am only interested in the use of such attitude verbs when they are used to attribute *propositional contents* to such attitudes, and whether the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses can be used to give an account of such attributions. Of course, a deflationist about *that*-clauses is likely to want to endorse a deflationary account about these other content-attributions as well, although how such an account would work is a relatively unexplored field. Whether a variant of the Sellarsian account could do this job, however, is a question of future research.

content. The second project is to cash out those notions related to the contents of mental states, such as e.g. “content”, “proposition”, “truth-condition” (in the case of beliefs) or “satisfaction-condition” (in the case of desires), and so on, ideally in terms not themselves invoking such content related notions. Not only will the meta-theory of content explain in virtue of what sentences have their contents, it will also tell us something about what is attributed when contents are assigned, truth- or satisfaction-conditions specified, etc. Parallel to the case of meaning-attributions, the project of giving an account of attributions of mental contents is part of the second project. This will be the project that one is involved in when one is trying to develop a deflationary account of the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions, and, consequently, the project which will concern me in what follows.

A deflationary account will be, primarily, an account of attributions of mental contents, not an account of what such content *is* (after all, there is some relevant sense on which, on a deflationary account, mental content *is* not really anything). Just as in the linguistic case, however, “mental content” is a notion that is already associated with certain kinds of phenomena regarding mental states. As opposed to the case of meaning-attributions where the notions of interpretation and translation gave us some leverage, however, it is difficult to give a principled characterization of these phenomena in a suitably theory-neutral fashion.<sup>3</sup> What we can do, however, is to give examples that illustrate the cluster of theoretical jobs associated with “mental content”. This should be sufficient for our purposes.

The phenomena associated with “mental content” are of the following kind. First, “mental content” is supposed to be what distinguishes different instances of propositional attitudes of the same kind. For example, it will be what distinguishes the belief that there are monsters hiding in the closet from the belief that there are jackets hanging in the closet or what distinguishes the desire that Hannelore be visiting for coffee from the desire that Manfred lead a happy life. Second, it is

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3 Of course, the notion of interpretation might arguably provide some leverage here as well: as some philosophers have famously argued, attribution of propositional attitudes also happens within a practice of interpretation (e.g. Davidson 1973, Dennett 1987, and Lewis 1974). If this is the case, it might be quite plausible to characterize mental content by pointing to the role which content-attributions play in this context. While I am sympathetic to this suggestion, I will not pursue it further here, as making a solid case for this approach would be beyond the scope of this investigation.

regarded to be what instances of propositional attitudes of a different kind can have in common or share. For example, it is supposed to account for what the belief that there are monsters hiding in the closet and the desire that there are monsters hiding in the closet have in common. Third, “mental content” is thought to play a crucial role in determining how propositional attitudes figure in the production of action. For example, the content of the belief that there are jackets hanging in the closet and the content of the desire that one wear a jacket will figure in an explanation of why having this belief and this desire produces, among other things, the action of opening the closet. Fourth, “mental content” is associated with the behaviour and interaction of different propositional attitudes in processes such as inference and deliberation. For example, the content of the belief that there are jackets hanging in the closet explains, for example, why the belief can figure as a premise in the inference from the belief that if there are jackets hanging in the closet, then the family has arrived to the conclusion that the family has arrived. Let us call these phenomena that are associated with the notion of mental content the “content-explananda” of the mental states in question.

As in the case of literal meanings, many philosophers will find it tempting to account for these content-explananda by introducing entities, “propositional contents”, to which *that*-clauses stand in some theoretically significant representation relation. Propositional attitudes can then be seen as relations to these entities, and the most crucial question for theories of this kind to answer will be: what is the metaphysical nature of these propositional contents, such that they can fully account for the content-explananda? Obviously though, this approach to attributions of mental content would be to adopt the representationalist order of explanation for *that*-clauses as they figure in our folk-theory of psychology. So, a deflationist about *that*-clauses cannot endorse this kind of view. However, even on a deflationary account there should be something that accounts for the content-explananda, which should be something that is fully describable in terms that do not make mention of contents. This is by no means an outlandish position. For example, one might hold a view on which the content-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms of certain patterns of the brain, or in terms of certain causal relations in which individuals



stand to their external environment. Let us call the properties which do all of the relevant explanatory work on an account on which the content-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms not making mention of contents the “fundamental explanatory properties”.

Suppose that one accepts a view of this kind, as the deflationist would have to do. What can one then say about the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions? We could again adopt reductionism or an error-theory about content-attributions, but neither of these would be an option for a deflationist. So, what *can* the deflationist say? It should be clear that regarding the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions we are now in a situation which is exactly parallel to the situation for the use of *that*-clauses in meaning-attributions we encountered in the last chapter. And the question is now whether in this situation the Sellarsian account can help someone looking for a deflationist account about content-attributions as well. Given how parallel the situation seems for a deflationist regarding both kinds of uses of *that*-clauses, it seems to be relatively straightforward what has to be the case for the Sellarsian account to work in both cases.

I introduced the Sellarsian account as a way to preserve the legitimacy of meaning-attributions without having to endorse any representationalist commitments with regards to *that*-clauses. Assume one accepts that the properties associated with meaning can be fully accounted for in terms of properties of sentences fully describable in terms not mentioning meaning, their “basic explanatory properties”. Then the most straightforward way to preserve the legitimacy of meaning-attributions without being a representationalist about them, is to “hook up” meaning-attributions with the basic explanatory properties without having them represent these properties. This is exactly what the Sellarsian account does. On the Sellarsian account, meaning-attributions provide a convenient means to attribute basic explanatory properties to sentences. They do this, because *that*-clauses are linguistic tools that allow us to pick out basic explanatory properties *via example*: they allow us to pick out basic explanatory properties by pointing to a sentence in some presupposed language as an example for something with particular basic explanatory properties. In this way, *that*-clauses allow us to assign those properties to other sentences via the

verb “means”, which gives meaning-attributions a legitimate job within the framework. Because they allow us to do this while leaving meaning-attributions irreducible—so I suggested in the last chapter—those basic explanatory properties are also the most plausible candidate for the properties in virtue of which sentences have their meaning. These are their meaning-constituting properties.

To illustrate again how this account works, recall the example from last chapter: on the Sellarsian account, a sentence like

- (1) “Heinrich ist ein Imker” (in German) means *that Heinrich is a bee-keeper*.

classifies the German sentence “Heinrich ist ein Imker” as having certain kinds of meaning-constituting properties. The sentence does this by using the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” as an example to *illustrate* the meaning-constituting properties in question. Indicating that this is what “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” is used for is the job of transforming that sentence into a *that*-clause. More specifically, by transforming the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” into a *that*-clause, we are introducing a predicate which serves to pick out the relevant meaning-constituting properties, by using the sentence as an illustrative example. “Means”, then merely functions, in this context, to attribute those properties to the German sentence.

With this picture in view, consider now the case of the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions. Assume that one thinks that the content-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms of properties not mentioning content, certain “fundamental explanatory properties”. How would one then preserve the legitimacy of the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions without endorsing representationalist commitments with regards to *that*-clauses? Again, the most straightforward way of doing so is to connect such attributions with the fundamental explanatory properties, without having them represent those properties. Could the Sellarsian account do this job? On that account, a sentence like (1) attributes meaning-constituting properties to one sentence by using another sentence to illustrate those properties. How could an account of this form account for the use of *that*-clauses in sentences like

(2) Helene believes *that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper.

though? The Sellarsian account *can* do this job, but only if the meaning-constituting properties of declarative sentences and the fundamental explanatory properties of propositional attitudes are identical, or at least related to each other in a relevant way. In this case, *that*-clauses can serve, on the Sellarsian account, to pick out both kinds of properties by using a sentence as an illustrative example. They can then be connected with different kinds of verbs for different purposes, e.g. to attribute meaning-constituting properties to sentences, or to attribute fundamental explanatory properties to mental states. In the above example, for instance, “*that Heinrich is a bee-keeper*” could then be used to pick out certain properties by using “Heinrich is a bee-keeper” as an illustrative example, either to attribute meaning-constituting properties to the German Sentence “Heinrich ist ein Imker”, or to attribute fundamental explanatory properties to Helene’s belief. This answers the question *how* the Sellarsian account can be generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions and other kinds of propositional attitude ascriptions.

