Moral Arguments and the Frege-Geach problem

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the Frege-Geach problem, which is arguably the main objection faced by the expressivist view on moral discourse. The key idea of the Frege-Geach objection is that the expressivist cannot give an account of the meaning of conditionals sentences involving moral predicates and the validity of arguments involving moral sentences. After all, as traditionally understood, validity requires truth-aptness. Philosophers such as Crispin Wright and G. F. Schueler challenged the very idea according to which desire-like attitudes can stand in logical relations. They held that if the components of the moral *modus ponens* are not truth-apt, the argument cannot be properly categorised as 'valid'. After presenting and critically examining five different attempts to solve the Frege-Geach problem, I provide a new way solution to it. My main goal is to develop an expressivist framework within which it is possible to give an account of evaluative conditionals and validity without relying on the contentious assumption that desire-like attitudes can stand in logical relations. My position is influenced by Grice's notion of conversational implicature and Vranas' logic of prescriptions. I further argue that there is a relation between the evaluative and the prescriptive domains of discourse, and that a plausible way of understanding this relation is via the conversational implicature. I follow Peter Vranas with respect to the question whether prescriptions can have a logic, and show how to get from evaluations ('x is bad) to prescriptions ('don't do x!'). Finally, I trace a distinction between two levels of validity – the psychological and the logical one – and show that the moral *modus ponens* is valid in both senses. My thesis therefore concludes that the Frege-Geach problem is not a knockdown objection against expressivism.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and that I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged in the bibliography and due credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Introduction

Moral expressivism – henceforth *expressivism* – can be characterised as the view according to which moral judgments are not in the business of describing states of affairs. As Joyce (2002) puts it nicely: "expressivism holds that moral judgments function to express desires, emotions, or pro/con attitudes".[1] On this view, when one asserts a moral sentence such as 'lying is bad' one is not telling us how things are in the natural world, one is not expressing a belief. Instead, one is, *inter alia*, expressing a desire-like state, namely, disapproval of lying. Likewise, one who asserts 'giving to charity is good' is not thereby expressing a semantic content that can be evaluated in terms of truth and falsity – what philosophers typically call a *proposition*. Rather, one is giving vent to one's approval of the action of giving to charity. The role played by this speech act is very akin to the one that would be played by the utterance of the exclamatory sentence *Hooray for giving to charity!* Consequently, expressivists are not entitled to apply the classical accounts of validity and inconsistency to the moral domain of discourse. After all, since these accounts rely on the notions of truth and falsity, they cannot be applied to non-truth apt sentences.

Previous versions of expressivism have been defended in the 30s and 40s. The most prominent figures of this period were A.J. Ayer (1952) and C.L. Stevenson (1944). More recently, Simon Blackburn (1984, 1988), Allan Gibbard (1990, 2003)

[1] Joyce 2002, p.336

and Mark Schroeder (2008) have provided more refined forms of expressivism, even though the core idea remained the same.

Cognitivism, in turn, is generally described as the claim that moral sentences do express propositions and stand in the same logical relations as ordinary (non-moral) indicative sentences. Cognitivists believe that moral judgments play a fact-stating role. On this perspective, one who asserts 'Lying is bad' is actually putting forward as true the proposition that lying is bad. If this proposition is true, its truth-maker is a good candidate for a moral fact. The same goes for the assertion of 'Giving to charity is good'. One who performs this speech act expresses a truth-apt semantic content in the same fashion that someone who asserts an ordinary sentence such as 'snow is white' does.

For the purposes of this thesis, I treat expressivism and cognitivism as views on the nature of moral discourse. Some philosophers trace a distinction between expressivism about moral discourse and expressivism about moral thought, but I don`t think this is proficuous. I follow Richard Joyce (2002), who defends that framing the debate between cognitivism and expressivism as a matter of finding out which mental state one who makes a moral judgment is in, makes the whole issue an empirical one.

Since the 1960s, the Frege-Geach challenge has been a disquieting metaethical problem for those who defend an expressivist view on moral discourse. Peter Geach (1965), whose writings on metaethics have a seminal importance for this thesis, considered expressivism – or, one might say, an earlier version of it which he coined 'act-condemnation theory of bad' – as a view about

the assertion of moral sentences. At the very beginning of the paper 'Assertion' (1965), Geach states that "a right view of assertion is fatal to well-known philosophical views on certain other topics".[2] The phrase 'other topics' refers to both debates: ascriptivism and the metaethical debate over the semantic function of moral language.

The main question to be addressed in this thesis is the following: Is the Frege-Geach problem[3] a knockdown objection to expressivism? I reply negatively to this question. My central claim is that there is a way out for the expressivist. I provide a framework within which we can treat moral sentences as expressive of attitudes and still provide an account of the validity of arguments constituted by moral sentences. I show that all of this can be done without assuming the controversial claim that attitudes can stand in logical relations.

Before presenting my own account, I present and discuss a number of objections and responses in relation to the main solutions to the Frege-Geach problem presented so far, namely, those put forward by Hare (1970), Blackburn (1984, 1988), Gibbard (1990, 2003), and Schroeder (2008).

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter one, I explain how some of Frege's ideas have influenced the metaethical debate over the nature of moral discourse from both a historical and a philosophical perspective. I present Geach's original formulation of the Frege-Geach problem and critically examine two responses to this problem. In chapter two, I undertake a theoretical reconstruction

[2] Geach 1965:449

[3] In this thesis, I use the phrases 'Frege-Geach problem', 'Frege-Geach challenge', 'Frege-Geach objection' and 'Embedding problem' as synonymous.

of the three different solutions to the Frege-Geach problem carried out by Simon Blackburn. As I go through his solutions, I provide a critical appraisal of the main objections presented to them, point out their strengths and limitations, and set the terrain for the view I defend in chapter five. In chapter three, I present Gibbard's take on the Frege-Geach objection, and argue that his norm-expressivistic analysis faces serious difficulties.

In chapter four, I present Schroeder's version of expressivism. Schroeder's project consists in developing what he considers to be the most defensive expressivist account of moral discourse and, at the end, showing that it fails as a metaethical theory. I outline the main characteristics of his theory, and discuss Skorupki's objections against it.

Finally**,** in chapter five I argue against Geach's original formulation of the Frege-Geach problem and provide a novel way of approaching it. I trace a distinction between neutral and question-begging requirements and argue that the Frege point, when used against expressivism, begs the question. Finally, I provide an expressivist account of evaluative conditionals and validity that does not rely upon the controversial claim that desire-like attitudes can stand in logical relations. By rejecting this claim, I'm aware of the fact that I'm ruling out hybrid views on the workings of moral language. But this is a justified move since my goal is to develop further a purely expressivist picture of the moral domain of discourse. With this in tow, I will show that it is possible to develop a plausible account of conditionals and validity within a more extreme expressivist framework.

1 Chapter One: The Frege-Geach problem: a historical and a philosophical journey

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, I explain Frege's contribution to the Frege-Geach problem. Second, I present Geach's original formulation of the problem. Third, I briefly present Searle's version of the problem and explain how it slightly differs from Geach's version. Fourth, I present and deflect two attempts to solve the Frege-Geach challenge: the first is presented by R.M. Hare (1970), and the second is based on Timothy Smiley's (1996) work on the nature of negation.

1.1 Frege's contribution to the Frege-Geach problem

Two of Frege's papers are important for understanding his perhaps unwitting contribution to the Frege-Geach problem: 'Thought' (1956), originally published in 1918 under the German title 'Der Gedanke'; and 'Negation' (1960), originally published in 1919 as 'Die Verneinung'. My purpose here is not to undertake a detailed exegesis of Frege's writings, but to clarify the main ideas that set up the terrain from which the Frege-Geach problem emerged. Throughout this brief historical journey, it will become clear that Frege's influence over Geach's writings is twofold: the distinction between content and assertion (which Geach later called 'the Frege point'); and the argumentative strategy Frege carried out in order to refute a particular view, the so-called 'rejection view', on the workings of the negation sign.

1.1.1 The distinction between content and assertion

As the title suggests, the paper 'Thought' (1956) consists of an inquiry into the nature of thought. A thought is, according to Frege, "something for which the question of truth arises […] The thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence and thereby becomes comprehensible to us".[4] Frege's use of the word 'thought' (*Gedanke)* bears a striking resemblance to the use that contemporary analytic philosophers make of the word 'proposition'. According to Dummett, "a *thought*, in Frege's terminology, is the sense expressed by a complete sentence – a sentence which is capable of being used to make an assertion or to ask a sentential question (a question requiring an answer 'Yes' or 'No')".[5] Following this reading, I take the word 'thought' to mean the same as 'proposition'.

Frege holds that only indicative and interrogative sentences express thoughts. Consider, for example, the indicative sentence 'London is the capital of England' and the interrogative 'Is London the capital of England?'. On Frege's view, they express the same proposition, namely, the proposition that *London is the capital of England*. However, there is an important property that only indicative sentences exemplify: their content can be used to make assertions; that is, indicative sentences can be used with assertoric force. In the following passage, Frege traced an important distinction between content and assertion.

> Two things must be distinguished in an indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question and the assertion. The former is the thought, or at least contains the thought. So it is possible to express the thought without laying it down as true. Both are so

[4] Frege 1956: 292
[5] Dummett 1963,p.364

> closely joined in an indicative sentence that it is easy to overlook their separability.[6]

This passage contains three important claims about the relation between indicative sentences and propositions. We can unpack it as follows. For every indicative sentence *i* and proposition *p:*

(FC1) *i* has *p* as its content.
(FC2) *i* can be used to assert *p.*
(FC3) *i* can be used to express *p* without asserting it.

In order to get clear about FC3, consider the use of "London is the capital of England" embedded in "if London is the capital of England, then it must be a big city". If I assert this conditional I do not thereby assert that London is the capital of England. What I assert is the conditional as a whole. Even though the proposition that London is the capital of England is not asserted when it occurs embedded, this proposition is still being expressed. One might even be tempted to generalize this point and mantain that the same goes for all linguistic constructions (conjunctions, negations, bi-conditionals, etc.).

Frege considered the three claims above as intuitively true, so that he did not see the need to provide arguments for them. But he used FC3 (conjoined with an additional claim) to derive an important requirement that Geach (1965) later called *The Frege point*.[7]

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[6] Frege 1956, p. 294
[7] "A thought may just have the same content whether you assent to its truth or not; a proposition may occur in discourse now asserted, now unasserted, and yet be recognizably the same proposition […] I shall call this point about assertion the Frege point" (Geach 1965:449).

Premise 1. If *i* is an indicative sentence, then *i* can be used to express a proposition *p* without asserting it.
Premise 2. If *i* can be used to express *p* without asserting it, then *i's* content remains the same whether or not it is asserted.
The Frege point: If *i* is an indicative sentence, the content of *i* remains the same whether or not it is asserted.

The additional claim is the second premise, which is based on the following idea: since the content of an indicative sentence is a proposition and — given the principle of bivalence — every proposition is either true or false, expressing a proposition is always a matter of expressing either a true or a false one. The phrase 'the same' in the consequent of the premise 2 conveys the idea that there should be an identity of content. Thus, once we accept FC3, we are committed to accept that that the semantic content of a given proposition *p* – truth or falsity – would not change in virtue of occurring unasserted; otherwise, *p* would not be the same proposition. Since the semantic content of a proposition boils down to its truth-value, the identity of content would be lost.

1.1.2 Frege's argumentative strategy: the case for negation

In 'Negation' (1960) Frege deals with the question of whether negation is a logical connective or a sign of illocutionary force that indicates that another type of linguistic act – *viz.,* the act of rejecting a proposition as opposed to asserting it — is being performed. Frege puts forward an argument against the so called *rejection view*. The rejection view maintains that there are two ways of judging, one for affirmative sentences (assertion) and another for negative sentences (rejection).

According to the rejection view, in sincerely uttering a sentence such as 'York is not the capital of England' one is not putting forward as true the proposition that *York is not the capital of England*. Rather, one is simply putting forward as false (that is to say, one is rejecting) the proposition expressed by the sentence 'York is the capital of England'. Thus, on the rejection view, negation is not part of the semantic content of that sentence. The role the word 'not' plays is that of a sign to indicate that the linguistic act of rejection is being performed.[8]

Frege was opposed to the rejection view. He thought that there is only one way of judging.[9] For Frege, in asserting an indicative sentence (whether affirmative or negative) one is thereby making an assertion, that is, putting forward its semantic content (a given thought/proposition) as true. Thus, on Frege's view, the act of asserting $\neg p$ is not a mere rejection of the content expressed by p. It is committing oneself to the truth of the content expressed by $\neg\, p$, negation being a part of its semantic content.

Frege provides two objections against the rejection view. But only the first is pertinent to the aims of this chapter.[10] Its pivotal idea is that the rejection view

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[8] Although Frege never mentions Franz Brentano explicitly when criticizing the advocates of the rejection view, Frege was probably referring to the thesis put forward by Brentano in the book *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* – a book whose first publication took place in 1874. Brentano was a *bona fide rejector*. Roughly put, he held the idea that judgments are analogous to desire-like attitudes and preferences, in the sense that they can be either positive or negative. An object can be accepted as existing or rejected as fictional.

[9] A characterisation of Frege's view on judgement can be seen in "Compound Thoughts" (1963). In this paper, Frege says the following: "In my terminology, one judges by acknowledging a thought as true. This act of acknowledgement I call " judgement ". Judgement is made manifest by a sentence uttered with assertive force. But one can grasp and express a thought without acknowledging it as true, i.e., without judging it" (Frege 1963: 3).

[10] Frege's second objection is that the view he defends is more parsimonious than the rejection view. Whereas Frege assumes that there is only one way of judging, the rejection view assumes that there are two. Here is the passage in which Frege puts forward this objection: "On the assumption of two ways of judging we need: 1. affirmative assertion; 2. negative assertion, e.g., inseparably

does not allow us to account for the validity of some inferences (which are clearly valid according to the standard notion of validity). In order to make this point clearer, let us compare the following cases[11]:

FR1
Premise 1. If the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder.
Premise 2. The accused was not in Berlin.
Conclusion. He did not commit the murder.

FR2
Premise 1. If the accused was in Rome at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder.
Premise 2. The accused was in Rome.
Conclusion. He did not commit the murder.

Clearly, both inferences display the same valid form – *modus ponens*. But if we assume the rejection view on the meaning of the word 'not', then the first inference will no longer display the *modus ponens* form; the reason is that the content of its second premise will no longer coincide with the content of the antecedent of its first premise. In other words, the rejection view implies that 'the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder' does not express the same thought on both of its occurrences in the first inference. Therefore, under the rejection view, the first inference is invalid. This unwanted consequence gives rise

attached to the word 'false'; 3. a negative word like 'not' in sentences uttered non-assertively. If on the other hand we assume only a single way of judging, we only need: 1.assertion; 2. a negative word […] If we *can* make do with one way of judging, then we *must*," (Frege 1960: 130-131).

[11] These inferences were given as examples by Frege himself (cf. Frege 1960: 124-125)

to the following problem: how can one consistently hold the rejection view and the claim that the first inference is valid?

Frege anticipates a reply and promptly rejects it. In order to account for the validity of the first inference, the advocate of the rejection view would have to replace 'not' (in the antecedent of the first premise of the first inference as well as in the second premise of the same inference) by a phrase such as 'it is false that'. This phrase would then be used as a sign for the illocutionary force of rejecting. However, this procedure would work only for the second premise of the first inference. For the sentence 'It is false that the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder' would, once again, lose its illocutionary force when embedded in the if-clause of the first premise.

> The first premise of the first inference would run as before: 'If the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder'. Here we could not say 'If it is false that the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder'; for we have laid it down that to the words 'it is false that' assertoric force must always be attached; but in acknowledging the truth of this first premise we are not acknowledging the truth either of its antecedent or of its consequent. The second premise on the other hand must now run: 'It is false that the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder'; for being a premise it must be uttered assertively.[12]

In this passage, Frege suggests that the advocate of the rejection view would have to recast the first inference as follows:

FR3 (reformulated version of FR1)

P1. If the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder.

P2': *It is false that* the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder.

C: He did not commit the murder.

[12] Frege 1960, p. 130

Now there is clearly a problem here. The requirement according to which an indicative sentence must express the same thought whether or not it is embedded has not been fulfilled. The content expressed by the antecedent of P1 is not the same as that expressed by P2'. If the first inference were reformulated in the way described above (FR3), the antecedent of P1 would express the proposition that the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder. And P2' would be the rejection of the proposition that the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder. As a result, the rephrased first inference falls under the category of invalid arguments. The solution is to dismiss the rejection view and consider negation as part of the thought:

> If nevertheless we want to allow that the inference is valid, we are thereby acknowledging that the second premise contains the thought that the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder. This involves separating negation from the act of judging, extracting it from the sense of 'it is false that…' and uniting negation with the thought. Thus the assumption of two different ways of judging must be rejected.[13]

After all, it is clear that one who sincerely utters P1 is not rejecting that the accused was in Berlin, but asserting the thought expressed by the entire conditional. For Frege, this is a sufficient reason to justify the belief that the rejection view is not true. [14]

1.1.3 The emergence of the Frege-Geach problem

[13] Frege, 1960, p.130

[14] For a contemporary discussion on the nature of negation see Timothy Smiley's paper "Rejection" (1996). In this paper, he argues against Frege's view and provides a formal treatment of rejection. He holds, amongst other things, that asserting not-P and rejecting P are equivalent, but that does not mean they are exactly the same thing; analogously, the formula $p \rightarrow q$ is equivalent to $\neg p \vee q$, but they are not exactly the same formulas.

In a series of papers, starting from the late 50s, Peter Geach used both Frege's distinction between content and assertion and Frege's argumentative strategy as laid out in the previous section. Geach employed the same strategy in order to argue against certain philosophical views on the semantic function of 'voluntary', 'true' and 'bad'.

The first paper, 'Imperatives and Deontic Logic', was published in 1958. The main goal of this paper is to criticise the view that the logical behaviour of moral utterances is pretty much the same as that of imperatives and, therefore, Imperative Logic can be conceived as analogous to Deontic Logic. By contrast, Geach holds that the only similarity between them is that "the contradictory of a moral utterance is itself a moral utterance, just as the contradictory of an imperative is itself an imperative".[15] In all other respects, however, they widely differ. For instance, we cannot represent general permissive principles (such as 'It is permissible to do A and also permissible not to do A') by using Imperative Logic. Actually, Geach considered Imperative Logic as trivial:

> The logic of proper imperatives is, I think, fairly trivial. For every proper imperative, there is a future-tense statement whose 'coming true' is identical with the fulfilment of the imperative. This is the source of everything that can be said about the inferability, incompatibility, etc. of imperatives.[16]

After this remark, Geach discusses Hare's view on whether there are specific logical principles one must invoke in order to assess the validity of arguments involving imperatives. On Geach's view there are no such principles, so that in

[15] Geach 1958, p.50.
[16] Geach 1958, p.51.

order to assess the validity of a given argument where imperatives take part we should proceed by just "substituting the imperatives for the corresponding plain futures"[17]. According to this idea, the imperative 'shut the door' can be replaced by the indicative sentence 'you will shut the door'. By contrast, Hare's view, developed in *The Language of Morals* (1952), is that we do need specific logical rules to assess the validity of arguments constituted by at least one imperative sentence.

Hare formulates two rules that are supposed to guide our assessment of arguments containing imperatives. Nevertheless, given the purposes of this section, only the second rule is relevant. Let us then consider it: "No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premises which does not contain at least one imperative".[18] In what follows, I shall present the example provided by Hare (1952) and discussed by Geach (1958). Before this, however, it is important to have a look at Geach's remark about the rule under discussion:

> In discussing Rule (2) I shall first introduce the Stoic logicians' notion of *themata*. A *thema* is a rule whereby, given one valid inference, we may derive another. For example: 'if "p", "q", "r", are so read that "p, q, *ergo* r" is a valid inference, then with the same interpretation "p; *ergo* if q, then r is a valid inference'. We may write this *thema*, which is clearly a correct rule if "p", "q", "r" are all indicative, in the following way: *Thema 1*. p, q, *ergo* r // p; *ergo* if q, then r.[19]

Now let us consider an argument containing imperatives:

Grimbly Hughes is the largest grocer in Oxford.
Go to the largest grocer in Oxford.
Ergo, go to Grimbly Hughes.

[17] Geach 1958, p.52.
[18] Hare 1952, p.28
[19] Geach 1958, pp.52-53

From an intuitive point of view the above argument is valid (in the sense that its conclusion follows from its premises), but Geach thinks we should test it by applying *Thema 1*. Before doing the test, Geach points out there is a problem because *Thema 1* originally applies to arguments solely constituted by indicative sentences. In order to solve this problem, Geach claims that we have to "use a plain future in the 'if' clause instead of an imperative".[20] The result is as follows:

> Grimbly Hughes is the largest grocer in Oxford
> *Ergo*, if you are going to the largest grocer in Oxford, go to Grimbly Hughes.

Geach's strategy of substituting the imperative for a plain future seems to be successful. Nonetheless, if we try to apply *Thema 1* directly to the original argument, *i.e.*, without using the plain future in the if-clause, the result is the following:

> Grimbly Hughes is the largest grocer in Oxford
> *Ergo*, if go to the largest grocer in Oxford, go to Grimbly Hughes.

This is an odd result. As Geach points out, Hare cannot accept that this is the right formulation we get from applying *Thema 1*: "now here he [Hare] runs up against a difficulty; in this case 'p' is indicative, but 'q' and 'r' are imperative, so how do we frame 'if q, then r' at all? An imperative will not (grammatically) go into an 'if' clause".[21] This is a serious difficulty because Hare does not accept that we can replace imperatives by indicative sentences expressing their corresponding plain futures.

[20] Geach 1958, p.53.
[21] Geach 1958, p. 53

In order to get round this problem, Hare places the word "want" in the conclusion's antecedent:

Grimbly Hughes is the largest grocer in Oxford.

Ergo, if you *want* to go to the largest grocer in Oxford, then go to Grimbly Hughes.

It is not clear, however, what the word "want" means in this context. *Prima facie* it is merely a device to transform the conclusion into a grammatical sentence. Thus, it would be certainly helpful to see Hare's explanation in his own words: "*want* is here a logical term, and stands, as we shall see, for an imperative inside a subordinate clause".[22] A few passages later, Hare also adds that "in a hypothetical imperative proper the 'if' clause itself contains an imperative neustic[23], concealed in the word 'want'". [24] Geach rejects this move in the following passage:

> So far as I can follow Mr.Hare's explanations, an imperative neustic would be something for imperatives analogous to what Frege thought the assertion-sign was for indicatives. But this does not help us at all. We may waive possible objections to a Fregean assertion sign (say on the line of Wittgenstein's Tractatus). In any case it is clear that an assertion-sign so conceived could not stand in an 'if' clause, since 'if' removes assertoric force from the clause that follows it. Similarly, a performatory utterance like "I give you this book" no longer has performatory force in an 'if' clause. I do not understand, therefore, - since the imperative neustic is conceived as analogous to Frege's assertion sign - how 'want' could be a disguise for an imperative neustic in an 'if' clause. [25]

As this passage makes clear, Geach interprets Hare's use of 'want' as analogous to Frege's assertion sign |–. This sign is for Frege's formal language what

[22] Hare 1952, p.34
[23] According to Hare, "the neustic is that part of the sentence which determines its mood" (Hare 1952: 188-189). Thus, the imperative neustic is whatever it is that defines the mood of a sentence as being imperative.
[24] Hare 1952, p.37
[25] Geach 1958, pp. 53-54

the indicative mood is for the natural language: it carries assertoric force. In natural language, an effective way of knowing whether a given sentence *s* occurs with assertoric force is by looking at two things: its mood and the linguistic construction within which it appears. If *s* is in the indicative mood and occurs unembedded, then *s* has assertoric force; otherwise, it hasn't. Analogously, the assertion sign, when followed by a given proposition *p* (as in |– *p*), indicates that *p* is being put forward as true. Since, according to Frege, a natural language has no specific sign that carries assertoric force, it is the indicative mood that plays this role [26]. Thus, the assertion sign can be seen as the formal counterpart of the indicative mood.

Now it is clear why Geach rejected the view that "want" (followed by an imperative sentence and conceived as playing a role analogous to |–) cannot be an imperative neustic in an if-clause: both the assertion sign and the imperative lose their illocutionary force when they occur embedded.[27] Thus, according to Geach, Hare's move is not successful because Hare did not take the loss of force in embedded contexts into account.

Though the question of whether there are special logical principles governing the behaviour of imperative sentences is certainly of great interest, the discussion brought about by Geach (1958) will not be carried forward in this

[26] This idea is held, *e.g.,* in the following passage: "language has no special word or syllable to express assertion; assertive force is supplied by the form of the assertoric sentence" (Frege 1960, p.128).

[27] According to Hare, "the neustic is that part of the sentence which determines its mood" (Hare, 1952: 188-189). The imperative neustic is, therefore, whatever it is that defines the mood of a sentence as being imperative.

section. In Chapter Five, however, I will go more thoroughly into the matter of imperative logic.

The germ of the FGP can be found in a footnote shortly after the passage quoted above in which Geach criticises the alleged parallel between the role that "want" plays when embedded in an "if" clause and Frege's assertion sign. In fact, the importance of Geach's 1958 paper to this thesis is well summarized in this footnote:

> There arises here a difficulty for what may be called performatory theories of the predicates "good" and "true" - that to predicate "good" of an action is to commend it, and to predicate "true" of a statement is to confirm or concede it. For such predications may occur within "if" clauses; the predicates "good" and "true" do not then lose their force any more than other predicates used in "if" clauses do; but "if S is true" is not an act of confirming S, nor "if X is good" an act of commending X.[28]

In order to understand the central idea of this passage it is important to get clear about what principle lies behind the performatory theories of the terms "good" and "true". The basic assumption of a performatory theory of a given domain of discourse D is that the meaning of the sentences formulated in D should be explained by pointing out their semantic function.[29] According to the first theory mentioned by Geach, the predicate "good" does not refer to any property and has no descriptive function.[30] The role this evaluative term plays is that of giving the

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[28] Geach 1958, p.54 (footnote).

[29] The phrase 'semantic function' might foster confusion. After all, the word 'semantic' is typically used to refer to the content of a certain linguistic expression rather than the linguistic act a speaker can perform with it. However, in his book *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics* (2003), Alexander Miller claims that one of the fundamental metaethical problems is whether or not the semantic function of moral discourse is to state facts. Thus, if the semantic function of "lying is bad" is to state facts, then one who utters it performs an assertion. If its semantic function is to express attitudes, then 'lying is bad' has a non fact stating role. Following Miller (2003: 2), I use 'semantic function' to refer to the type of linguistic act that a certain word/sentence can be used to perform.