Of course, this means that there is no *general* answer to the question whether the Sellarsian account can plausibly be generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in content-attributions. Rather, this question will have to be answered *relative* to an account of the meaning-constituting properties and whether those properties can plausibly be identical, or otherwise relevantly related, to the fundamental explanatory properties.<sup>4</sup> Because this chapter is concerned with the question of whether the combination of the Sellarsian account and *expressivism* allows for an appropriate generalization of the Sellarsian account, two things, consequently, need to be considered. First, what the meaning-constituting properties are, if we endorse expressivism. Second, whether these properties can plausibly do double duty as the fundamental explanatory

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<sup>4</sup> I can see two straightforward kinds of approaches which would achieve a plausible connection between the meaning-constituting properties and the fundamental explanatory properties. On the first, we explain the meaning-constituting properties without reference to propositional attitudes, and then hold that propositional attitudes should be seen as relations to *sentences* such that the meaning-constituting properties are the fundamental explanatory properties. On the second, we give an account of the fundamental explanatory properties in psychological terms—meaning we hold that the fundamental explanatory properties are themselves concerned with something mental—and then account for the meaning-constituting properties in terms of relations to propositional attitudes with the relevant fundamental explanatory properties. I assume that an endorsement of ideationalism would block tacking the first path, so an approach along the second lines is what I will develop in what follows.

properties of propositional attitudes. So, let us take a look at what view about the meaning-constituting properties fits with expressivism.

## 2. HOW NOT TO THINK ABOUT EXPRESSIVISM AND MEANING-CONSTITUTING PROPERTIES

Of course, we already know what an expressivist says about the meaning-constituting properties. In the third chapter, I argued that expressivism actually *is* primarily a view about the meaning-constituting properties of declarative sentences, with a particular focus on the meaning-constituting properties of normative sentences. More specifically, I argued that the most plausible form of expressivism is *meta-semantic expressivism*. In the philosophy of language, meta-semantic expressivism subscribes to

**PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS:** Declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

According to meta-semantic expressivism the meaning-constituting properties of sentences consist in those sentences being conventionally associated via some theoretically significant “expression” relation with certain mental states. Whether or not the Sellarsian account can be appropriately generalized to account for the use of *that*-clauses in attributions of mental content in a way that helps the quasi-realist depends on whether *these* meaning-constituting properties could play the role of the fundamental explanatory properties. Of course, to be able to make a considered judgement about this, one needs to know how *exactly* the expressivist’s commitment to *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS* is to be understood in this context.

At this point it will be helpful to anticipate a certain complex worry regarding how the combination of these two accounts could appropriately generalize to get a clearer understanding of how the expressivist’s commitment should and should not be understood. The worry I have in mind goes as follows: the fundamental explanatory properties are those properties of mental states which account for their content-explananda. If we hold that the meaning-constituting properties *as conceived by the expressivist* constitute these fundamental explanatory properties, however, it

seems that we would be committed to the view that what accounts for the content-explananda relevant for the propositional attitudes *itself* involves a mental state. This not only appears to give a highly unorthodox account of the structure of propositional attitudes, which might worry some, but it also raises certain difficult questions.<sup>5</sup> Are the mental states that figure in the expressivist account not *themselves* propositional attitudes? Would this not mean, however, that the expressivist either has to already presuppose a notion of propositional mental content that is *independent* of the Sellarsian account, which makes the Sellarsian account redundant, or that she faces an infinite regress? On the other hand, if those mental states are *not* propositional attitudes how else would they be characterized?

If this worry comes up at this point, I take it that it has a particular source: meta-normative theorists are *used* to think of expressivism in a certain way, namely, as a position which characterizes normative judgements and distinguishes those judgements from descriptive judgements in a distinctive way. More specifically, on the way meta-normative theorists typically think about expressivism, the expressivist draws the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements in terms of *beliefs* and *desires*. This understanding of expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of mind, however, *also* informs the way in which expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of language are understood.

In previous chapters I suggested that expressivism's commitments in the philosophy of language are best understood as embedding expressivism within the ideationalist tradition. According to ideationalism, linguistic items derive their meaning from standing in a relevant expression relation to certain kinds of mental entities. While there are several ways one could understand this, a very specific understanding of this claim is forced on the expressivist, if expressivism is thought of along traditional lines.<sup>6</sup> According to this understanding of ideationalism, the

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5 Billy Dunaway and Mark Schroeder both express the worry that expressivists who accept a deflationary account of *that*-clauses are committed to this unorthodox way of viewing propositions (see Dunaway 2010 and Schroeder 2014a).

6 This was recently highlighted by Mark Schroeder (Schroeder 2008b). This understanding of expressivism is also relatively salient e.g. in the writing of Simon Blackburn (see e.g. Blackburn 1984a, Blackburn 1988 and Blackburn 1998a; Blackburn is rarely clear on this matter though), Allan Gibbard (Gibbard 1992 and Gibbard 2003), Michael Ridge (Ridge 2006a, although Ridge has since then revised his view—See Ridge Forthcoming), and Ralph Wedgwood (Wedgwood 2008).

meaning of sentences is explained by being associated with a propositional attitude, where it is *both* the psychological kind of the attitude and the content of the attitude which are relevant for the meaning of those sentences. Why is this understanding forced on the expressivist? Because according to the expressivist—as traditionally understood—what is distinctive about the meaning of normative sentences is that the mental states expressed by use of those sentences are of a particular psychological kind: they are desire-like, rather than belief-like. Consequently, it seems that expressivism as a meta-semantic theory must amount to the claim that sentences have their meaning in virtue of *both* a content *and* an attitude towards that content. Thinking about expressivism along these lines, however, clearly gives us a particular picture about expressivism’s commitments regarding the nature of the meaning-constituting properties: on this picture, it is an attitude toward a content related in a particular way to a sentence that constitutes the meaning-constituting properties of that sentence. And it is this picture which raises the questions mentioned above.

In our context we should resist this picture though. As I have already suggested above, the quasi-realist expressivist who *accepts* that normative judgements are beliefs will *not* draw the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements in terms of our *ordinary* notions of “belief” and “desire” as they figure in folk-psychology. Instead, the theoretical work of drawing that distinction would be done fundamentally in terms of a more robust philosophical theory of psychology.<sup>7</sup> But, if this is the case, then it should also be the characterization that is given by that theory which *fundamentally* figures in the expressivist’s account of the meaning-constituting properties. Which means that it should also be the characterization of the mental states that is given by the expressivist’s chosen theory of psychology which should be considered, when one tries to determine whether the combination of expressivism with the Sellarsian view can be plausibly generalized to account for the use of *that-*

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7 This is *not* to say that the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements *could* not be drawn in terms of our ordinary notions of “belief” and “desire”. For example, it could turn out that the difference between normative and descriptive judgements maps onto the fact that normative judgements are beliefs which are type-identical with certain desires with non-normative content, while descriptive beliefs are not type-identical to any desires. Even in this case, however, the fundamental explanatory work would be done in terms of a robust theory of psychology which explains why normative judgements consist in a state for which our folk-notions offer *two* ways to conceptualize them, while descriptive judgements consist in a state for which our folk-notions offer only one way to conceptualize them.

clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions.

This provides some indication how we should *not* understand the expressivist's commitment to *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS* in our context and some indication how we *should* understand this commitment. Unfortunately, at this point we still have no clear idea what theory of psychology expressivists who concede that both descriptive and normative judgements are beliefs, *would* use to draw the difference between normative and descriptive judgements. This is what now needs to change, if progress is to be made on the question of whether the meaning-constituting properties as construed by the expressivist could do the work of those properties which explain the content-explananda when it comes to the propositional attitudes. Is there a theory that would suit the expressivist's purposes?

I take it that in this context, the robust theory of psychology that a quasi-realist endorses should satisfy at least the following three requirements. First, the theory should fit with a plausible form of a scientific, naturalistic world-view. This requirement derives from the fact that at least some motivation for expressivism comes from its compatibility with a naturalistic world-view and so, an expressivist should not accept a theory of mind that is in conflict with such a world-view. Second, the theory should not require a notion of propositional content to explain the content-explananda, at least not in a way which would conflict with deflationist commitments. This is the requirement that the fundamental explanatory properties actually are fully describable in terms that do not make mention of propositional contents. While it should be OK in the philosophy of mind (or cognitive science) to use a technical notion of "propositional content" which is not the Sellarsian one for theoretical purposes, just as this was OK for semantics, this notion should be eliminable in the sense that the fundamental explanatory work is done in other terms. Third, the theory should provide the necessary resources to draw the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements that is fundamental to expressivism, while being compatible with both being beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, to make a *full* case for any theory of psychology chosen by the quasi-realist, one would also have to show that it is, if not the best theory, at least among the best motivated theories in the philosophy of mind. While I think that there is very good motivation for the theory that I want to suggest in what follows, this dissertation is not the place to make a full case. Rather, here I am interested in the question whether there is a theory in the philosophy of mind for which there is

In what follows I will argue that “conceptual role semantics”, a certain school with functionalism about the mind, satisfies these requirements, and that it will allow us to appropriately generalize the Sellarsian account.<sup>9</sup> I will argue for this by developing the framework that combines conceptual role semantics, expressivism and the Sellarsian view in a way that shows that it is in fact compatible with all of our theoretical requirements. I will develop the framework in three steps. In the first step I will focus *only* on the case of belief, bracketing how the view deals with any other propositional attitudes. I will argue, in the third section of this chapter, that conceptual role semantics could combine with the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses to give us an account of belief-attributions and of the role *that*-clauses play in such attributions. The second step of my argument, located in the fourth section, will then be to show that this framework can allow the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements that lies at the heart of expressivism, while being compatible with both being beliefs. The third step is then to explain how the framework developed for belief-attributions can account for the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions more generally. I will do this in the fifth section.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL ROLE, SELLARSIAN *THAT*-CLAUSES, AND BELIEF

Let me start by explaining why I want to proceed by first focusing on the case of belief, bracketing the other propositional attitudes. My two main reasons for doing so are the following. First, it should already be clear that the Sellarsian account imposes a certain constraint on how *that*-clauses function in propositional attitude ascriptions. On the Sellarsian account, *that*-clauses pick out the meaning-constituting properties of *declarative sentences*. Insofar as those properties are related to the

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some independent motivation, and which can do the work required in our context. What follows should, consequently, be read with this reservation in mind, and it should remain clear that a quasi-realist who follows my suggestion still has this significant theoretical burden to discharge.