[30] The same goes for the performatory theory of "true". It holds that the meaning of the sentence 'what the referee said is true' is the illocutionary act of confirming what the referee said.

illocutionary force of commendation to the utterance of the sentences containing it. For instance, the meaning of a sentence such as "helping poor people is good" is that its utterance consists in the performance of the illocutionary act of commending the action of helping poor people.

The aforementioned failure in the alleged parallel between the role of 'want' and Frege's assertion sign made Geach realise that the performatory theories seemed to have a similar fault: apparently, they do not take into account the fact that the predicates 'good' and 'true' also lose their force when occur embedded in an if-clause. So even if we accept as plausible the explanation that the performatory theories give to the role of the predicate 'good' in 'helping poor people is good' and the role of 'true' in 'what the referee said is true', this does not compel us to accept it as the right explanation of the role played by these predicates when they are embedded in conditional sentences such as 'if helping people is good, you should encourage people to do it' and 'if what the referee said is true, then the defender has committed a foul'. Moreover, it seems that neither one who utters the first is commending the action of helping poor people, nor one who utters the second is confirming what the referee said.

1.2 The logical side of the Frege-Geach challenge

In both papers, 'Ascriptivism' (1960) and 'Assertion' (1965), Geach developed the thoughts contained in the footnote quoted in the previous section. Geach (1960) argues against *ascriptivism* – a view about the correct analysis of the concept of voluntarianess. According to this view, in asserting *John did A voluntarily* one is not describing John's action as the result of — or as caused by —

his will. Rather, one is holding John responsible for *A;* one is, so to speak, ascribing *A* to John.

Geach used the Frege point about assertion in order to refute ascriptivism. He asks us to consider an embedded occurrence of 'John did *A* voluntarily'.

(J) If John did *A* voluntarily, then he should be punished.

Since one who asserts (J) is not thereby holding John responsible for *A*, there must be some problem with the ascriptivist view on the meaning of 'voluntary'. For this example shows that one can actually use the word 'voluntary' in a way that does not get across any ascription of responsibility.

Geach's move against expressivism follows basically the same pattern. The sentence 'lying is bad', when it occurs embedded in 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad' does not express the speaker's disapproval towards lying. As in the previous cases, the if-clause deletes the illocutionary force of the sentence.

Geach employs Frege's argumentative strategy against the rejection view as follows. He claims that if we adopt the expressivist account of 'lying is bad' we will not be able to explain the validity of the following moral *modus ponens*:

(P1) If lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad.
(P2) Lying is bad.
(C) Getting your little brother to lie is bad.

This argument – often referred to in the literature as 'the little brother argument' (LBA) – seems to display the *modus ponens* form. So, 'lying is bad' must express the same thought in both occurrences. Otherwise, the argument will be an

equivocation fallacy. Just as Frege refutes the rejection view on the meaning of "not", Geach tries to do the same with regard to expressivism. As we have seen, Frege's dismissal of that view is based on the claim that it implies that the inference from the premises 'if the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder' and 'the accused was not in Berlin' to the conclusion 'he did not commit the murder' is invalid. By the same token, Geach thinks we have grounds to dismiss the expressivist view on moral discourse. Let us see in more detail the way in which Geach makes his case against expressivism. In the standard format, Geach's argument is as follows:

(G1)If moral sentences do not express the same thought regardless of whether they are embedded, then LBA is invalid.
(G2) LBA is valid.
(G3) Moral sentences express the same thought regardless of whether they are embedded.

The first premise relies on the Frege point. Geach's central idea is that the expressivist view on moral discourse must be rejected because it implies the negation of (G3), which is a seemingly devastating result because it is the conclusion of an apparently sound argument. As a matter of fact, Geach considered his argument to be a knockdown one. As he writes: "the fourfold unequivocal occurrence of 'bad' in that example [the little brother argument] is enough to refute the act-of-condemnation theory".[31]

[31] Geach 1965, p.464

The problem set up by Geach provoked many interesting responses: R.M.Hare (1970), Blackburn (1971, 1984, 1988); Gibbard (1990,2003); and Schroeder (2008) are the most prominent figures in this ongoing metaethical debate.

1.3 Searle's version of the embedding problem

John Searle (1962) tries to refute a particular application of the pattern of philosophical analysis according to which to find out the meaning of a given word *w* we should look out for the speech act *w* allows us to perform. Searle considers R.M.Hare's work in *The Language of Morals* (1952) to be a clear example of this kind of analysis.

Hare's remarks on value-words like 'good' are the focus of Searle's criticism. According to Hare, we understand what 'good' means by understanding how this word is used in a given sentence. The word "good" is primarily used in sentences whose utterances consist in the speech act of commending.[32] From these premises, Hare concludes that the meaning of 'good' relies upon the speech act of commending. In the standard format, Hare's argument is as follows:

> **H1.** The meaning of a value-term consists in its semantic function, that is, the role it plays in the language.
>
> **H2.** The semantic function of 'good' is to allow the speaker to perform the speech act of commending.

[32] According to Schroeder's interpretation of Hare's view, Hare has "aspired to tell us the meaning of moral words like 'good' and 'wrong' by telling us what they are used to do – at least, what simple or atomic sentences containing them, such as 'stealing money is wrong' are used to do. Such theories can be thought of as essentially speech act theories, and if we followed Hare's suggestion and developed such theories into complete theories of meaning, they would work by assigning each sentence to some speech act which it is suited to perform" (Schroeder 2010, p.74).

H3. Therefore, the meaning of 'good' is to allow the speaker to perform the speech act of commending.[33]

Searle believes that those who accept the above argument hold that the first premise is "both the germ of a theory of meaning and a methodological principle of philosophical analysis".[34] Accepting the first premise commits one to believe that, given a word *W*, the question 1) 'What does *W* mean?' is the same as 2) 'How is *W* used?'. If this is the case, as Searle notices, a correct answer to the latter is also a correct answer to the former.

However, Searle disagrees with the first premise. He holds that in answering the first question one is not necessarily giving an answer to the second one. The reason is that 'good' can occur in many linguistic constructions the utterances of which are clearly not a performance of the speech act of commending. The evidence for this idea is that 'good' allows for a variety of uses and yet maintains its literal meaning:

> any analysis of 'good' must allow for the fact that the word makes the same contribution to different speech acts, not all of which will be instances of calling something good. 'Good' means the same whether I ask if something is good, hypothesise that it is good, or just assert that it is good. But only in the last does it (can it) have what has been called its commendatory function.[35]

[33] Hare thinks that his point holds for all value-terms: "Value-terms have a special function in language, that of commending; and so they plainly cannot be defined in terms of other words which themselves do not perform this function; for if this is done, we are deprived of a means of performing the function" (Hare, 1952: 91)
[34] Searle, 1962, p. 428
[35] Searle 1962, p.429

As you can see, Searle's statement of the Frege point is slightly different from that presented by Geach.[36] Searle is not worried about the identity of content, *i.e.,* whether the thought expressed by a sentence gets altered in virtue of the linguistic construction in which the sentence occurs. Rather, the source of Searle's worry is the question whether a given word *w* plays the same role no matter what speech act *w* is being used to perform. Since Hare's analysis ties up the term 'good' to the speech act of commending, it cannot account for the fact there are alternative uses of 'good' in which the speaker does not commend anything. Searle asks us to consider the following cases:

(1) If this is a good electric blanket, then perhaps we ought to buy it for Aunt Nellie.

(2) I wonder if it is a good electric blanket.

(3) I don't know whether it is a good electric blanket.

(4) Let us hope it is a good electric blanket. [37]

In neither of the above sentences is the word 'good' being used to perform the speech act of commending. Nonetheless, it seems to occur in its literal meaning and make the same contribution to the meaning of the sentences (1)- (4). Therefore, the meaning of 'good' cannot be identified with the speech of commending. According to Searle, if the second premise of Hare's argument were true, then the sentences (1) – (4) would have the same meaning as (1a) – (4a).

[36] Although Searle did mention the Fregean roots of the idea a word must make the same contribution to different speech acts, Searle also considers it as a plausible requirement that any theory of meaning must comply with.

[37] Cf. Searle 1962, p. 425

(1*a*) If I commend this electric blanket, then perhaps we ought to but it for Aunt Nellie

(2*a*) I wonder if I commend this electric blanket
(3*a*) I wonder if I commend this electric blanket
(4*a*) Let us hope I commend this electric blanket

But it is clearly not the case that (1a)- (4a) mean the same as (1) – (4). Thus, the second premise of Hare's argument is false. [38] To sum up, Searle's reasoning goes as follows. If the meaning of 'good' is the speech act of commending, then we can replace 'X is good' by 'I commend X' in any linguistic construction without changing its meaning. But we cannot replace 'X is good' by 'I commend X' in any linguistic construction without changing its meaning (as we can see in the sentences 1a—4a above). Consequently, it is not the case that the meaning of 'good' is the speech act of commending.

At this point, one might wonder whether there is any difference between Geach and Searle with respect to their approaches. After all, both of them appealed to the Frege point (or some version of it) in order to formulate their objections. Nonetheless, there is a difference. Geach made both a semantic and a logical point. In contrast, Searle only made a semantic point. For Searle did not take into account one of the devastating consequences of not complying with the Frege point, *viz.*, the turning of an apparently valid argument into an equivocation fallacy.

[38] Another reason why Searle thinks it is a mistake to associate a word with a speech act is that "the unit of the speech act is not the word but the sentence"(Searle 1962: 429).

1.4 Two solutions to the Frege-Geach challenge

1.4.1 Hare's solution to the embedding problem

In "Meaning and Speech Acts" (1970) Hare tries to provide an answer to the two related objections we have seen in the earlier sections. The first, posed by Geach, is that a non-descriptive theory of "good" is not able to account for the validity of arguments in which this word occurs both embedded and unembedded. The second, posed by Searle, is that the meaning of "good" cannot be identified with the speech act of commending because it can be used in other linguistic constructions, such as conditionals and interrogative sentences, in which no commendation is in the offing. In what follows, I will explain and critically assess Hare's take on the Frege-Geach problem. But first, it will be helpful to explain briefly Hare's view on meaning as put forward in the aforementioned paper.

Roughly put, Hare's account of meaning relies on a three-way distinction between *tropic*, *neustic* and *phrastic*. The *tropic* has to do with the mood of the main verb. For instance, "the door is closed" is in the indicative mood: the verb (*to be*) occurs in its indicative form. On the other hand, "close the door!" is in the imperative mood because its main verb (to close) occurs in its imperatival form. The *neustic* is the sign of force. It has to do with what type of speech act one can perform by uttering the sentence in question. The first can be used to assert that the door is closed, and the second can be used to command someone to close the door. The *phrastic* refers to the content. It is what the sentences "the door is closed" and "shut the door" have in common.

In the previous section, we saw Hare's argument for the idea that the meaning of 'good' can be understood by looking at what speech act it is used to perform. One who sincerely utters the affirmative categorical 'that is a good movie' thereby performs the speech act of commending. Searle provided us with examples of sentences containing 'good' whereby no speech act of commending is in the offing and, therefore, concludes that Hare's account cannot be right. Against Searle, Hare holds that the fact that the word 'good' is not used to commend anything when it occurs embedded (or 'encaged', as Hare likes to say) in the antecedent of a conditional – e.g., "if that is a good movie, then it will make a lot of money" – does not compromise his account of meaning. For even though the *neustic* is lost, the *tropic* is still there. The sentence 'that is a good movie', as an embedded clause, continues to have the same *tropic*: "when it goes into the cage, it takes its *tropic* with it, but loses its *neustic*. The whole sentence in which it is encaged has a *neustic*, but not the conditional clause by itself".[39]

Hare seems to be suggesting that, in order for it to mean the same on both embedded and unembedded occurrences, "that is a good movie" has to maintain at least one of its properties (*tropic, neustic* or *phrastic*) when it goes into the cage. But this is not sufficient for understanding the meaning of "if that is a good movie, it will make a lot of money". As Hare writes: To understand the 'If…then' form of sentence is to understand the place that it has in logic (to understand its logical

[39] Hare 1970, p.21

properties)."[40]In order to spell out his view, Hare asks us to consider the ordinary hypothetical sentence "if the cat is on the mat, then it is purring":

> To know the meaning of the whole sentence 'If the cat is on the mat, it is purring', we have to know (1) the meaning of the hypothetical sentence form, which we know if we know how to do *modus ponens*; (2) the meanings of the categoricals which have got encaged in this sentence form; and we know the latter if we know (a) that they are (when not encaged) used to make assertions and (b) what assertions they are used to make.[41]

Now let us compare the following arguments:

HA1
P1: If the cat is on the mat, then it is purring.

P2: The cat is on the mat.

C: It is purring.

HA2
P1*: If that is a good movie, then it will make a lot of money.

P2*: That is a good movie.

C*: It will make a lot of money.

Hare's response to Geach's logical challenge is based on a comparison between HA1 and HA2. If one is committed to believe that HA2 is a fallacy of equivocation because the sentence "that is a good movie" as it occurs embedded in the antecedent of the first premise is not an act of commendation, then one is also committed to believe that HA1 is also an instance of the same fallacy. The reason is that the utterance of "the cat is on the mat" embedded in the first premise is not an assertion.

> The only difference between this [HA2] and the preceding case is that to affirm the minor premise 'It is a good movie' is here to commend the movie.