9 Choosing a school within functionalism has two additional advantages in our context. First, it is a view that some prominent expressivists already accept, or at least express sympathy for. See e.g. Blackburn 1998a, Gibbard 1992 and Ridge 2006b. Hence, functionalism should not be something which is too far from a view in the philosophy of mind that many expressivists would want to endorse anyways. Second, Sellars himself was one of the first functionalists about the mind (see e.g. Sellars 1956 and Sellars 1963). An investigation of how his view about *that*-clauses would interact with functionalism should, consequently, also be of interest to those generally sympathetic to Sellars’ views, and a combination of both views something that is not too far from what Sellars himself could endorse.



fundamental explanatory properties of *any* mental state, however, it seems that they must be primarily related to the fundamental explanatory properties of *beliefs*, the states conventionally expressed by assertoric uses of declarative sentences. In this respect, the Sellarsian account *already* requires that we explain the use of *that*-clauses in all propositional attitude ascriptions by reference to how *that*-clauses figure in belief-attributions. Second, if one wants to explain all content-attributions to propositional attitudes in relation to content-attributions to one particular kind of propositional attitude, then belief seems to be the best bet. After all, if *language* has a “downtown”—in the sense that the content of all linguistic expression should be explained by reference to it—then the most likely candidate for this downtown is *assertion*.<sup>10</sup> But then, the most likely candidate for the downtown of the *mind* should be *belief*, the state expressed by assertion.

As I already said, I want to argue that a certain school within functionalism about the mind fits with our theoretical purposes. What is “functionalism about the mind” though? According to *functionalism about the mind*, mental states are dispositional states which are fundamentally characterized by how they function within a mental economy.<sup>11</sup> Mental states, on this view, are characterized fundamentally by what I will call their “causal-functional role”.<sup>12</sup> The *causal-functional role* of a mental state is the causal role it plays within a mental economy. So, according to functionalism, mental states are fundamentally characterized by their *relational* properties, not by their intrinsic nature.

Functionalism is often regarded as being well-suited to fit with a naturalistic,

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10 As mentioned in footnote ten in the first chapter, the metaphor of language having a “downtown” originates in Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1953), and prominently figures in the works of Robert Brandom (e.g. Brandom 1983, Brandom 1994, and Brandom 2008).

11 For overviews over functionalism and the different variations that it can take, see Block 1980, Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson 1996, and Levin 2013. For well-known proponents of functionalism, see Fodor 1968, Lewis 1966, Putnam 1960 and Putnam 1967.

12 I use the label “causal-functional” in this context rather than just “functional” as is common in the philosophy of mind, to distinguish this role from the “functional role” that was relevant in the second chapter. The “functional role” of a mental state, as I used the label in the second chapter, is the web of *platitudes* characterizing that mental state in our ordinary practice. The causal-functional role of a mental state, on the other hand, is the set of causal relations that characterize the state according to a robust theory of psychology (where this can be, but does not have to be the same as what platitudes characterize the mental state in folk-psychology). In general, folk-psychology can be seen as a good way to *track* or *individuate* mental states with certain causal-functional roles, without it being a given that it provides the best means to characterize those states for explanatory purposes or that it allows us to fully spell out the causal-functional role.

scientific world-view. Hence, if we choose a school within the general functionalist framework, we are guaranteed to satisfy at least our first requirement. Functionalism comes in a variety of different versions though. Here I will commit to as little as possible regarding what *specific* version of functionalism the expressivist should endorse, and only make explicit commitments when our theoretical purposes require this.<sup>13</sup> This brings us immediately to the school within functionalism that I want to argue can deliver the kind of theory required in our context. Accepting this particular school is born out of the second requirement introduced further above, namely, that no irreducible notion of propositional content figure on the theories' most fundamental characterization of mental states.

Even if we can characterize mental states in terms of their causal-functional roles, that does not establish that they can be fully characterized without making use of an irreducible notion of propositional content. This is because functionalism itself is compatible with such a notion of content figuring irreducibly in the functional characterization of mental states. However, there is a school within functionalism according to which, on the most fundamental level, propositional attitudes can be fully characterized *without* making reference to propositional content. This is the school I will call "conceptual role semantics" in what follows.<sup>14</sup> *Conceptual role semantics*

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13 One question that I want to stay neutral on, for example, is whether the causal-functional role characteristic for a mental state should be understood in *normative* terms or in non-normative terms. According to some versions of functionalism the causal-functional role of a state specifies how someone's mental state *ought to behave* or would behave *if they are rational*, while according to others, it only specifies how such a mental state regularly or generally behaves. The relevant question here is, of course, whether attributions of mental states (including attributions of mental contents) are normative or not. Even if such attributions are normative in some sense though, I take it that they are not *practically* normative. Hence, an expressivist will have no stake in this debate and should stay neutral on this issue, absent arguments that such a stance is not feasible for the expressivist.

14 In the literature the term "conceptual role semantics" is used to label the broad tradition according to which content is determined by a certain kind of role or use (for overviews over this tradition, see Block Forthcoming, Greenberg and Harman 2007, and Whiting 2009). The *locus classicus* for conceptual role semantics in this sense is Wilfried Sellars' work in the philosophy of language and mind (see especially Sellars 1954a, Sellars 1954b, Sellars 1969, and Sellars 1974). While it seems plausible to see Sellars as the first "real" proponent of conceptual role semantics, note that Robert Brandom points out that Immanuel Kant, Rudolf Carnap and (surprisingly) Gottlob Frege can be plausibly interpreted along these lines as well (see Brandom 2000: 49-52 and 57-61). Other philosophers who can plausibly be read as standing in this broad tradition are e.g. Ned Block (Block 1986), Robert Brandom (Brandom 1994 and Brandom 2008; Brandom calls his view "inferentialism", but it can still be situated within the broad tradition I am calling "conceptual role semantics" here), Matthew Chrisman (Chrisman 2010, Chrisman 2011, and Chrisman 2012), Hartry Field (see e.g. Field 1977, Field 1978, and Field 2001b), Gilbert Harman (see e.g. Harman 1999a and Harman 1999b), Paul Horwich (Horwich 1998b and Horwich 2006), Brian Loar (Loar

is primarily a view about the nature of the properties in virtue of which mental states have their contents, what I called their “content-constituting properties” above. It situates those properties in the *causal-functional role* of those mental states. Roughly, according to *conceptual role semantics* mental entities have their contents in virtue of particular *parts* of their functional roles, specifically in virtue of certain roles they play e.g. in the procession of sensory information, inference, deliberation and reasoning more generally, and in the production of behavioural outputs. As Gilbert Harman characterizes the view, according to conceptual role semantics

“[content] depends on role in conceptual scheme rather than on truth conditions. That is, [content] has to do with *evidence, inference, and reasoning*, including the *impact sensory experience has on what one believes, the way in which inference and reasoning modify one’s beliefs and plans, and the way beliefs and plans are reflected in action.*”<sup>15</sup>

Generally, the roles that could be relevant for a mental states’ content can be distinguished into three kinds.<sup>16</sup> First, “mind-entry” conditions, which specify the role the state plays in the procession of sensory stimuli. Second, “mind-to-mind” conditions, which specify the role of the state in the processes of deliberation, reasoning and inference. Third, “mind-exit” conditions, which specify the role of the state in the production of actions. I will call that part of the causal-functional role of a state that is of concern for conceptual role semantics the “conceptual role” of that state.

Of course, what is characteristic for the different types of propositional attitudes—what distinguishes them from each other and from other mental states—is

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1981), W. V. O. Quine (Quine 1960), Christopher Peacocke (Peacocke 1992), Eike von Savigny (Von Savigny 1988), John Skorupski (Skorupski 1997), and Ralph Wedgwood (Wedgwood 2001 and Wedgwood 2008). Conceptual role semantics can also be found outside of philosophy, for example, in cognitive science or computer science (see e.g. Block Forthcoming and Rapaport 2002). The views for which I will use the label “conceptual role semantics” here, are embedded within this broad tradition, but take on commitments which not all of those who fall within the broader tradition might share. Authors who are plausibly read as explicitly endorsing the more narrow view I call “conceptual role semantics” are, for example, Block, Field and Harman. Readers who are interested in the details of the independent motivations and arguments for such views should consult these authors, as well as the other authors standing in this broader tradition.

15 Harman 1999b: 201. My emphasis.

16 The following tri-partite distinction goes back to Sellars (Sellars 1954b). Sellars’ focus, however, is on *language*, which is why he uses the labels “language-entry transitions”, “language-to-language transitions”, and language-exit transitions” for the three kinds of transitions he holds relevant for the content of linguistic entities. My way of labelling these transitions follows Sellars, but is modified to apply to the case of mental content.

exactly the way they operate on their content. Hence, what characterizes the different types of propositional attitudes on a framework of this kind should be cashed out in terms of their conceptual roles. More specifically, it should be cashed out in terms of the *types* of mind-entry, mind-to-mind, and mind-exit conditions which are characteristic for mental states of this kind. This puts us in a position to say something about the meaning of the term “belief”. On this framework, the term “belief” will pick out mental states with a certain *type* of conceptual role. Given minimalist conceptions of belief and truth-apptitude—which we will still require to allow a significant theoretical difference between normative and descriptive beliefs—this should be that type of conceptual role which is suitable for conventional expression by assertoric use of disciplined declarative sentences. If one wants to explain the meaning of declarative sentences in terms of the mental states they express, this should be the kind of conceptual role possessed by all those dispositional states which can enter into all those kinds of inferential relations necessary to solve the Frege-Geach Problem. So, headaches would be out and descriptive beliefs would be in, while it would be an open question whether the states expressivists think constitute normative judgements would fall under this conceptual role kind.

Not only the *type* of propositional attitude to which a mental state belongs is characterized in terms of content, however, but also what particular instance of that type it is. Hence, if one accepts conceptual role semantics, then one thinks that on the most fundamental level of psychology those states we pick out with belief-attributions can be *fully* characterized in terms of their conceptual role. At this point, we need to go one step further though. As I said earlier, “mental content” itself is a notion associated with certain kinds of phenomena regarding mental states, which I have called the “content-explananda”. On a deflationary account we need to hold that the content-explananda can be fully accounted for in terms not making mention of contents, in terms of the “fundamental explanatory properties” of the relevant mental states. Consequently, at this point my purposes require endorsement of a version of conceptual role semantics according to which it is not only the case that beliefs can be fully characterized in terms of their conceptual roles, but also that all of the content-explananda associated with beliefs can be fully accounted for in terms

of conceptual role.<sup>17</sup> Given this, it is the property of having a particular conceptual role which has to account for all of the content-explananda of a belief on this kind of account.

This gives me a view about the fundamental explanatory properties of beliefs. I can now make the first step towards a generalization of the Sellarsian account. Further above I already explained that the Sellarsian account can be generalized if it is the case that the meaning-constituting properties and the fundamental explanatory properties are identical or otherwise relevantly related. Now that we *have* a view of these fundamental explanatory properties in place, we can tweak our understanding of

***PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS***: Declarative sentences have their meaning in virtue of the judgements assertoric uses of those sentences conventionally express.

accordingly. Given a *functionalist picture* about the mind generally, it seems plausible to think of the ideationalist commitment along the following lines: languages are basically (more or less) codified ways of providing information about the functional profile of one's mental states, and the meaning of declarative sentences is explained in terms of what causal-functional state one commits oneself to be in by assertoric use of that sentence. Clearly though, it will be the conceptual role which is most relevant for the sentence's meaning, as it will, for example, be a difference in the conceptual role of the states expressed which accounts for the difference in meaning between different kinds of declarative sentences. So, on this modified understanding of *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS* it is the *conceptual role* of the judgement conventionally expressed by assertoric use of a declarative sentence in virtue of which that sentence has its meaning. If we accept this understanding of *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS*, what is the consequence for the Sellarsian view?

On the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses, *that*-clauses function to pick out

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<sup>17</sup> This, of course, is in a sense a more radical view than the one which holds that mental states can be fully characterized in terms of their causal-functional roles, but concedes that certain of their properties can only be described in terms of an non-eliminable notion of content, where the content of a mental state might be derivative from its causal-functional role, but its explanatory properties not fully reducible to this functional role. Deflationism about the contents of mental states commits us to denying such a view, however.

meaning-constituting properties *by example*. More specifically, to employ a *that*-clause is to use the declarative sentence following the “that” as an example for something with particular meaning-constituting properties as a means to pick out these meaning-constituting properties. This way *that*-clauses feed on our competence with a particular language (our implicit know-how of the meaning-constituting properties of sentences) to enable us to use sentences in that language as examples to talk and think about meaning-constituting properties. For example, they allow us to assign those properties to sentences when combined with the verb “means”. But, on the above picture, those meaning-constituting properties will be that assertoric use of the sentence conventionally expresses a mental state with a particular conceptual role. And if this is the case, we cannot only use *that*-clauses to assign meaning-constituting properties to sentences, we can also use *that*-clauses to pick out the conceptual roles of certain kinds of mental states, namely, those states suitable for expression by declarative sentences. Given that those states are beliefs on the minimalist conception of belief, this means that *that*-clauses provide an easy way for us to keep track of the conceptual roles of beliefs via the sentences with which we are competent. And this extends the *raison d’être* of *that*-clauses from providing an easy means to keep track of meaning-constituting properties, to providing an easy means to keep track of the conceptual roles of at least certain kinds of mental states, namely, beliefs.

Let me illustrate this one last time with the example from above. On the Sellarsian account, *that*-clauses like “*that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper” serve to pick out meaning-constituting properties by using a sentence in a language competence with which is presupposed—in this case the English sentence “Heinrich is a bee-keeper”—as an example to illustrate what these properties are. Because the meaning-constituting properties, on the above account, will be that assertoric use of the sentence conventionally expresses a mental state with a particular conceptual role, we can use *that*-clauses to pick out a particular conceptual role, using the English sentence (in this case “Heinrich is a bee-keeper”) as an illustrative example for something which expresses a state with that role. This way, we cannot only use *that*-clauses to attribute meaning-constituting properties, as in

- (1) “Heinrich ist ein Imker” (in German) means *that* Heinrich is a bee-

keeper.

We can *also* use them to attribute a conceptual role to a mental state, as in

(2) Helene believes *that* Heinrich is a bee-keeper.

In (2) we are attributing that conceptual role to Helene's belief, which is possessed by mental states expressed by sentences of which "Heinrich is a bee-keeper" is an illustrative example.

This also puts me in a position to explain how the Sellarsian view accounts for the role of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions. Sentences of the form

(B) A believes *that* p.

attribute a state with a particular conceptual role to a person. In particular, they attribute a mental state which is of the conceptual role kind "belief" and which has the particular conceptual role picked out by "that p", namely, the conceptual role of the state conventional expressed by assertoric use of the sentence "p".

Note that on the Sellarsian account, *that*-clauses will, even when they occur in belief-attributions, still possess all of the characteristics they have in meaning-attributions and which I highlighted in the last chapter. That is, in belief-attributions *that*-clauses will still perform their role—allowing us to pick out certain properties by example—in a non-representational fashion and there will be no informative reductive analysis of *that*-clauses in terms of the conceptual roles they pick out. Furthermore, in belief-attributions *that*-clauses will behave linguistically exactly like referential singular terms that refer to something that supervenes on, but does not reduce to, the conceptual role of the belief in question. This also means that we can carry out belief-attributions by using the label "propositional contents" (and similar ones) to refer to what is attributed by *that*-clauses. For example, rather than saying

(B) A believes that p.

we might now be able to say

(BC) A has a belief with the content *that* p.

We might even be able to say,

(BP) A believes the proposition *that* p.

Of course, on the Sellarsian account the information carried by claims made by sentences such as (BC) or (BP) cannot go beyond what is claimed by sentences such as

(B). And, while such talk is generally harmless and can be a useful tool in some cases, we need to be at pains to not take it too seriously, lest we let ourselves be led into metaphysical conundrum where there is none.<sup>18</sup>

One last observation about this framework: on this account, *that*-clauses will behave in belief-attributions like terms that refer to something which supervenes on, but does not reduce to the conceptual role of certain beliefs. Parallel to the case of the basic explanatory properties which turned out to be the most suitable candidates for the meaning-constituting properties on the Sellarsian account, this will make the property of having a certain conceptual role the most plausible candidate for the property in virtue of which a belief has its content. So, while it initially might have appeared that the account on the table gives a completely different job to conceptual roles than conceptual role semantics would, the accounts actually end up assigning conceptual role the same status. Both views hold that conceptual roles crucially figures in the content-constituting properties, at least of beliefs. The view I have offered differs from conceptual role semantics only in virtue of *also* being a view about the nature of content-attributions, which provides us with a particular picture of how the content of a belief and the content-constituting properties of that belief are related. Conceptual role semantics by itself does not have any implications regarding this relation. It is only a view about the content-constituting properties themselves.