[40] Hare 1970, p.16
[41] Hare 1970, p.17

> But this does not make the meaning of 'It is a good movie' in the categorical premise different from that of the same words in the conditional clause of the hypothetical premise in any sense that is damaging to the inference, any more than the fact that 'The cat is on the mat' (categorical) is used to assert that the cat is on the mat, whereas the same words occurring in a conditional clause are not used to make this assertion, invalidated the inference we discussed earlier.[42]

However, Geach – as well as other potential critics of expressivism – are not committed to the idea that HA1 is a fallacy of equivocation. Therefore, Hare concludes, there are no good grounds to believe that HA2 is invalid solely in virtue of the fact that "that is a good movie" is used with commendatory force in just one of the premises.

At this point, one might wonder whether it is really the case that believing that HA2 is a fallacy of equivocation commits one to believing that HA1 is also a fallacy of the same type. As I see it, Hare's point is not persuasive for those who do not already agree with his theory of meaning. The commitment to believe that HA1 is an equivocation fallacy (given the belief that HA2 is also a fallacy) holds only if one believes that the *neustic* of a given linguistic expression *l* is somewhat relevant to determine the meaning of *l*. However, one who believes that the semantic content of *l* is what matters to determine its meaning will not accept Hare's point.

Contrary to Hare's idea, a cognitivist could argue that HA1 is valid *in spite of* the fact that "the cat is on the mat" occurs with assertoric force in P2 but not in P1. For the cognitivist believes that HA1 is valid *because*, amongst other things, there is an identity of meaning (understood in a propositional way) between the first and the second occurrences of "the cat is on the mat". Thus, the problem with Hare's

[42] Hare 1970, p.19

response is that it presupposes that the speech act one can perform with a sentence is in some way relevant to determine its meaning. Since this is precisely what Hare's opponents deny, his response is not successful.

In addition, there are two further difficulties with Hare's response. First, Hare does not spell out the *phrastic* of 'that is a good movie'. This is a problem because even if one accepts that this sentence has the same *tropic* in P1* and P2*, this does not seem to be sufficient to guarantee that "good" does not equivocate. In order to move justifiably from one premise to another one needs more than identity of mood. In fact, Hare's position blurs the tripartite distinction between syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Second, Hare fails to provide a satisfactory account of how the word "good" can work as a tropic analogous to the way in which the indicative mood works. As the passage below shows, even though he recognises this difficulty and seems to be willing to withdraw his original proposal, we are left in the dark as to how this account would work:

> It would be a gross oversimplification to say that the word "good" is itself a tropic or mood sign. When a performer says that it is a word used for commending, he does not mean this; rather he means that, in its analysis, which is undoubtedly complex, other tropics besides that of assertion will appear. What there are, and in what combination with the assertoric or indicative tropic, is a difficult question which I am not raising here.[43]

Therefore, given these difficulties, Hare's attempt to solve the Frege-Geach problem cannot get off the ground.

1.4.2 A Smileyan solution to the Frege-Geach problem

[43] Hare 1970, p.24

In the next two sections, I present Smiley's response to Frege's argument against the rejection view, and discuss how this response could be used in favour of the expressivist in order to provide a solution to the Frege-Geach problem.

1.4.2.1 Smiley's response to Frege

Before presenting Smiley's response to Frege, let us consider once again the three inferences discussed by Frege in his paper "Negation" (1956):

FR1
Premise 1. If the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder.
Premise 2. The accused was not in Berlin.
Conclusion. He did not commit the murder.

FR2
Premise 1. If the accused was in Rome at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder.
Premise 2. The accused was in Rome.
Conclusion. He did not commit the murder.

FR3 (rephrased version of FR1)
P1. If the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder, he did not commit the murder
P2': *It is false that* the accused was in Berlin at the time of the murder.
C: He did not commit the murder.

At the section 1.2, we have seen how Frege argued against the rejection view by claiming that that view is not able to accomodate the validity of FR1. In "Rejection" (1996), Timothy Smiley provides a defence of the rejection view.

Smiley concedes Frege's point about the negation sign when it goes in the antecedent of a conditional. But even if one accepts that "not" is part of the semantic content of the antecedents of the first premises of FR2 and FR3, one is not thereby committed to accept that, in a simple sentence, negation does not work as a sign of force.

Smiley represents sentences of the form "It is not the case that P" as *P (the rejection of P). When "not" works as a sign of force, it can only be used in "sentences standing on their own, not when they occur as clauses in other sentences".[44] Thus, "the accused was not in Berlin at the time of the murder" is represented as *P.

With respect to the challenge of explaining the validity of FR1, Smiley claims that we can create a rule of inference involving the rejection sign. This would allow us to grapple with the arguments in which the rejection sign is deployed. The rule suggested by Smiley is as follows: "from if not-P, not-Q and *P, infer *Q".[45] So, FR1 would be symbolized as follows:

FR1 (formalized)

Premise 1. $\neg P \rightarrow \neg Q$
Premise 2. *P
Conclusion. *Q

According to Smiley, this rule would certainly accommodate FR1 as a valid inference. But it should be seen as an additional rule that enriches a logic system,

[44] Smiley 1996, p.4
[45] Smiley 1996, p.3

not as an opponent of *modus ponens*: "it is not a case of using more apparatus to explain the same data, but more to explain more".[46]

Smiley's response to Frege appears to be successful or, to say the least, seems to indicate a promising way to develop an adequate response. One might think that this is an oversimplification. After all, the debate about the nature of negation is ongoing.[47] Given the subject matter of this thesis, I do not have to go further into that particular debate. Nonetheless, it is worth considering whether Smiley's line of thought could be used by an expressivist in order to sketch a solution to the Frege-Geach challenge.

1.4.2.2 A Smilean solution to the Frege-Geach challenge

Following Smiley's strategy, an advocate of expressivism could hold that moral terms also have a twofold behaviour: in embedded sentences, they behave as ordinary predicates; in unembedded sentences, they work as signs of force. Let us call *Smileyan expressivism* the view according to which moral terms are part of the semantic content only when they occur in embedded sentences. On this view, the little brother argument would be read as follows:

P1. If lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad.
P2'. Boo! (lying).
C': Boo! (getting your little brother to lie).

Additionally, the Smileyan expressivist would need a rule to back up this inference. Here is a suggestion: 'from if X is bad, then Y is bad and Boo X!, infer Boo Y!'. In P1, 'bad' is part of the content of 'lying is bad'. In P2', 'bad' works as a sign of

[46] Smiley 1996, p.3
[47] See, for instance, Rumfitt (2000), Incurvati & Smith (2010) and Textor (2011).

force. Instead of the asterisk '*' used to represent the act of rejecting, now we have 'Boo!', a term that represents the act of disapproving. Is this a legitimate move for the expressivist to make? I think the answer to this question is negative. In what follows I explain why this is so.

Smiley's approach to the question about the nature of negation seems to be promising. Nonetheless, whether or not a Smileyan approach to the Frege-Geach challenge is successful depends upon the existence of similar characteristics between the two debates, namely, Frege *vs*. rejectors, and Geach *vs.* expressivists. But the cases are not as similar as they appear to be at first blush.

The main difference is that, in the former debate, there is a consensus about the semantic content of the indicative sentences that we use to make ordinary judgments. Both parties (the Fregeans and the rejectors) agree that those sentences express truth-apt contents – one may call these contents "thoughts" or "propositions". The source of disagreement is not about the content of sentences of the form "not-P", but whether "not" is part of the content.

In the latter debate, the disagreement is – so to speak – more fundamental. The apple of discord between expressivists and cognitivists is about the *very meaning* of moral sentences. This disagreement is deeper than it might look at first sight. For both expressivists and cognitivists are committed to radically opposing views on the nature of meaning (at least the meaning of a particular domain of discourse).

As Lycan (2002) points out, there are three main types of theories of meaning: Ideational Theory, Propositional Theory, and Use Theory.[48] These theories aim at explaining several facts about meaning – what Lycan calls *the meaning facts, viz.,* "that some physical objects are meaningful (at all); that distinct expressions can have the same meaning; that a single expression can have more than one meaning; that the meaning of on expression can be contained in that of another". [49]

Historically, these three theories have been conceived as theories of the descriptive domain of discourse. However, since my main interest in this thesis is the metaethical problem about the nature of moral discourse, the question I am worried about is this: given a meaningful moral sentence *M* (that is, a meaningful string of words containing a moral predicate), what is it that makes *M* meaningful? Cognitivists and expressivists give different answers to this question, for they operate within distinct theoretical frameworks.

I don't need to go further in the explanation of the three aforementioned theories of meaning. What is relevant here is to stress that expressivists and cognitivists depart from different theories of meaning in order to account for the moral domain of discourse. Cognitivists tend to believe something akin to the Propositional theory. As such 'lying is bad' has meaning in virtue of expressing the proposition that *lying is bad*, which is either true or false independently of what we

[48] Roughly put, the ideational theory takes meaning to be ideas in people's mind. The propositional theory claims that meanings are ethereal (in the sense of *non-physical*) entities, which are the primary bearers of truth-values. The Use Theory, as Lycan nicely puts, holds that "meaning is a matter of the role an expression plays in human social behavior. To know the expression's meaning is just to know how to deploy the expression appropriately in conversational settings." (Lycan 2002, p.89)

[49] Lycan 2002, p.76

think. Expressivists tend to believe in something close to the Use theory**.** In fact, earlier expressivists (*e.g.*, Ayer, Stevenson) believe that there is no such a thing as the semantic content (conceived as something abstract) of a moral sentence. Rather, they hold that moral sentences should be analysed solely in virtue of the role they play in moral discourse.

These differences between cognitivism and expressivism suffice to justify the belief that the Smileyan strategy cannot be successfully applied to the metaethical debate with which I am concerned in this thesis; even though it may be a very promising strategy with respect to the debate on the nature of negation. Smileyan expressivism does not allow us to derive an explanation of what it is for a moral predicate such as 'bad' to be part of the content of 'lying is bad' when this sentence occurs embedded. Given this limitation, the Frege-Geach challenge kicks in once again and leaves the Smileyan expressivist in muddy waters.

2 Chapter Two – Blackburn's solutions to the Frege-Geach problem

Over the years, Blackburn's account of moral language underwent some important changes. It gradually became more sophisticated, specially in virtue of the technical apparatus developed in 'Attitudes and Contents' (1988). Therefore, when talking about Blackburn's take on the Frege-Geach challenge, it is better to use the plural form 'solutions' instead of the singular form. In this chapter, I will present and critically examine Blackburn's three different attempts to solve the Frege-Geach problem.

2.1 The involvement account: Blackburn's first solution to the Frege-Geach problem

Simon Blackburn (1993) develops his first attempt to sketch a solution to the Frege-Geach problem. [50] He puts forward the view according to which the meaning of simple moral sentences rely upon the idea that they express the speaker's attitude towards the object of evaluation.[51] To take his example: in uttering 'courage is a good thing' one expresses approval of courage. However, Blackburn is aware that the Frege-Geach problem kicks in when the same sentence occurs in an embedded context. He invites us to consider the following hypothetical:

> (H) If courage is a good thing, then organized games should be a part of school curricula.

[50] The paper 'Moral Realism' was originally published in 1973. In this thesis, I use the version republished in *Essays in Quasi Realism* (1993).

[51] It is worth noticing that by 'attitude' Blackburn means desire-like attitude. Thus, beliefs and desires do not count as attitudes. In this Thesis, I use 'attitude' in this sense.

Since in sincerely uttering (H) one does not express approval of courage, it is hard to see how the expressivist's original insight about the meaning of simple moral sentences could be used to shed light on the role that 'courage is a good thing' plays as the antecedent of (H). Blackburn characterizes the Frege-Geach problem in the following way:

> the problem, for an anti-realist, is that of showing how the original insight as to what is done when a moral proposition is asserted also gives him an explanation of what is done when the sentence expressing it occurs in such contexts.[52]

Blackburn holds there is a way of explaining the meaning of (H) that preserves the aforementioned insight. But before we are able to consider this, we have to understand an important notion that Blackburn employs in his account – the notion of *propositional reflection*:

> By a 'propositional reflection' I mean roughly any statement that, while appearing to make a factual claim about states of affairs, their interrelations, and their logic, is actually making claims about attitudes, although none of the propositions involved in the statement is to be analyzed into one whose subject is an attitude.[53]

As the passage above makes clear Blackburn distinguishes a sentence that expresses an attitude (like 'courage is a good thing') from a sentence such as (H) which is a claim about attitudes. The main difference is that the latter expresses a belief (which is a truth-bearer), and the former doesn't. Thus, it turns out that the hypothetical above

> must be taken as a propositional reflection of a claim about attitudes. This claim is that an attitude of approval to courage in itself involves an attitude of approval to organized games as part of the curriculum in every school. It

[52] Blackburn 1993, p.124
[53] Blackburn 1993, pp.125-126

> does not, of course, involve this as a matter of logic, but neither is (H) true as a matter of logic.[54]

Blackburn does not explain precisely what he means by 'involve' in this context. Although he makes the negative claim that it is not a matter of logic, he leaves us in the dark when it comes to understand its positive characteristics. Nonetheless, in looking at what Blackburn says about how can we show that one attitude involves another, we can get a clue on what sense of 'involve' is being used:

> to show that one attitude does involve the other it is necessary to show that organized games are intimately connected with the production of the quality of courage and lack other disadvantages.[55]

Some clarifications may come in handy here. The term 'involvement' is used to refer to a relation whose *relata* seem to be attitudes. The phrase 'intimate connection' is apparently used to refer to a relation that holds between actions or states of affairs. Thus a possible interpretation of what Blackburn means in the passage above is this:

- Involvement =df. holding an attitude *A* towards X *involves* holding *A* towards Y if, and only if, X is intimately connected with Y.

With respect to the challenge of explaining the validity of the moral *modus ponens,* Blackburn states the following:

> anybody asserting 'P, and if P, then Q' where P attributes worth to a thing expresses his attitude to that thing, and asserts that that attitude involves a further attitude or belief. There is, when that has been done, a logical inconsistency in not holding the further attitude or belief.[56]

[54] Blackburn 1993, p.126
[55] Blackburn 1993, p.126
[56] Blackburn 1993, p.27

This account of validity clearly differs from the standard one. The standard notion says that validity (in the deductive sense) is a property exemplified by a certain class of arguments in virtue of its being impossible for them to have true premises and false conclusion. It looks as though, on Blackburn's involvement account, validity is no longer understood at the propositional level. On his account, the little brother argument is interpreted as follows:

> P1: Disapproval of lying involves disapproval of teaching your little brother to lie.
> P2: Boo! (lying)
> C: Boo! (teaching your little brother to lie).

Validity is now understood at the agent's level. The thought is that validity depends on whether the agent holds a proper combination of attitudes and beliefs. P1 expresses a belief about a relation between two attitudes, namely, B!(lying) and B!(teaching your little broter to lie). P2 and C express two attitudes of disapproval. Holding P1 and P2 involves holding C. Thus, on the above definition, one who holds P1 and P2, but fails to hold C (or even holds not-C), stumbles into a sort of attitudinal inconsistency. After all, it is not an inconsistency in truth values.

2.1.1 Evaluating the first account

The first problematic point of Blackburn's account is the notion of intimate connection used to explain what it means to say that one attitude involves another. That notion does not shed any light on what involvement is. For there are many ways in which two things can be intimately connected, and Blackburn does not provide an account of what are the truth conditions of 'A is intimately connected B'.

In addition, there is a problem with respect to the nature of the relations of intimate connection and involvement. The first seems to be a symmetric one. If A is intimately connected with B, then B is intimately connected with A. The second, however, is not symmetric. A might be involved with B (in the sense that A brings B with it), and B not be involved with A (in the sense that B does not bring A with it). The involvement between attitudes is supposed to be non-symmetric. One might coherently hold that disapproval of lying (in general) involves disapproval of teaching your little brother to lie, and yet think that disapproval of teaching your little brother to lie does not involve disapproval of lying (in general). Therefore, given the difference with respect to the nature of these relations, involvement cannot be defined in terms of intimate connection.

Blackburn's account of validity can be criticized on the ground that it assumes that attitudes and beliefs can be logically inconsistent with each other. For instance, with respect to the moral *modus ponens* Blackburn asserts that "its validity is a reflection of possible logical inconsistency in attitudes and beliefs".[57] However, this claim is implausible. The standard notion of inconsistency says that a set of propositions is inconsistent if its members cannot be simultaneously true. On a derivative sense, beliefs can be logically inconsistent with each other because they are truth-apt. But desire-like attitudes are not truth-apt. Therefore, desire-like attitudes cannot be logically inconsistent with each other (at least not in the standard sense).

[57] Blackburn 1993, p.27

Now let us turn our attention to another objection against Blackburn's first solution. It is the one G.F Schueler presents in "Modus Ponens and Moral Realism"(1988). Schueler holds that if we accept Blackburn's first account of evaluative conditionals, then the logical form of 'if lying is bad, teaching your little brother to lie is bad' will not be P→Q. As Schueler points out: "its logical form, for the purposes of propositional logic, is just R, that is, it must be taken as 'simple', not truth functionally compound".[58] Consequently, the logical form of the little brother argument will be the invalid form P, R; *ergo*, Q.

Blackburn (1988) replies to this objection by saying that, contrary to Schueler's assumption, there is no clear-cut criterion one can use in order to evaluate whether a given argument formulated in natural language has the *modus ponens* form. In order to illustrate his point, Blackburn urges us to consider the following case:

> Compare 'P, P→Q, so Q' with the implication taken as truth-functional, with the same seeming argument taken as some suppose the English take it: P→Q is the commitment of one who attributes a high probability to Q conditional upon P. Which is the true *modus ponens*? If we plump for either exclusively, we face the uncomfortable consequence that it becomes controversial whether natural English contains any inferences of the form.[59]

Schueler's argument is subject to yet another objection. The problem is that Schueler assumes that if an argument has an invalid form, then it is invalid. But there is a reason to call that assumption into question. To see why, let us consider the following cases:

[58] Schueler 1988, p.495
[59] Blackburn 1988, pp.501-502

(A) 2+2 =5; *ergo*, snow is white.

(B) Snow is white; *ergo,* all triangles are three sided.

(C) If John is taller than Mary, Mary is shorter than John. Mary is shorter than John. *Ergo,* John is taller than Mary.

In spite of the fact that (A), (B) and (C) have invalid forms, they are all deductively valid arguments. After all, there is no circumstance in which their premises are true and their conclusion is false. (A) and (B) fall into the category of the so-called 'paradoxes of validity'. Roughly put, the idea is that arguments that contain either necessarily false premises or necessarily true conclusions will be valid. With respect to (A), precisely because the premise is necessarily false, there is no circumstance in which the premise is true and the conclusion is false. With respect to (B), precisely because the conclusion is necessarily true, there is circumstance in which the premise is true and the conclusion is false.

(C) does not fall within the paradoxes of validity category. However, even though its form is invalid, *viz.,* $\alpha \rightarrow ß,\ ß \vdash \alpha$, it is also impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false. The moral we should draw from these cases is that, contrary to Schueler's view, it is not plausible to sustain that a particular argument is invalid solely on the basis that it has an invalid form.

The claim that a logical form F is invalid does not commit one to the belief that every argument displaying F is invalid. Rather, it only commits one to the belief that there is at least one invalid argument that displays the form F. So Blackburn might reply that even if one agrees that Schueler is right with respect to the way in which the little brother argument has to be symbolised (*viz.*, P, R, *ergo*

Q), it does not follow that the it is invalid. However, this reply is not compelling. Even though the cases (A)- (C) above show that there are special ways in which some arguments can be valid in spite of the fact they have an invalid form, the little brother argument does not resemble any of them. Therefore, the aforementioned special ways o achieving validity cannot be used to account for the LBA.

2.1.2 Schroeder's attack on the involvement account

Mark Schroeder (2010) puts forward two objections against Blackburn's involvement account. The first objection is that the involvement account does not allow us to explain the validity of arguments involving non-analytic conditionals. In order to grasp Schroeder's point let us consider his own examples:

Ex1

P1: Being friendly is wrong.

P2: If being friendly is wrong, being friendly to strangers is wrong.

C**:** Being friendly to strangers is wrong.

Ex2

P1'**:** Lying is wrong.

P2': If lying is wrong, then murder is wrong.

C': Murder is wrong.

Schroeder regards P2 as analytic: "conditionals with the feature that accepting their consequent is in some natural sense involved in accepting their antecedent are what philosophers call analytic".[60] On the involvement account, P2 would be read as 'disapproval of being friendly involves disapproval of being friendly to strangers', which looks perfectly right. The problem is that in applying the same idea to P2' the reading we get is 'disapproval of lying involves disapproval

[60] Schroeder 2010, p.113

of murder', which does not look right because P2' is not analytic and, as Schroeder rightly points out, "murder is not a special case of lying, in the way that being friendly to strangers is a special case of being friendly".[61] So it turns out that Blackburn's view does not allow us to account for the validity of Ex2.

Schroeder's second objection is that "the involvement account also does not generalize in any natural way to Moral-Descriptive, Descriptive-Moral, or Descriptive-Descriptive conditionals".[62] His examples are the following:

MD If being friendly is wrong, then my parents lied to me.
DM If the Bible instructs one not to be friendly, then being friendly is wrong.
DD If the Bible instructs one not to be friendly, then my parents lied to me.

Schroeder asks us to consider DM in order to show that the involvement account does not explain its meaning properly. According to Schroeder, the reason for this is that there is a conflict in Blackburn's first solution. Such conflict is between the following claims: (i) having a belief can involve having a particular attitude (like in the case of DM) and (ii) the mere presence of a belief is not sufficient to motivate an agent because, by itself, it does not entail the presence of a desire or an attitude (the Humean Theory of motivation).[63]

[61] Schroeder 2010, p.113
[62] Schroeder 2010, p.113
[63] Here is a textual evidence that Blackburn accepts the Humean Theory of Motivation: "consider the situation in which a person X is wondering whether to do A or to do B. Suppose a person Y tells him that A is the right thing to do. Suppose that X believes Y. Then it is logically necessary that this belief is relevant to his decision. On the other hand, there can be no realistic belief of which this is necessary, for, as Hume saw, the relevance of belief that some state of affairs obtains to a decision is always contingent upon the existence of a desire whose fulfillment that state of affairs affects." (Blackburn, 1993 pp.113-114)

Schroeder's first objection does not work because it hinges on an implausible conception of analyticity. Whether or not a sentence is analytic must depend on the characteristics of the very sentence – *e.g.,* whether its predicate is contained in its subject, as Kant held, or whether it is true in virtue of the meaning of its constituent terms, as Ayer thought –, and not, as Schroeder suggests, on the agent's acceptance of its parts.

With respect to Blackburn's first account, the whole weight of the discussion is on what the word 'involvement' is supposed to mean. Schroeder's second objection is compelling and presents a dilemma for the upholders of the involvement account: either accepting (i) or accepting (ii), but not both. It turns out that Blackburn (1984) rejects (i) and develops a new account of evaluative conditionals. This account will be the focus of the next section.

2.2 Blackburn's second solution: a higher-order account

In *Spreading the Word* (1984) Blackburn has slightly modified his account in order to deal with the Frege-Geach problem. There are two significant changes in Blackburn's new approach. The first is the way of coping with complex evaluative sentences. The second is the way of explaining validity**.** With respect to the first change, the notion of involvement does not any longer play a central role in the explanation of the meaning of conditionals. Concerning the second change, validity is no longer explained through the assumption that beliefs and desire-like attitudes can be logically inconsistent with each other.

Before getting into the details of Blackburns's second solution to the FGP, it is important to fathom the main ideas of his metaethical program – the so-called 'quasi-realism' and its relation to projectivism.

> It is important to be clear about the distinction between projectivism and quasi-realism. Projectivism is the philosophy of evaluation which says that evaluative properties are projections of our own sentiments (emotions, reactions, attitudes, commendations). Quasi-realism is the enterprise of explaining why our discourse has the shape it does, in particular by way of treating evaluative predicates like others, if projectivism is true. [64]

As the passage above makes clear, projectivism is a metaphysical hypothesis about the nature of evaluative properties. Quasi-realism is an attempt to explain the realistic appearance of moral language. With these two ideas in mind, Blackburn argues against both the view that the realistic appearance of moral language gives an initial advantage to the moral realist thesis, and the view that the Frege-Geach objection suffices to justify the rebuttal of expressivism.

In order to deal with complex evaluative sentences Blackburn holds that we need to expand the way we think about the connectives.[65] After all, we already use some logical connectives to link non-truth apt sentences, *e.g.*, commands: 'Give me my laptop and close the door', 'stop yelling or leave this place', 'do not shut the door' are just some examples. Blackburn's idea is that since these sentences are perfectly grammatical ones, we have a good reason to think about the connectives 'and', 'or', and 'not' in a broader way.

Conditional sentences are certainly more challenging. For although it makes sense to use a non-truth-apt sentence embedded in the then-clause of a conditional

[64] Blackburn 1984, p.180
[65] Cf. Blackburn 1984, p.191

(*e.g.,* 'if the meat is ready, turn off the oven'), the same does not apply for the if-clause, since it deletes the illocutionary force of the sentence that follows it. In fact, a sentence of the form 'If do X, then Y' is not even grammatical, e.g., 'if turn off the oven, the meat is ready'.[66] So, as Blackburn recognizes, "to tackle Frege's problem the first thing we need is a view of what we are up to in putting commitments into conditional".[67] Now Blackburn uses the term 'commitment' to cover both types of expression: "the notion of commitment is then capacious enough to include both ordinary beliefs, and these other attitudes, habits and prescriptions".[68]

Blackburn points out that an important feature of our moral discourse is that we do not just evaluate actions, but also what he calls 'moral sensibility':

> a moral *sensibility*, on that picture, is defined by a function from *input* of belief to *output* of attitude [...] and amongst the features of sensibilities which matter are, of course, not only the actual attitudes which are the output, but the interactions between them.[69]

The idea of evaluating interactions between attitudes can be understood through an example. Imagine a person that combines the following attitudes: disapproval of stealing and approval of encouraging people to steal. This person would have a sensibility that would not meet our endorsement. The reason,

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[66] A possible way of making sense of what 'if turn off the oven, the meat is ready' means is to apply the contrapositive law. Then we have 'if the meat is not ready, do not turn off the oven'. A second option would be to translate it into the 'only if' form. Some logic textbooks (see Lepore 2009, pp.84-85) consider that 'If A, then B' is equivalent to 'A only if B'. If this is right, we can apply this idea to the previous sentence and get 'Turn off the oven only if the meat is ready', which is grammatical and makes perfect sense. So, perhaps the linguistic fact that we can't have a grammatical conditional sentence with an imperative as the if-clause does not reveal anything deeper about the nature of prescriptions. For we can make sense of what is being said by applying alternative readings.
[67] Blackburn 1984, p.192.
[68] Blackburn 1984, p.192
[69] Blackburn 1984, p.192.