With these remarks in place, the Sellarsian account has been successfully generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions. Of course, this is only a partial success, as two things still remain to be established. First, we must establish whether the framework on the table is compatible with the expressivist's distinction between normative and descriptive judgements. Second, we must establish how the framework can account for the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions more generally. The next two sections deal with these two remaining challenges in turn.

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<sup>18</sup> Again, this stance toward propositional contents seems appropriate, given that the Sellarsian account is supposed to be an account of the use of *that*-clauses in ordinary practice, but that the notion of a "proposition" is not generally part of our ordinary practice. Ordinary folk rarely talk about the propositions that they believe, though they might talk more often about their beliefs' contents.



#### 4. EXPRESSIVISM RETHOUGHT: CONCEPTUAL ROLE EXPRESSIVISM

It is now time to see whether the above account satisfies the third requirement I introduced above. This was the requirement that the chosen theory of psychology allow the expressivist to maintain her distinction between normative and descriptive judgements, while conceding that both are beliefs. Recall that with regards to normative judgements the expressivist subscribes to two claims, namely,

***NON-REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements do *not* consist in representational states such that a normative judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

***CONATIVE NATURE OF NORMATIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute normative judgements (at least partially) consist in conative attitudes.

Regarding descriptive judgements, on the other hand, expressivists are representationalists. Specifically, expressivists think that descriptive judgements consist in representational states and not in motivational states. So they subscribe to

***REPRESENTATIONALISM ABOUT DESCRIPTIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute descriptive judgements do consist in representational states such that a descriptive judgement is true if and only if the representational state it consists in is true.

and

***NON-CONATIVE NATURE OF DESCRIPTIVE JUDGEMENTS:*** The mental states which constitute descriptive judgements do not consist in conative attitudes.

Can this difference be cashed out in terms of conceptual role semantics, while still maintaining that both normative and descriptive judgements are beliefs?

Let's start the investigation by taking a look at how we would distinguish between "representational states" and "conative attitudes" in terms of causal-

functional roles.<sup>19</sup> I take it that *representational states* are states which are characterized by their function to track features of our external environment. In this function, they also prominently serve to guide the agent around in that environment. While representational states are relevant for action in this way, however, those states themselves are in a relevant sense motivationally inert: representational states might be causally relevant to many different kinds of acts, but their causal-functional profile will not be such that it will lead an agent to perform any particular action. Such states will, consequently, be states with a causal-functional profile of the following kind: the procession of and reaction to sensory inputs will play a major role in their causal-functional profile, but insofar as the production of action is relevant to this profile, the causal-functional profile of representational states will reflect that they only play a guiding role in action. Furthermore, representational states will be states which either require of us to expand our ontology by including those features they function to track, or must be shown to track something already part of our ontology, unless we think that there is reason to think that they fail to track anything in our external environment.

*Conative attitudes*, on the other hand, I take to be states which are primarily characterized by the function to lead an agent to move around in and manipulate her external environment. Conative attitudes do not function to track anything in the external environment, rather they function to cause the agent to interact with that environment. These states will directly cause the agent to do particular actions and they will be connected to other states and events in an agent's mental economy that increase the likely-hood for the agent to be so moved. So, for example, conative attitudes will be directly tied to having positive or negative experiential states in certain situations (as pleasure and pain, for example, reinforce certain kinds of behaviour), the agent seeing certain things in a favourable or unfavourable light, the agent's attention being drawn to certain things, and so on. Conative attitudes will,

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19 What follows draws on the characterization of representational states and conative attitudes from a variety of places. See e.g. Ridge 2006b, Sinclair 2006, Sinhababu 2009, Smith 1994a, and Sterelny 2003. I presuppose here a broadly Humean theory of motivation, which (as already said in the first chapter) is often taken to be our most plausible theory of action (the theory has gained prominence with the work of Donald Davidson (see Davidson 1963) and has recently been defended by Michael Smith (Smith 1987 and Smith 1994a), and Neil Sinhababu (Sinhababu 2009).

consequently, be states with a causal profile of the following kind: the procession of and reaction to sensory inputs will play only a minor role within their causal-functional profile, but a major part of that profile will be concerned with the production of action. Furthermore, conative attitudes will be states that do not require us to expand our ontology, as conative attitudes do not function to track anything.<sup>20</sup>

With these characterizations of representational states and conative attitudes in place, it should be clear that most mental states with the causal-functional profile of conative attitudes will not be states which folk-psychology would pick out with the term “belief”. Rather, in folk-psychology that causal-functional profile is paradigmatically the one possessed by non-cognitive states, most prominently, of course, desires. Be that as it may, the crucial question is now the following: would it be possible to claim within the above framework that in the set of mental states that have the conceptual role picked out by “belief” there are some states that have the causal-functional profile of representational states, while others have the causal-functional profile of conative attitudes?

I take it that *if* there are such different kinds of beliefs, the difference in their causal-functional roles lies in the kinds of *conceptual roles* that characterize them. Within the conceptual role that characterizes all beliefs, we would have to distinguish two fundamentally different kinds of beliefs, depending on a difference in the type of conceptual role which characterizes them. The difference between those two different kinds of beliefs should, thereby, be mostly a difference in the kinds of mind-entry and mind-exit conditions that characterize them. However, they might also differ in the types of reasoning and deliberation in which they prominently figure, or how they enter into reasoning and deliberation.<sup>21</sup> For example, insofar as beliefs that have a conceptual role that provides them with the causal-functional profile of

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20 Of course, both representational states and conative attitudes in some sense require us to expand our ontology, as they both require that we include these mental states in our ontology. This, however, is of course not what I mean when I say that representational states do, and conative attitudes do not, require us to expand our ontology. Rather, the issue in question is whether representational states or conative attitudes have ontological commitments beyond this.

21 Matthew Chrisman suggests that the difference between normative and descriptive belief should be drawn in terms of the difference between theoretical and practical reasoning, once all parties in the debate concede that both normative and descriptive judgements are beliefs (Chrisman 2008).

representational states enter into practical deliberation—reasoning about what to do—such deliberation will terminate in intentions only if accompanied by a conative attitude. Beliefs with a conceptual role that provides them with the causal-functional profile of conative attitudes, on the other hand, might enter into practical deliberation in a way that such deliberation will terminate in an intention without any further conative attitude.

It should be relatively clear at this point that the assumption that there are beliefs with such different types of conceptual roles is neither ruled out by conceptual role semantics, nor is it ruled out by a minimalist conception of belief. On a minimalist conception of belief, a mental state is a belief just in case it has a conceptual role that would make it suitable for expression by a disciplined declarative sentence. Above I suggested that this should be the kind of conceptual role possessed by all those dispositional states which can enter into those kinds of inferential relations necessary to solve the Frege-Geach Problem. This imposes some restrictions on the kinds of conceptual roles that could characterize a belief, since a mental state could only qualify as a belief if it could be characterized by a conceptual role with a sufficiently rich set of relevant mind-to-mind conditions. At least *in principle* though, a significant number of different types of conceptual role should be compatible with that requirement, conceptual role types which differ significantly among each other when it comes to their *other* conditions. In our context, two types of conceptual role that seem, at least *in principle*, compatible with this requirement can, thereby, be highlighted.

First, the requirement should be compatible with there being beliefs that are characterized by a conceptual role of the following kind: when it comes to mind-entry conditions their conceptual role is characterized by a significantly robust set of such conditions, which are such that we are required to expand our ontology, or show that those conditions function to track something already part of our ontology, unless we want these beliefs to be misfiring systematically. When it comes to mind-exit conditions, on the other hand, these beliefs will be characterized by conditions according to which they play—at most—a contributory role in the production of action in combination with other mental states, most prominently desires. It seems

very plausible though that beliefs with a conceptual role of this type have the causal-functional profile of representational states. And an expressivist can hold that descriptive beliefs are beliefs of exactly this kind.

Second, the minimalist restriction should *also be* compatible with there being beliefs with a very different type of conceptual role. If this conceptual role is characterized by mind-entry conditions at all, these conditions will be such that they do not expand our ontology. This could be the case, for example, because those mind-entry conditions only specify a restricted set of conditions which *rule out* the belief characterized by them. But, the conceptual role would be characterized by a robust set of mind-exit conditions which provides these beliefs with a motivating role in the production of action. It seems very plausible, however, that beliefs with a conceptual role of this type will have the causal-functional profile of conative attitudes. And an expressivist can hold that normative beliefs are exactly of this kind. It seems, consequently, that the framework on the table *does* allow the conceptual space for an expressivist to draw the distinction between normative and descriptive judgements that is characteristic for expressivism, while at the same time maintaining that both are beliefs.