Blackburn says, is that a combination of attitudes such as the previous one "opens a dangerous weakness in a sensibility".[70]

Blackburn's view on what we are up to when we assert an evaluative conditional is that we express endorsement of a certain moral sensibility[71]; in fact, it is "an endorsement which is itself the expression of a moral point of view".[72] On this picture, in asserting 'If lying is bad, teaching your little brother to lie is bad' the speaker expresses a second order attitude of approval towards a moral sensibility that combines disapproval of lying with disapproval of teaching little brother to lie.

One of the central features of Blackburn's strategy is to show that even if we had a purely expressive moral language like Eex, this language would have to evolve and turn into something similar to our current language. And this would be so not because of the supposedly intuitive appeal of moral realism, but for the reason that people would naturally want to improve their expressive power with respect to moral evaluation, *e.g.,* in order to talk about approval or disapproval of certain combinations of attitudes, as in H! (B!p → B!q). As Blackburn points out, Eex would have

> to become an instrument of serious, reflective, evaluative practice, able to express concern for improvements, and coherence of attitudes. Now one way of doing this is to become like ordinary English. That is, it would invent a predicate answering to the attitude, and treat commitments as if they were judgments, and then use all the natural devices for debating truth.[73]

Blackburn claims that although it might be compelling for many people, the fact that our moral language is apparently realistic is not sufficient to justify the

[70] Blackburn 1984, p.192.
[71] Blackburn defines this notion as follows: "a moral sensibility, on that picture, is defined by a function from input of belief to output of attitude" (Blackburn 1988:192).
[72] Blackburn 1984, p.192
[73] Blackburn 1984, p.195

acceptance of the view that moral sentences have representational content. Neil Sinclair (2007) agrees with the previous claim and uses the phrase 'propositional clothing' to refer to the grammatical appearance of moral discourse, *i.e.,* the fact moral sentences can intelligibly occur within the scope of sentential connectives as well as locutions such as 'It is true that…' and '*S* knows that…'.[74] This is a fair point to make, as the expressivist believes that one should not take moral discourse at face value. After all, one cannot derive a substantial philosophical thesis, namely, that moral discourse has descriptive content, simply from the claim that moral discourse wears propositional clothing.

In order to shore up his metaethical view, Blackburn provides an argument based on the following thought experiment:

> Imagine a language unlike English in containing no evaluative predicates. It wears the expressive nature of value-judgements on its sleeve. Call it Eex. It might contain a 'hooray!' operator and 'boo!' operator (H!, B!) which attach to descriptions of things to result in expressions of attitude […] we would expect the speakers of Eex to want another device, enabling them to express views on the structure of sensibilities.[75]

The reason why another device would be needed is that, as has been indicated, it is a common feature of the moral discourse that people evaluate combinations of attitudes as well as combinations of attitudes with beliefs. So, according to Blackburn, in addition to the operators H! and B!, Eex would include

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[74] In 'Propositional Clothing and Belief' (2007), Sinclair argues for the idea that wearing propositional clothing is neither necessary nor sufficient for having representational content. It is not a necessary condition because a thermometer and a fuel gauge have representational content even though they don't wear propositional clothing. It is not sufficient because the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes took cocaine' does not have representational content, even though it is clothed in a propositional garment.

[75] Blackburn 1984, p.193

the semi-colon, which is used "to denote the view that one attitude or belief involves or is coupled with another".[76] So, in using Eex to translate the sentence 'If lying is bad, teaching little brother to lie is bad we get H! (|B! (lying) ; |B! (getting little brother to lie)|), which makes clear – given the scope of 'H!' – that a second order attitude is being expressed, *viz.,* approval of moral sensibilities which treats disapproval of lying as involving disapproval of teaching little brother to lie.

Despite the fact that Blackburn still uses the notion of involvement to explain the meaning of conditionals with evaluative components, that notion does not any longer play a central role. So, the problem that has been pointed out in the first solution does not arise. As you may remember, the problem with the first solution is that the conditional was being interpreted as an expression of a belief about an involvement between attitudes, where involvement was understood in terms of the unclear notion of 'intimate connection'. Now involvement is understood in terms of a combination of attitudes that an agent can hold. In order to account for the meaning of conditionals, Blackburn's main notion is that of a second-order attitude, which is a rational appraisal of our own moral sensibility. And this allows for an explanation of validity and inconsistency – as we will see in the following paragraphs.

In order to account for the validity of the little brother argument, Blackburn proceeds in two steps. The first is to translate it into the Eex language:

P1: B! (lying)
P2: H! (|B! (lying) ; |B! (getting little brother to lie)|)
C: B! (getting little brother to lie)

[76] Blackburn 1984, p.193

The second step is to hold that one who both disapproves of lying and approves of moral sensibilities that combine disapproval of lying with disapproval of teaching little brother to lie, and yet fails to disapprove of teaching little brother to lie, will experience a clash of attitudes. Consequently, this person will have a moral sensibility that is not worthy of our endorsement – a *fractured sensibility*. The reason why it is not worthy is that

> such a sensibility cannot fulfill the practical purposes for which we evaluate things. Eex will want to signal this. It will want a way of expressing the thought that it is a logical mistake that is made if someone holds the first two commitments, and not the commitment to disapproval of getting your little brother to lie.[77]

Regarding the notion of *clash*, the role it plays in Blackburn's new account of validity is that of explaining what it is for a set of attitudes to be inconsistent. Under this account, a set of attitudes is inconsistent if there is a clash among its members. It is worth noticing that Blackburn does not explicitly formulate his definition of validity; however, based on what has been explicated, I propose that one way of carrying this out is as follows:

• Eex-validity =df. An argument constituted by evaluative sentences is valid if, and only if, holding the premise-attitudes and refusing to hold the conclusion-attitude gives rise to a clash of attitudes.

Blackburn thinks that most of us would certainly not give credit to the moral advice of someone who holds P1 and P2, but fails to hold C. For we feel rationally compelled to move from the attitude of disapproval towards lying to the

[77] Blackburn 1984, p.195

attitude of disapproval towards getting little brother to lie. With respect to the aforementioned 'practical purposes for which we evaluate things' what Blackburn probably means is to do with action-guiding and moral advice. As Sinclair points out: "moral assertions are not mere sounding off, they are persuasive attempts to influence the attitudes and hence actions of others".[78] Therefore, if one has a fractured sensibility, then one can neither guide himself nor properly persuade other people on moral issues.

2.2.1 Wright's objection

In 'Realism, Antirealism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism' (1988), Crispin Wright argues against Blackburn's second account of validity. In this section, I shall explain Wright's argument as well as examine Blackburn's reply. In the standard format, Wright's argument can be reconstructed as follows:

> W1: "Anything worth calling the validity of an inference has to reside in the inconsistency of accepting the premises but denying its conclusion".[79]
> W2: Blackburn's account of validity does not reside in the inconsistency of accepting the premises and denying the conclusion of a given inference.
> W3: Therefore, Blackburn's account of validity is not worth calling 'validity'.[80]

As we saw in the last section, Blackburn's second account relies on a notion of inconsistency explained in terms of what he called 'clash of attitudes'. But according to Wright, this is not, so to speak, genuine inconsistency – *i.e.,* the kind of inconsistency involved in a set of propositions whose members cannot be

[78] Sinclair 2007, p.403
[79] Wright 1988, p.33
[80] Schueler (1988) put forward the same argument against Blackburn's second account of validity.

simultaneously true. Rather, Wright holds that desire-like attitudes do not stand in logical relations. For a necessary condition to stand in logical relations is to be (at least derivatively) truth-apt. He claims that those who hold conflicting attitudes (or 'clashing attitudes', if one wants to use Blackburn's terminology) do not commit any logical mistake. Instead, they "merely fail to have every combination of attitudes of which they themselves approve. That is a moral failing, not a logical one".[81]

In "Attitudes and Contents"(1988), Blackburn develops a system of logic ('a logic of attitudes', as he calls it) that is supposed to explain under what circumstances a set of attitudes is consistent. In section 2.3, I will go into the details of Blackburn's logic of attitudes (LA). But it is important to say, beforehand, that Blackburn does not actually reply to the Wright's objection. For the mere development of a system of logic does not suffice to justify the belief that attitudes can stand in logical relations. The rationale here is the following: if attitudes can stand in logical relations, then LA might capture the correct way to represent those relations. If attitudes cannot stand in logical relations, then LA might turn out to be a mere formal exercise.

In response to the first premise of Wright's argument, Blackburn points out that there is more than one way of understanding validity.[82]

> One might cite imperative logic. Or, one might cite the approach to propositional inference in terms of coherent subjective probability functions, where validity corresponds to there being no coherent function attributing a lesser probability to the conclusion than to the premises […]

[81] Wright 1988, p.33
[82] In the section 3 I shall explain how Blackburn explains validity in his paper 'Attitudes and Contents' (1988).

> Or one could cite Stig Kanger, that in interpreting a deontic logic to the extension of the truth predicate to the formulae, which could equally be regarded as imperatives or expressions of attitude, is a conventional matter.[83]

Blackburn's thought is that given that we have all these alternative notions, it is implausible to sustain the narrow view on validity suggested by Wright. In addition, it may be said that a limitation of Wright's argument is that he did not provide any reason as to why we should accept P1. Given the plurality of views on validity, this an important premise to be defended, not just assumed.

But this is not the only problem with Wright's argument. When Wright claims that anything worth calling the validity of an inference has to reside in the inconsistency of accepting the premises but denying its conclusion he himself seems to be confusing logical inconsistency with pragmatic inconsistency. The set constituted by the premises and the negation of the conclusion of a valid argument is logically inconsistent. The inconsistency of *accepting* the premises but denying the conclusion of a valid argument is not logical, but pragmatic. In fact, if we interpret 'inconsistency' in the pragmatic sense, Wright's view will be actually adding grist to Blackburn's mill.

2.2.2 Schueler's objections

G.Schueler (1988) puts forward two objections against Blackburn's second solution to the FGP. The first objection puts into question Blackburn's right to use the term 'commitment'. According to Schueler, "this is another one of those terms

[83] Blackburn 1988, p.502

which seem to entail a realist picture".[84] Schueler's idea is that as a result of being an anti-realist, Blackburn has no right to employ that term in his account of moral discourse and judgment. For genuine commitment can only take place in a moral realist picture of the world.

In order to support his objective view on the nature of commitment, Schueler provides the following example: "if I am committed to, say, paying my nephew's way through school, or to the claim that a Republican succeeded Carter, then this seems something objective, forced on me by a promise I have made or other views I hold".[85]But this example does not constitute an argument for the realist nature of commitments. In fact, the very idea of a word entailing a realist picture (or whatever other picture one may consider) strikes me as profoundly mistaken. Whether or not a given word has a realist shape is something that depends on one's theoretical framework as well as his philosophical assumptions. For instance, words such as 'true', 'proposition', 'property', 'set', 'causality' and so on are used within different frameworks for both realists and anti-realists on questions that involve the philosophical discussion of their meaning and what, if anything, they refer to.

Contrary to Schueler's thought, I think that neither the realist nor the anti-realist has a special claim over the use of 'commitment'. After all, there is no obvious reason as to why one framework should take precedence over the others. In addition, it might be objected that to say that something *seems* to be objective is not providing a reason to believe it, but only appealing to an intuition. However, it

[84] Schueler 1988, p.498
[85] Schueler 1988, p.498

turns out that Blackburn departs from a different intuition and uses 'commitment' as a "general term to cover mental states which may be beliefs, but also those which gain expression in propositional form".[86]

The second objection is that Blackburn's notion of clashing attitudes is not adequate to explain the validity of the moral *modus ponens* because it does not involve any logical mistake. Schueler's writes:

> having clashing attitudes or failing to do something which one has committed oneself to do (even on a realist account of commitment), are not the same things as making logical mistakes, at least in the ordinary sense of those words.[87]

Schueler also believes that the notion of 'mistake' is a realistic one. To support that intuition he asks us to imagine a case in which one simultaneously approves and disapproves of eating a cookie. One approves of it because of the pleasure the cookie promotes, and disapproves in virtue of what it does to one's waistline. Clearly, there is a clash of attitudes. But there is no logical mistake involved. According to Schueler, "the fact that I cannot act on or satisfy both attitudes just means that I have to figure out what to do here, not that there is anything untoward or fishy about having both attitudes".[88]

At this stage, it is important to point out that Wright and Schueler's views mesh nicely with one another. For Schueler's idea according to which there is no logical mistake involved when someone has a clash of attitudes is in line with Wright's idea that attitudes do not stand in logical relations. If Wright and Schueler's views are correct, Blackburn's theory is in serious trouble. For there

[86] Blackburn 1988, p.503
[87] Schueler 1988, p.499
[88] Schueler 1988, p.500

will be no sense in talking about validity, inconsistency and entailment within the moral domain of discourse.

As I have anticipated, Blackburn (1988) does not argue directly for the idea that attitudes do stand in logical relations. Rather, he tries to reply to Schueler's previous objection by saying that having a clash of attitudes can involve a mistake inasmuch as we consider that our attitudes are related to our goals, and that consistency in attitudes can be thought as realization of goals in an ideal world. In section 2.3, I will will lay out Blackburn's third attempt to solve the Frege-Geach challenge and explain this idea in more detail.

2.2.3 Evaluating the second account

The main problem now is to do with Blackburn's interpretation of the semi-colon, which is used to denote the view that one attitude is involved or coupled with another. To begin with, the phrases 'A is involved with B' and 'A is coupled with B' are not equivalent. The first denotes a non-symmetric relation, whereas the second denotes a symmetric one: If A is coupled with B, then B is coupled with A. However, it may be the case that A involves B, but B does not involve A.