Of course, to establish that there are and can be such states, as well as cashing out their conceptual roles in detail would be part of a theoretical enterprise that goes far beyond the purposes of this dissertation. Here, I just want to bring forward a couple of considerations which should give us some license to optimism about the project's success. First, I should note that for the expressivist, this difficulty should mostly affect whether or not they can legitimately allow there to be beliefs characterized by the conceptual role type they take to be characteristic for normative belief. After all, representationalism about both normative and descriptive belief is the stance of the dialectical opponent of expressivism, so that opponent is in no position to deny that some beliefs are representational states. Of course, such an opponent might want to deny the viability of characterizing such beliefs within the above functionalist framework. Given that functionalism is a relatively established position in the philosophy of mind, and at least some functionalist approaches offer an account on which belief can be fully characterized without making mention of

content, however, I take it that this is a worry which is not all too pressing for an expressivist.

Second, there are two ways for an expressivist to establish that there can be beliefs with a type of conceptual role that would give them the causal-functional profile of conative attitudes. The first would be to argue that the conceptual role of normative beliefs is actually identical to the conceptual role of a mental state which clearly is a conative attitude, but which we do not conceptualize as a belief in folk-psychology. Such a mental state could be, for example, some desire with non-normative content. On this approach, the expressivist can argue that the Frege-Geach Problem can be solved for normative sentences, if normative sentences express *this* conative attitude. Combined with minimalism about belief, the expressivist could then hold that this means that the mental state can be conceptualized as a belief as well, with the desire-like causal-functional characteristics becoming part of the conceptual role of that belief. If the expressivist takes this route, she can hold that in folk-psychology there are two ways of conceptualizing the relevant causal-functional state—two different ways of thinking about the different parts of the state’s causal-functional role. First, we can think about this state as a desire with a non-normative content or second, we can think about it as a belief with a normative content.

The second way would be to argue that paradigm examples of conative attitudes can have features that would qualify them to be suitable for expression by disciplined declarative sentences. The expressivist can then hold that there can be states which are only conceptualizable as normative beliefs with a certain conceptual role, but which nevertheless exemplify the causal-functional profiles of conative attitudes. On this route, the expressivist would deny that normative beliefs can be reduced to any of the familiar conative attitudes—normative beliefs would be *sui generis* conative attitudes, which folk-psychology can only conceptualize in one way, namely, as normative beliefs with a certain content.

Both of these ways require paying attention to the Frege-Geach Problem, but they show how we can argue for the legitimacy of assuming that there can be the relevant mental states even without going deeper into the robust theory of

psychology, simply by drawing on the resources which folk-psychology provides.

This concludes my discussion of how the framework presented here would be compatible with the expressivist view that there is a fundamental difference between normative and descriptive judgements, while conceding that both are beliefs. One theoretical task remains. This is the issue how the account offered of the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions would deal with the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions more generally.

## 5. DESIRE AND ALL THAT: FULLY GENERALIZING THE SELLARSIAN VIEW

I have generalized the Sellarsian account to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions. This generalization was relatively straightforward: it just required a modification in the understanding of *PSYCHOLOGIZED META-SEMANTICS* that allowed *that*-clauses to pick out the conceptual role of beliefs. One might think, however, that the way I have made the generalization comes at a high price: given that *that*-clauses now always pick out the conceptual role of beliefs, the use of *that*-clauses in propositional attitude ascriptions more generally can no longer be explained. Is this a devastating objection? Not necessarily, since there is at least one way to escape this challenge. We can escape the challenge by holding that the content of all other propositional attitudes can be individuated in relation to the content of the relevant beliefs. More specifically, we can deal with the challenge, by holding that the conceptual role of all propositional attitudes can be appropriately individuated by their relation to the conceptual role of belief. If this was the case, we could, even though *that*-clauses only pick out the conceptual role of a belief, nevertheless use *that*-clauses to attribute a conceptual role to another kind of propositional attitude, namely, that conceptual role which is relevantly related to the conceptual role of a belief. Is this response feasible?

To see whether it is, let us take a look at one propositional attitude in particular, namely, *desire*. Can the suggestion provide an appropriate function from the conceptual role of beliefs to the conceptual role of desires, which would be in agreement with our intuitions about what beliefs and desires share a content? The first thing to note is that on the account on offer, there are actually two different kinds

of beliefs distinguished by their different kinds of conceptual roles, namely, normative and descriptive beliefs. Because of this bifurcation in the case of belief, we need to consider two cases of desire as well when we consider the suggestion that the conceptual role of desire can be individuated by relation to the conceptual role of belief. First, we need to consider whether this suggestion can deal with desires with descriptive contents, such as the desire that there are monsters hiding in the closet. Second, we need to consider whether it can deal with desires with normative contents, such as the desire that pleasure is good for its own sake. I will deal with each type of desire in turn, starting with desires with descriptive contents.

Let me begin by fleshing out a little bit what the conceptual role of such desires would be. Among philosophers, desire is prominently known as a state that is motivating, with its content determining the kinds of actions an agent is disposed to undertake. Someone who desires that there are monsters hiding in the closet, for example, will do her best, *ceteris paribus*, to make it more likely that there are monsters hiding in the closet—whatever that may be in their particular situation. For instance, if she believes that monsters prefer a dirty and cluttered environment, she will do her best to create such an environment in her closet. The conceptual role of such desires will, consequently, be such that, in combination with beliefs about what makes the desired outcome more likely, it causes the agent to act in certain ways. Of course, this does not exhaust the conceptual role of desires:<sup>22</sup> for example, someone who desires that there are monsters hiding in the closet will be disposed to experience pleasure in entertaining the thought that there are monsters hiding in the closet. Furthermore, such a person will be disposed to have her attention directed towards the thought that there are monsters hiding in the closet and to fantasize about such thoughts. Such other features will need explaining as well eventually. I will do this when I consider desires with normative contents. However, the role of desires in the production of action is so central to their conceptual role, or at least to the conceptual role of desires with descriptive contents, that we have made significant progress, if we can

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<sup>22</sup> While these are features of desire which philosophers have tended to ignore in favour of desire's motivational role (which might be explained by the fact that philosophers have tended to use the label "desire" not in its folk-psychological sense, but as a technical term for what I have called "conative attitudes"), they have recently been highlighted by Scanlon (Scanlon 1998: 39-41). See also Sinhababu 2009, for an account of desire which pays attention to these features.



account for how desires with the relevant conceptual role can be identified within the given framework.

Here is how I think this theoretical work can be done: Recall that beliefs with descriptive content will be characterized by conceptual roles with a robust set of mind-entry conditions. Those beliefs have mind-entry conditions of this kind, because they are representational states that function to track particular features of the environment. With this in place, however, we can draw a distinctive relationship which should hold between the conceptual role of beliefs with descriptive contents and the conceptual role of certain desires with descriptive content: for any belief B with descriptive content, there will be some desire D the conceptual role of which is such that it tends to move the agent in a way that is conducive to bringing about those features of the external environment that it is the function of beliefs with the conceptual role of B to track. That desire, however, will surely be the most plausible candidate for the desire with the same content as the belief in question: surely the desire *that p*, will be that desire which functions to bring about what the conceptual role of the belief *that p* functions to track. Consequently, the account seems to be able to offer a function from the conceptual roles of beliefs to the conceptual role of desires, a function which tracks our intuitions about which beliefs and desires have the same content. If this is the case, however, then it seems plausible that we *can* characterize the conceptual roles of desires with descriptive contents in relation to the conceptual roles of the corresponding beliefs. Hence, even though *that*-clauses would pick out the conceptual roles of beliefs on the Sellarsian account, we can still account for their use in desire-attributions—at least when it comes to desires with descriptive content. In such attributions they serve to identify and attribute a desire with a certain conceptual role, by illustrating the belief to which that desire is relevantly related.

One question which might be raised at this point is whether this account smuggles in any illicit notion of propositional content by invoking the features in our external environment which beliefs with descriptive contents function to track. Might one not suspect that it is *these* features which play the role of the propositional content of the relevant beliefs and desires? I want to suggest that we can resist this picture at

this point. Mark Schroeder has recently introduced the distinction between a “propositional content” and a “representational content”.<sup>23</sup> According to Schroeder, *propositional contents* are what accounts for what I have called the content-explananda, while *representational contents* “serve to carve up the world, [...] correspond to distinctions in reality, [...] are associated with metaphysical commitment of some kind”.<sup>24</sup> Of course, Schroeder’s characterization of propositional contents is overly restrictive, because it effectively removes the possibility of a view like the Sellarsian from the conceptual landscape. So, we should resist *that* part of Schroeder’s account.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Schroeder’s distinction helps us in this context, because it highlights that the worry that the represented features of reality could smuggle in some problematic notion of propositional content is unfounded. It would *only* be problematic if those represented features of reality played some role in accounting for the content-explananda. But, the represented features of reality do not play this role in the account on offer—this is the role which is played by the conceptual role of the relevant desire, which is individuated in relation to the conceptual role of the corresponding belief. Hence, it is more plausible to see those features which are tracked as the *representational contents* of attitudes with descriptive contents, and as not smuggling in some independent notion of propositional content.

It seems, consequently, that we *can* account for the role of *that*-clauses in desire-attributions even if we see *that*-clauses as picking out the conceptual role of beliefs. Of course, this explanation will not work for the case of desires with normative contents, at least not if we endorse expressivism. After all, if we accept expressivism, normative beliefs will *not* be characterized by a conceptual role with a significantly robust set of mind-entry conditions, because they do not function to track *anything* in our external environment. If the conceptual role of desires with normative content *can* be characterized in relation to the conceptual roles of normative beliefs, we will

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23 Schroeder 2013b.

24 Schroeder 2013b: 418.

25 This assumption is also the reason Schroeder is led to think that a deflationary view cannot possibly do the explanatory work of accounting for the content-explananda, as he has to think that if there is something that accounts for these phenomena, *that* would have to be the propositional content of the relevant mental state. That means, that on Schroeder’s account the Sellarsian view would actually turn out to be not a deflationary view at all, but a reductionist view. I take it that this should give us enough pause to see that one should not accept Schroeder’s overly restrictive framework when it comes to characterizing propositional contents.

have to tell a different kind of story. However, it seems to me that there is a plausible different story to tell.

One thing that is notable is that there is actually an intuitive difference in the conceptual roles of these two kinds of desires. While desires with descriptive contents are prominently motivating, it seems very implausible that desires with normative contents are. Suppose someone has the desire that there are monsters hiding in the closet. Does it seem plausible that this person would be motivated to act in any particular way? Obviously it does. As long as the person believes that monsters are not hiding in her closet, she will be motivated to do any number of things which make it more likely that monsters start hiding in her closet. On the other hand, take someone who desires that pleasure is good for its own sake. Does it seem plausible that this person would be motivated to act in any particular way? It does not seem very plausible that she would be. Hence, it seems that desires with normative contents differ in a significant respect from desires with descriptive content: where the latter are motivating, the former are not.

Of course, here we must proceed with caution, as *some* desires with normative contents do seem to be motivating. For example, if someone had the desire that eating meat is morally permissible, she might be motivated to do a number of things, such as supporting research into lab-grown meat. Basically, such a person would be motivated to make it the case that eating meat loses all the properties which she believes to make it currently impermissible. However, it is very plausible that the ascription of desires of this kind can be seen as elliptical for the ascription of a certain mix of beliefs with normative contents, beliefs with descriptive contents, and desires with descriptive contents. For example, it is plausible to construe the above person's desire as a combination of the belief that causing unnecessary pain is inherently wrong, the belief that eating meat causes unnecessary pain and the desire that eating meat does not cause unnecessary pain. What we have in such cases are not really desires with normative contents, but instead convenient ways of attributing a complex combination of mental states. In the case in which we have desires with normative contents which cannot be so treated, however, it seems that such desires would be motivationally inert.

Note that such normative desires are not alone in having a conceptual role that significantly deviates from the conceptual role of desires with descriptive content. To take only one example, desires with *mathematical* content also do not seem to motivate agents to act in any particular way. To desire that a very complicated calculation turn out correct, for example, does not seem to motivate one to behave in any particular way. It is, of course, not hard to find an explanation for this phenomenon: both desires with normative contents and desires with mathematical contents have contents which are such that if they are true, they are necessarily true, while desires with descriptive contents have contents which would only be contingently true. Consequently, even if an expressivist has to hold that desires with descriptive content and desires with normative content are significantly different, there is actually independent motivation for doing so. Hence, even if we have to give a different explanation for the content of desires with descriptive content and the content of desires with normative content, there is some independent justification for doing so anyways.

So, what *does* characterize the conceptual role of desires with normative content and can those characteristics be appropriately individuated in relation to the conceptual role of the relevant beliefs? I take it that the most prominent features of the conceptual role of such desires are the following two, which I have already mentioned further above. First, someone who desires that p, where “that p” expresses a normative content, is disposed to take pleasure in entertaining the thought that p.<sup>26</sup> Second, someone who desires that p, where “that p” expresses a normative content, is disposed to have their attention drawn to the thought that p and to fantasize about this thought. Can we make sense of both of these features in relation to the conceptual roles of normative beliefs in a way that gives us the right function from belief to desire?

Both features of desires make mention of a further mental state, namely, the

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<sup>26</sup> It is important here that the person be taking pleasure *in* entertaining the thought that p and not just have a pleasurable experience *when* entertaining the thought that p. For example, someone who was brainwashed to experience pleasure whenever they entertain the thought that grass is green does not, thereby, automatically have the desire that grass is green. For desire, it is important that the pleasure derive from the thought in a certain way and that deviant causal chains of the above kind be ruled out.

propositional attitude “entertaining the thought that p”. The first step should, consequently, be to investigate whether an account can be given of this propositional attitude within the above framework, one which plausibly connects the conceptual role of that propositional attitude with the conceptual role of the relevant belief. Giving such an account is not a big problem though. One very plausible account of what it is to entertain a thought is that it is to *simulate* having the corresponding belief. “Simulation” is here to be understood as it would be used in the simulation theory in the philosophy of mind, namely, as running the relevant belief “off-line” within one’s own cognitive system.<sup>27</sup> If we understand “entertaining the thought that p” this way, however, then it is easy to see how the *that*-clause in such attributions would make the same contribution there as it would in a belief-attribution. After all, to entertain the thought that p, is just to be in that functional state which is a simulation of the belief with the conceptual role of beliefs picked out by “that p”. Hence, it will be very easy to identify the conceptual role of the relevant instance of the state of entertaining the thought that p in relation to the conceptual role of the relevant belief. This means also, of course, that the function from the conceptual role of a belief to an attitude of entertaining the thought will track our intuitions about which instances of belief and of the attitude of entertaining a thought will share the same content.

Given this understanding of what it is to “entertain the thought that p”, however, it should be clear that we can characterize the conceptual roles of desires with normative contents in relation to the conceptual roles of the corresponding beliefs as well. After all, these desires are characterized by relations to the attitude of entertaining the thought, which itself is characterized in relation to belief, where the relevant attitudes will all be those which we would intuitively regard as having the same contents. Hence, we can easily characterize the conceptual role of desires with normative contents in relation to the conceptual role of the corresponding belief. Someone who desires that p will be in a state with the following two features. First, it will, in some relevant way, cause them to experience pleasure from simulating a belief with the conceptual role picked out by “that p”. Second, they will be disposed to simulate the belief with the conceptual role picked out by “that p”, and to have their

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview over simulation theory in the philosophy of mind, see Gordon 2009.

attention drawn to that thought.

We now have a framework in which the Sellarsian account can deal with the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions and in desire-attributions. Can this account also deal with the use of *that*-clauses in other propositional attitude ascriptions though? I would like to suggest that it provides at least a significant license for optimism. As we have seen, the account *can* account for two of the major propositional attitudes, namely belief and desire, and we have already seen how it can account for another propositional attitude: entertaining a thought. Given this result, the expressivist should now be in a position to shift the burden of proof to anyone who has doubts about the above account being applicable to any particular kind of propositional attitude: someone who has doubts that the account will not work for some particular kind of propositional attitude now needs to give an argument why the view would not be applicable to that kind of attitude. If such an argument was given, the expressivist would then face a dilemma: either deny that the relevant attitude exists, or show how the attitude can be accounted for in terms that relate it to the conceptual role of the respective belief. Which horn to take at that point, however, and how problematic each horn would be, is something that can only be determined once we are given the attitude that is supposed to generate a problem for the above account. Therefore, at least for the moment, the expressivist should be able to rest content that the account *can* deal with all of the propositional attitudes and shift the burden of proof to those who want to deny this.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the third chapter I argued that there is an important phenomenon for which quasi-realists have not yet given an account for how it fits with expressivism. These are those uses of *that*-clauses associated with propositional contents. This phenomenon is important, not only because a quasi-realist must account for it to account for relevant platitudes surrounding our ordinary notions of truth-aptness and belief, such as

***ASSERTION AND BELIEF:*** The mental state conventionally expressed by assertoric use of a truth-apt sentence is a belief such that the content

of the belief is the content of the sentence.

or

***BELIEF IS A PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE***: Belief is a state with content.

in a way that is compatible with normative thought and discourse being truth-apt and normative judgements being beliefs. As we have seen, it also importantly figures in meaning-attributions in our ordinary practice, so a quasi-realist who wants to preserve this practice, better have an account for such uses as well. As I argued in the same chapter, there is no *in principle* worry that such an account could be given, which opens the door for anyone setting out to develop exactly such an account.