It turns out that both readings are problematic. On the one hand, if ';' is read as involvement, then we are once again left in the dark as to what it is supposed to mean. On the other hand, if ';' is read as *coupled with* we have the implausible result that H! [B! (lying) ; B! (teaching your little brother to lie] will be tantamount to H! [B! (teaching your little brother to lie) ; B! (lying). This cannot be case for the same reasons alleged above in regards to why the notion of intimate connection cannot be used to account for the involvement relation. The semi-colon cannot be

interpreted as commutative. Rather, it should be read as an operator similar to '→', that is, something that goes only in one direction.[89]

2.3 The third solution: a logic of attitudes

In 'Attitudes and Contents' (1988) Blackburn continues to pursue the goal of carrying out his quasi-realist project. As we have seen, this project consists, among other things, in explaining why moral discourse has a propositional appearance.[90]Blackburn claims that there are two tracks one can follow in order to put into effect the quasi-realist project: the slow track and the fast track.

The slow track "involves patiently construing each propositional context as it comes along".[91] That is to say, it requires an explanation of the meaning of moral sentences in each linguistic construction in which they can be properly embedded. According to Blackburn, in order to take the fast track one needs to

> make sufficient remarks about truth to suggest that we need a comparable notion to regulate evaluative discourse (even although that is nonrepresentational) and then say that our adherence to propositional forms need no further explanation than that.[92]

Blackburn considers important to maintain the propositional appearance of moral discourse because he wants to keep the complexity of our linguistic practices that involve the use of moral terms to make evaluations. We certainly do not just want to be able to make straightforward judgments such as 'x is good' or 'x is bad', but also more complex ones such 'If x is bad, so is y', 'x is not good', 'x is good or x is

[89] In chapter 5, I argue that reading ';' as a non-logical operator is a better option for the expressivist. I argue that it must be read as a psychological operator, that is, an operator that connects desire-attitudes (which are not taking to be the types of things that can stand in logical relations).
[90] To say that a given domain of discourse has a propositional appearance is to say that the sentences in that domain seem to express propositions.
[91] Blackburn 1988, p.504
[92] Blackburn 1988, p.505

bad'. For Blackburn, this is something to be preserved by the quasi-realist, regardless of whether one takes the fast or the slow track: "whichever track we favor, the point is to *earn* our right to propositional forms".[93]

Blackburn develops a logic of attitudes (LA) in order to account for the meaning of conditional sentences with evaluative components, and explain the validity of arguments involving those sentences. The core assumption here is as follows. Even though moral sentences express attitudes, those attitudes stand in logical relations and, therefore, they are also subject to logical constraints. LA allows Blackburn to take moral discourse seriously and argue that embracing projectivism does not commit one to the idea that this domain of discourse is either illogical or the realm of irrationality. Blackburn argues for the idea that the same feature that provides a basis for a deontic logic also provides a basis for a logic of attitudes. As I read it, his argument goes as follows:

> Premise 1: Deductive relationships between norms can be studied by thinking of ideal or relatively ideal worlds in which the norms are met.
> Premise 2: Attitudes are similar to norms in the sense that they can also be studied by thinking of ideal or relatively ideal world in which the attitudes (conceived as goals) are realized.
> Premise 3: If this feature about norms (viz., that deductive relationships between norms can be studied by thinking of ideal or relatively ideal worlds in which the norms are met) is a basis for deontic logic, relationships between attitudes can also be studied by thinking of ideal or relatively ideal worlds in which our attitudes are realized.
> Premise 4: This feature about norms is a basis for deontic logic.

[93] Blackburn 1988, p.505

Conclusion: Therefore, the fact that relationships between attitudes can also be studied by thinking of ideal or relatively ideal world in which the attitudes (conceived as goals) are realized constitutes a basis for a logic of attitudes.

The language of LA is a standard first order language with the addition of the operators H!, B! and T! which stand for the attitudes of horraying, booing and tolerating. A formula containing those operators is then defined in this fashion: if α is a formula, then H!α, B!α and T!α are formulas.

The semantics of Blackburn's Logic of Attitudes is based on Hintikka's interpretation of Deontic Logic, where the notion of deontically perfect world – an ideal world in which all duties are fulfilled – plays a central role in explaining logical consequence and satisfiability.[94] According to Blackburn, Hintikka's notion of perfect world can be adapted to the semantics of LA. All we need is to assume that in hooraying *p* one is aiming at a better (non-actual) world in which *p* obtains. On Blackburn's words:

> H!*p* can be seen as expressing the view that *p* is to be a goal, to be realized in any perfect world. A world in which ¬*p* is less than ideal, according to this commitment. The contrary attitude B!*p* would rule *p* out of any perfect world**,** and corresponding to permission we can have T!*p*, which is equivalent to not horraying ¬*p*, that is, not booing *p*.[95]

From this passage, the following equivalences between approval, disapproval and tolerance can be extracted:

- Approval: H!A ≡ ¬T! ¬A
- Disapproval: B!A ≡ ¬T!A

[94] Cf. Hintikka 1969, p.191
[95] Blackburn 1988, p.508

• Tolerance: T!A ≡ ¬B!A

There are two notions which are important to understand the semantics of LA.[96] The first is that of a *next approximation to the ideal* L*. Relative to an initial set of sentences *L* that describes the realization of goals in the actual world, *L** is a set of sentences that describes a world better than *L* ('better' in the sense that more goals are realized). The same goes for *L***, *L**** etc. until we get to the *set of final* i*deals* (the second important notion). A set of final ideals – represented as {*L**** ….} – is defined as a world in which all goals are realized, which is Blackburn's analogue of Hintikka's deontically perfect world. Now let's have a look at the four rules which tell us how to get from *L* to {*L**** ….}:

> (Ii) If H!*A*∈*L*, then H!*A* ∈ *L*;*
> (Iii) If H!*A*∈*L*, then *A* ∈ *L*;*
> (Iiii) If *T*!*A*∈*L*, then a set *L** containing *A* is to added to the set of next approximations for *L.*
> (Iiv) If *L** is a next approximation to the ideal relative to some set of sentences *L,* then, if *A*∈ *L*, A*∈subsequent approximations to the ideal *L**, L****
> (Iv) If B!*A* ∈ *L*, then ¬*A* ∈ *L**.[97]
>
> We can say that a set of *final ideals,* {*L**** ….} of *L* is obtained when further use of these rules produces no new sentence not already in the members *L***…* of the set.[98]

After stating these rules, which can be reiterated *ad libitum*, Blackburn introduces the final notion of a *route* to an ideal – which is represented by each branch of a

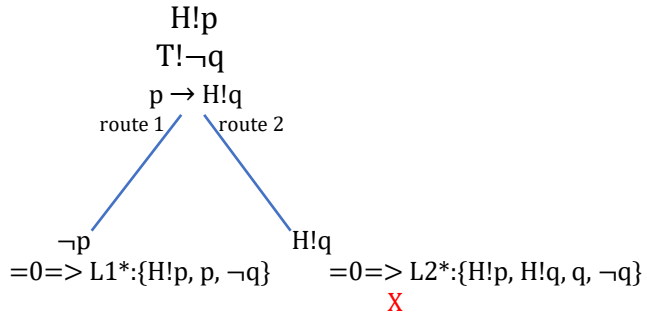
[96] Actually, Blackburn does not provide a full-fledged semantics, but just an outline that indicates the way to go if one wants to go further: "I do not want to claim finality for the semantics I shall now sketch, but it illustrates how a logic might be developed, and it shows that notions of inconsistency and satisfiability can be defined" (Blackburn 1988: 513)
[97] This rule is not explicitly formulated by Blackburn. However, it makes sense to have this rule in virtue of what he says in the passage I quoted right before the equivalence relations: "the contrary attitude B!*p* would rule *p* out of any perfect world" (Blackburn 1988: 508).
[98] Blackburn 1988, pp.513-514

disjunction in a *tableau* development – and it is used to define the circumstances under which a given set of sentences *L* is unsatisfiable.

> • Unsatisfiability =df. A set of sentences *L* is unsatisfiable iff each route to a set of final ideals *S* results in a set of sentences *S* one of whose members contains both a formula and its negation.[99]

Let us consider an example in order to illustrate how Blackburn's system works. Suppose we start with the following set of attitudes and want to determine whether it is satisfiable.

• L= {H!p, p →H!q, T!¬q}



By the application of (Ii) to H!p we get this formula carried across the two routes. By the application of (Iiii) to T!¬q we get ¬q in both L1* and L2*, the next approximations to the ideal. In the third line, we apply the rule for conditional to the formula p → H!q and get ¬p on the left branch and H!q on the right branch. Applying the rule (Iii) to H!q allows us to get q to the next approximation to the ideal L2*. Since there is now a contradiction between q and ¬q, we can no longer apply the rules and move across worlds. But the same does not go for L1*. The branch remains open since no contradiction was generated by the application of the rules. Therefore, as the tableau above shows, the initial set L is satisfiable

[99] Blackburn 1988, p.514

because it is not the case that each route to a set of final ideals results in a set of sentences one of whose members contains both a formula and its negation. Rather, only the second route leads to a set that contains a contradiction.

With these in tow, we can now have a look at Blackburn's new approach to conditionals and his account of the moral *modus ponens*. Conditionals are not any longer treated as expressing second order attitudes, that is, endorsement towards a combinations of attitudes. Now, "conditionals are treated as disjunctions and broken open for example by tableau methods".[100] The evaluative conditional 'if lying is bad, teaching your little brother to lie is bad' boils down to 'lying is not bad or teaching your little brother to lie is bad'. The conditional gets symbolized as B!p → B!q, and by the application of the tableau for conditionals it is turned into a disjunctive formula: ¬B!p v B!q. Therefore, someone who asserts 'lying is not bad or getting your little brother to lie is bad' is tied to the tree of (either avowing to lying yourself is not bad or to getting your little brother to lie is bad).[101]

Blackburn holds that his treatment of conditionals as disjunctions is not incompatible with his previous second-order account of evaluative conditionals. On his words:

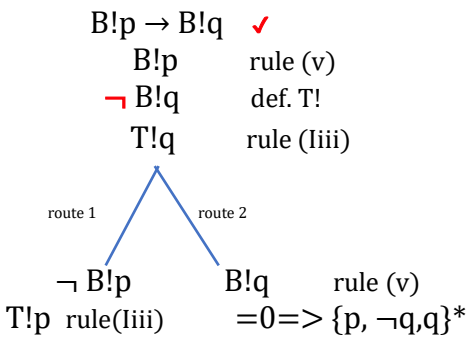
> In the present development conditionals are treated as disjunctions and broken open for example by tableau methods. Is there essential opposition here? Not necessarily. The issue is whether we can interpret endorsement (\A\=>\C\) – the original interpretation – as equivalent in strength to (~A v C) – the place conditionals now have in the logic.[102]

[100] Blackburn 1988, p.516
[101] Cf.Blackburn 1988, p.512
[102] Blackburn 1988, p.516

The place of conditionals in this logic rely on the metaphor of being tied to a tree. This treatment of conditionals makes sense given that p→q is equivalent to ¬p v q. Now let us turn our attention to Blackburn's account of the validity of the little brother argument. After translating it into the language of LA (where B!p: 'lying is bad', and B!q: 'teaching your little brother to lie is bad'), the argument can be represented by the following set of formulas $S = \{B!p, B!p \rightarrow B!q, B!q\}$.

- **LA validity =df**. An argument is valid iff (i) the set of formulas S that results from its translation into LA language is satisfiable or (ii) the set containing the premises and the negation of the conclusion is unsatisfiable.

In order to check for validity, we proceed in three steps. First, we list the premises and the conclusion. Second, we negate the conclusion and apply the standard tableau rules – which either add direct consequences to the tree or branch it – together with the five rules stated above. The rules (Ii) – (Iv) allow us to peel off the attitude operators one after another. Third, we check whether every branch ends up in a set with a formula and its negation. If it does, the initial set containing the premises and the negated conclusion is unsatisfiable. Therefore, the argument is valid. Let us apply of all this and construct a proof that the little brother argument is valid in LA.



$$=0=>\ \{p,\ \neg p,\ q\}^{*} \qquad \underset{X}{X}$$

A couple of explanatory remarks may come in handy here. The check symbol (✓) indicates that a standard tableau rule has been used and cannot be reiterated. By contrast, Blackburn's five rules stated above can be reiterated. For instance, in the third line of the tableau the rule (iii) is applied twice: the formula *q* is imported into both the set of final ideals at the end of route 1 and also the set of final ideals at the end of route 2.

The fact that all branches of the tree close shows that the set constituted by the premises and the negation of the conclusion of the little brother argument {B!p, B!p → B!q, ¬B!q} is unsatisfiable. For each route to a set of final ideals results in a set one of whose members contains a formula and it negation. At the end of route 1 we have a set containing {p, ¬p, q} and at the end of route 2 we have {p, ¬q,q}. Thusly, the little brother argument is proven to be valid in LA.

2.3.1 Zangwill's objections

In 'Moral Modus Ponens' (1992) Nick Zangwill formulates two objections against Blackburn's account of moral discourse and his solution to the Frege-Geach problem. The first objection is that Blackburn does not provide a way of constructing a uniform interpretation of 'lying is bad', that is, an account of its meaning that is the same whether it occurs on its own or as the antecedent of 'If lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad'. He claims that considering

conditionals as expressing second order attitudes seems to miss Geach's original point:

> even if we agree that conditionals do express attitudes, Blackburn's account of conditionals still looks incomplete. For it is not obvious how saying that the conditional as a whole expresses a second-order attitude connects with what he needs to explain.[103]

The third account explains the meaning of the conditional as a whole through the metaphorical idea that in uttering a conditional we tie ourselves to a tree of commitments, that explanation does not allow us to tell what is the meaning of the 'lying is bad' occurring as the if-clause of an evaluative conditional. On Zangwill's view, "Blackburn's account leaves untouched the original question of how embedded propositions can mean the same as they do when asserted".[104]

Zangwill's second objection is that even if it were granted that one of Blackburn's accounts of conditionals is correct, there would still remain other indirect occurrences of moral sentences to be explained. To get a grip on what is at issue let us consider the following occurrences of 'lying is wrong':

(z1) I wonder whether lying is wrong.