The aim of the fourth and fifth chapter was then to develop a deflationary account of *that*-clauses which fits with the quasi-realist's requirements. In the fourth chapter I offered the Sellarsian account as such a deflationary account, and developed the account in the context of meaning-attributions. This account straightforwardly allows the application of *that*-clauses to normative sentences even if expressivism is true, and allows the expressivist to say that normative sentences have propositional contents. In this, the fifth, chapter I have then argued that this account can be generalized to the use of *that*-clauses in belief-attributions and ascriptions of propositional contents generally. The generalization allows the expressivist to say that normative judgements are beliefs with normative propositions as their contents. In the context of generalizing the Sellarsian account I have suggested a novel way of thinking about expressivism, namely, as a view according to which the difference between normative and descriptive judgements is to be cashed out in terms of a difference in their conceptual role.

It should be relatively clear that the account of *that*-clauses that I developed in these two chapters allows the expressivist to account for platitudes such as *ASSERTION AND BELIEF* and *BELIEF IS A PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE*, so there should be no more objection on this front to an expressivist view which wants to allow that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and normative judgements beliefs. The account I gave even explains how desires with normative contents fit within an expressivist framework, a topic that expressivists rarely touch upon.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has been concerned with moving the debate surrounding expressivism beyond the Frege-Geach Problem, by investigating two neglected problems for meta-normative expressivism, and how the expressivist can deal with these problems. In this short conclusion I want to give a final summary of the main arguments and achievements of my investigation, and to point out some directions for future research that arise out of the dissertation.

The first problem this dissertation has been concerned with is the normative attitude problem, which is an objection to expressivism based on the challenge to give an account of the attitude which constitutes normative thinking. According to this objection, any attempt on the part of the expressivist to give an account for this attitude is impaled on one of the horns of a dilemma: if the expressivist holds that normative judgements consist (characteristically) in a distinctive, *sui generis* type of conative attitude which cannot be (completely) reduced to attitudes already part of an account of non-normative thinking, then the expressivist account will be uninformative and in conflict with naturalism. If the expressivist, on the other hand, holds that normative thinking can be completely accounted for in terms of attitudes that are already part of an account of non-normative thinking, then her account will leave something out that is distinctive about normative judgements.

I have argued that when it comes to the normative attitude problem, expressivists are on an equal footing with meta-normative representationalists who face a structurally identical dilemma, and that expressivists can use the very same resources that meta-normative representationalists have used to deal with their version of the dilemma. Furthermore, I have argued that these resources not only help more traditional expressivist approaches—according to which normative thinking can be completely accounted for in terms of attitudes that are already part of an account of non-normative thinking. These resources also, more surprisingly, make an expressivist account feasible, according to which normative judgements consist in *sui generis* attitudes. I then developed such an account in sufficient detail to



at least give us license for optimism that such approaches are in fact feasible.

One important question for future research that arises out of my discussion of the normative attitude problem is whether expressivists might not be *better* able to deal with the normative attitude problem with the resources made available by meta-normative representationalists than meta-normative representationalists themselves can deal with their own dilemma. One consideration that seems to support this thesis, is that the expressivist thesis is far less ambitious: it is only a thesis about the nature of normative thought, and not a thesis about the nature of normative facts. Hence, if the expressivist postulates *sui generis* normative attitudes, this will not force her to introduce a novel ontological category, as mental states and conative attitudes already are parts of our ontology. This is very different from the representationalist who holds that normative facts are *sui generis*. *Sui generis* conative attitudes, consequently, do not give raise to any novel epistemological or metaphysical worries that are not *already* raised by our general theory of mind. On the other hand, if the expressivist holds that normative judgements can be fully accounted for in terms of attitudes already part of our theory of non-normative thinking, this does not force her to make any claims about what settles normative questions. This is very different for the meta-normative representationalist, whose thesis about how the reference of normative concepts is fixed determines how normative questions are settled. A detailed investigation of these issues, however, is a subject for future research.

The second problem that this dissertation was concerned with, was the challenge to the quasi-realist expressivist to develop an account of those uses of *that-clauses* associated with propositional contents that fits with the thesis that expressivism is fully compatible with normative thought and discourse being truth-apt and normative judgements being beliefs. My particular aim with regards to this problem was to develop a *deflationist* account of the relevant uses of *that-clauses* which fits with expressivism's theoretical commitments and with the thesis that normative thought and discourse are truth-apt and normative judgements are beliefs.

I have argued that an expressivist-friendly account of *that-clauses* can be found in Sellars' account of *that-clauses*, which he developed in the context of his account of meaning-attributions. As I have explained, this account, on a plausible reading, *is* a

deflationist account of *that*-clauses, and it does allow talk of the propositional contents of normative sentences that is unproblematic for an expressivist. I have also shown how the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses can be generalized from their use in *meaning-attributions* to their use in belief-attributions and propositional attitude ascriptions more generally, in a way that allows the expressivist to say that normative judgements are beliefs and gives the expressivist a way to account for other kinds of propositional attitudes with normative contents. In this context, I introduced a novel way of understanding expressivism, as a view according to which the difference between normative and descriptive judgements consists in their being beliefs with different kinds of conceptual roles which directly translates into the difference being that they have different *contents*.

My discussion of the second problem and the accounts of *that*-clauses and of expressivism that I suggested in that context raise several directions for future research, of which I here want to mention four. First, one thing that it will be important to investigate is whether and how the Sellarsian account of *that*-clauses, in combination with the expressivist framework I developed, could be generalized even further to other relevant uses of *that*-clauses. One such use which is directly relevant to another neglected problem of expressivism is the use of *that*-clauses in combination with modal operators such as “ought” or “might”.<sup>1</sup> As I suggested that expressivism should align itself with conceptual role semantics, one way how one might approach this issue is to draw on the resources this tradition and views very closely related to it offer. A promising strategy, for example, might be to draw on Sellars’ own treatment of modal operators, or on the work of Matthew Chrisman on the modal operator “ought”.<sup>2</sup>

A second important direction for future research would be whether and to what extent my claim that all propositional attitudes can be characterized in relation to

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1 This use is relevant in the context of dealing with Andy Egan’s challenge that expressivist cannot account for judgements of the form “Nothing I would endorse as an improvement would lead me to abandon my normative judgement N, but I might still be mistaken in N.” See Egan 2007. While Simon Blackburn has recently given a response to Egan’s challenge (Blackburn 2009), Blackburn has not given us a systematic account of how he thinks modal operators should be treated by the expressivist, so in an important sense the challenge remains open (as is also noted by Mark Schroeder (Schroeder 2014b).

2 For Sellars’ work on modal operators, see especially Sellars 1958. For Chrisman’s work on “ought”, see e.g. Chrisman 2012 and Chrisman 2013.

belief can be defended. This question is not only of relevance for the view I have developed here, it is also relevant, for example, for views like Robert Brandom's according to which propositional content is derivative from assertion. I think my discussion here should make us optimistic that such a view *can* be defended, but if we find a view like this attractive, I think that in the future we should do more than rely on this license for optimism, and investigate the full potential of this view.

A third direction for future research raised by the development of the Sellarsian account as an account of *propositional* content, is the question whether a similar account could be developed for other kinds of contents (if there are any). For example, some attitude verbs do not only take *that*-clauses as their complements, but also *to*-clauses, such as the attitude verb "desire": we can not only desire *that* we exercise at least twice a week, but also desire *to* exercise at least twice a week. Furthermore, some attitude verbs can also take words for objects as their complements. For example, we can not only fear *that* there are monsters hiding in the closet, but also fear the monsters hiding in our closets. It seems that in each of these cases we are ascribing a content to an attitude, and it is at least not obvious that such content can or must be reducible to propositional content. Given that it is plausible that we should give a unified treatment for all content-attributions though, this raises the question whether the Sellarsian account could apply to these cases as well.

A final direction for future research that arises out of the discussion of the second question brings us back to the Frege-Geach Problem. I suggested that we should align expressivism with the tradition of conceptual role semantics. This suggestion, however, raises the question whether embedding expressivism within this tradition might not open up novel ways for expressivists to address the Frege-Geach Problem. If this was the case, this would provide us with one more motivation to consider neglected problems for expressivism, as doing so might actually enhance our ability to assess expressivism's prospects when it comes to addressing the Frege-Geach Problem. Furthermore, this would actually be a novel way of approaching the Frege-Geach Problem, and, therefore, interesting in its own right.

One last thing that needs to be highlighted at the end of this dissertation is that while I was aiming to move beyond the Frege-Geach Problem toward more neglected

problems, both of the problems I discussed in this dissertation had some significant relation to that problem. Hence, while I think that the dissertation makes a good case for the claim that expressivists have attractive answers to the challenges discussed in this dissertation, *and* that it is worthwhile to pay more attention to neglected challenges, as we will learn novel and surprising ways to think about expressivism, the dissertation also highlights how important it is for expressivists to answer the Frege-Geach Problem.



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