(z2) John thinks that lying is wrong.

(z3) I think that lying is wrong, but I do not know.

Since no attitude of disapproval towards lying is being expressed in the sentences (z1)- (z3), Zangwill claims that none of Blackburn's proposals provide us with a way of dealing with those embedded occurrences. As a consequence,

[103] Zangwill 1992, p.188
[104] Zangwill 1992, p.188

Zangwill points out that "similar problems about inference will trouble us in these other unasserted contexts".[105] His example is the following:

> Margo thinks that surfing is wrong.
> Everything that Margo thinks is right.
> Therefore, surfing is wrong.

Once again, for the reason that they do not allow the sentence 'surfing is wrong' to mean the same in both occurrences we cannot use Blackburn's definition to account for the validity of the above inference. If Zangwill's objections are successful, they point to a serious limitation of Blackburn's accounts – arguably, a limitation that anyone who wants to defend Blackburn's version of the quasi-realist view on moral discourse has to overcome.

2.3.2 Are Zangwill's objections conclusive?

One way of replying to Zangwill's second objection is to explain away what we are up to in uttering (z1) – (z3). This explanation run as follows. Someone asserting (z1) is wondering whether or not he should hold the attitude of disapproval towards lying. What someone who asserts (z2) is up to is that he is ascribing to John the attitude of disapproval towards lying. Finally, one who asserts (z3) is holding the attitude of disapproval towards lying, but also expressing uncertainty about whether he should hold that attitude.

One could think that it does not make sense to talk about the question whether or not a particular attitude *should* be hold. However, this thought runs into trouble because it conflicts with ordinary moral thought. As far as I can see,

[105] Zangwill 1992, p.191

wondering whether we should hold a given attitude is something that we do because we want to avoid clashing attitudes. This is particularly clear when it comes to discuss a given moral issue X that we have never thought carefully about. When this happens, we are often worried about whether holding an attitude *A* towards X will clash with some attitude that we already hold towards another issue Y. For instance, suppose that John approves of abortion because he thinks that a being has the right to life only if that being is conscious. Suppose also that John never thought about the consequences of his view to the infanticide issue. When faced with the objection that his view leads one to also approve the permissibility of infanticide, John must attentively consider whether or not it would be appropriate for him to hold the attitude of approval towards infanticide. And this consideration involves an appraisal of the question whether his first attitude towards abortion (H! abortion) will clash with his attitude towards infanticide.

Lastly, let me consider the objection that Blackburn's views cannot be used to account for the validity of the argument above. In order to skirt this objection, one advocate of Blackburn's view might take two steps. The first step is to recall the reason why Zangwill's second objection might fail. Once we get clear about the nature of Blackburn's proposal we realize that his explanation of validity must be different from the standard account. After all, Blackburn is not trying to determine in which circumstances a given proposition follows from others. Instead, he is trying to explain how non-cognitive attitudes can be subject to logical constraints, and also the reason why we feel rationally compelled to move from one attitude to another.

The second step is to show that it is indeed possible to explain the validity of that argument on the basis of Blackburn's second account. The task now is to explain what we are up to in putting forward its premises and conclusion. The first premise is then interpreted as expressing the belief that Margo disapproves of surfing. The second premise expresses approval towards the set of all Margo's attitudes, and the conclusion expresses disapproval towards surfing.

As I previously defined, under Blackburn's second account an argument containing evaluative terms is valid just in case holding the premises and refusing to hold the conclusion gives rise to a clash of attitudes. In this sense, the argument above is certainly valid. However, it is important to point out that the belief that Margo thinks that surfing is wrong is not in itself inconsistent with the attitude of disapproval towards surfing. That belief is to be seen as just an additional information we use to evaluate the coherence of someone who puts forward this combination of attitudes. So there would still be a clash of attitudes, but in virtue of the fact that holding the attitude expressed in the second premise is inconsistent with failing to hold the one expressed in the conclusion. Arguably, this response does not work because it suffers from the same problem pointed out by Wright, namely, that genuine validity is to do with a certain relation between propositions.

The sameness of meaning objection seems to pose a real threat to Blackburn's second account. Apparently, nothing in Blackburn's account allows us to respond to it. However, this does not imply that Zangwill's objection will be conclusive to any expressivist view on moral discourse. In chapter five, I present a version of expressivism that is not affected by the sameness of meaning objection.

Indeed, I hold that this objection – which is based on Geach's original formulation of the FGP – begs the question against expressivism.

2.3.3 Can there be a logic of attitudes? Hale's objections

In section 2.3, we have seen that Blackburn provides four rules that allow us to move progressively towards an ideal world, *i.e.,* a world in which all goals are realized. Perhaps the most powerful series of objections to Blackburn's account of moral evaluation was put forward by Bob Hale (1993). The first objection is that Blackburn's logic of attitudes gives rise to an implausible result, namely, the set {H!T!p, T!¬p} turns out be unsatisfiable. To illustrate this, consider the following diagram:

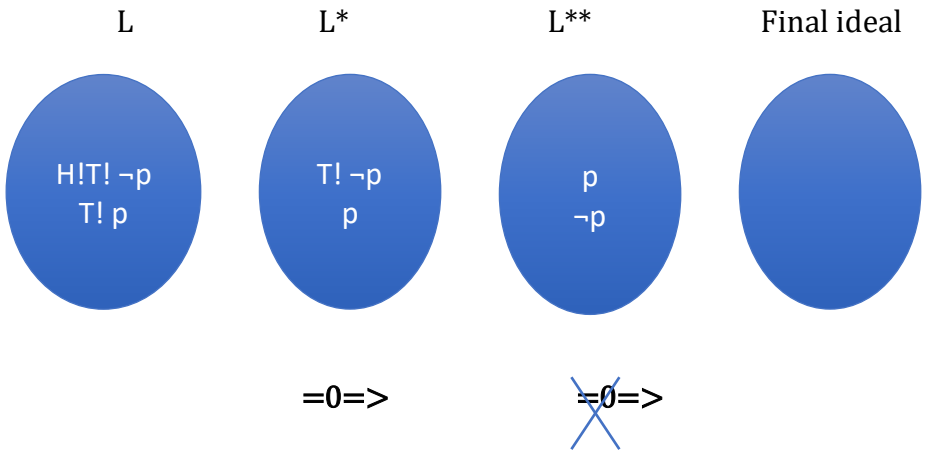


Figure 1 Moving across worlds (example 1)

By the application of the rules (Iii) and (Iiii) to the formulas in L we get to L* = {¬T!p, p}. Then, by the application of the rules (Iiii) and (Iiv) we get a set that contains a contradiction L**= {p, ¬p}. Thus, on Blackburn's logic of attitudes, the original set L= {H!T!¬p, T!p} is unsatisfiable; each route to the set of final ideals results in a set one of whose members contains a contradiction. To illustrate his point, Hale presents us with the following case: "might I not think it desirable that I

should not mind you not laughing at my feeble jokes (H!T!¬p), yet not mind if you do (T!p)".[106] According to Hale, this position does not appear to be inconsistent; however, LA implies that it is.

Hale claims that Blackburn could amend the rule (Iiv) in order to cope with the previous objection. The amended fourth rule is as follows:

(Iiv') For any L* from L, if H!A∈ L* then *A*∈ L*.

Now the set {H!T! ¬p, T! p} turns out to be consistent. The reason is that *p* in L* is no longer reimported into the world L**. However, on Hale's view, this move does not suffice to save LA from his objection. He thinks the problem is really about the philosophy behind Blackburn's rules.

As we have seen, Blackburn's LA is based on Hintikka's system of deontic logic. However, Hale points out that there is a disanalogy between Hintikka's notion of deontically perfect world and Blackburn's notion of an ideal world. Whereas Hintikka's world is reachable in one swoop, Blackburn's ideal world is reachable through a bunch of steps. On Hale's words: "there is, in Hintikka's system, no gradual approximation to deontic 'perfection'; rather, if reachable from *L* at all, it is reachable in a single step".[107]

But why is it a problem for Blackburn that in his system the ideal world cannot be achieved in a single step? According to Hale, the problem is that the notion of a gradual approximation to the ideal is tarred with the same brush as Blackburn's quasi-realist notion of truth. On Blackburn's (1984) view, an evaluative judgment E is true if, and only if, E is a member of the limiting set of

[106] Hale 1993, p.348
[107] Hale 1993,p.349

attitudes which results from talking all possible opportunities for improvement of attitude.[108] But Hale rejects this q-realist account of truth:

> One obvious difficulty with this conception concerns the – clearly very substantial – presupposition that there is a unique best set of attitudes on which any series of improvements on any imperfect set converges. I can see little to encourage belief that this presupposition is fulfilled; but even if the prospects for this more ambitious *q*-realist project are better than I think, it is important to observe that there neither is nor need be any involvement with it, insofar as our aim is simply to work out a logic of attitudes.[109]

Hale holds that Blackburn's notion of ideal faces a similar problem. For there is no reason to believe that there cannot be consistent sets of attitudes that are less than ideal. Intuitively, in order to get an ideal we might have to discard part of our attitudes and acquire completely new ones. In my view, this objection is compelling. In section 2.3.6, I will try to strengthen it even more.

The second objection points to a supposed difficulty to deal with mixed conditionals within Blackburn's theoretical framework. Hale asks us to consider the following example:

(7) If Bill stole the money, he should be punished.

How should one formalize it? On Blackburn's view, the formalization would go as follows: (a) p→ H!q. But Hale rejects this form on the basis of the idea that the attitude operator has subordinate scope. After all, since Blackburn is an expressivist, he needs to allow the attitude operator to have dominant scope. Otherwise, the conditional cannot be read in an expressive manner.

[108] Cf. Blackburn 1984, p.198
[109] Hale 1993, pp.349-350

Hale proposes the following formalization: (b) H! (p→q), which takes us back to the higher-order account defended in *Spreading the Word* (1984). Apparently, (b) is more plausible than (a) as a reading of (7). But adopting (b) gives rise to the following problem: (7), conjoined with (8) Bill stole the money, seems to logically imply (9) Bill should be punished. However, if (b) is adopted, (9) will not follow from (7) and (8) by *modus ponens*. The form of the argument will be rather this: (7) H! (p→q); (8) p; *ergo* (9) H!q, which is invalid in LA.

The last objection is about consistency. Hale proceeds in three steps. First, he contrasts the standard notion (SN), which is applicable to beliefs, with the normative notion (NN), applicable to what he calls 'normative attitudes'.

> **SN**: a set of beliefs is consistent when it is possible for all the beliefs in the set to be true.
>
> **NN**: a set of normative attitudes is consistent if there is a system of possible worlds (meeting certain constraints) which realizes it.[110]

Second, Hale holds that Blackburn is going to need an amalgamated notion (AN) of inconsistency in order to deal with mixed sets of sentences that are seemingly inconsistent. AN is the conjunction of SN and NN: "a mixed set of normative attitudes and beliefs is consistent iff there is a system of possible worlds which realizes all the normative attitudes and is such that every belief in the set is true at each world".[111]

Hale suggests both that we use an operator for beliefs in order to differentiate beliefs from the normative attitudes, and an extra rule for belief. So,

[110] Hale 1993, p.357
[111] Hale 1993, p.357

let us use BFp as a short for 'the belief that p'. The extra rule (ER) would be something along the following lines:

- **ER:** If BFA ∈ L, then a set L* containing A is to be added to the set of next approximations for L.

With this in tow, we can explain the third step, which is to point out that AN has two implausible consequences. The first is that "it becomes inconsistent to both believe that ¬p but hold that it ought to be otherwise (the tree for {¬p, H!p} is open, but its terminal set contains ¬p)".[112] The second is that "it becomes inconsistent to find it tolerable that *p* whilst believing that ¬*p*, and to believe that *p* but find that intolerable".[113] The diagrams below illustrate the two cases:

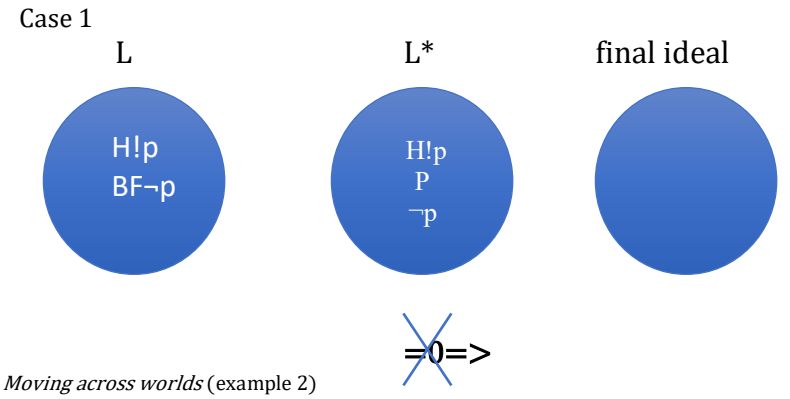


Figure 2 *Moving across worlds* (example 2)

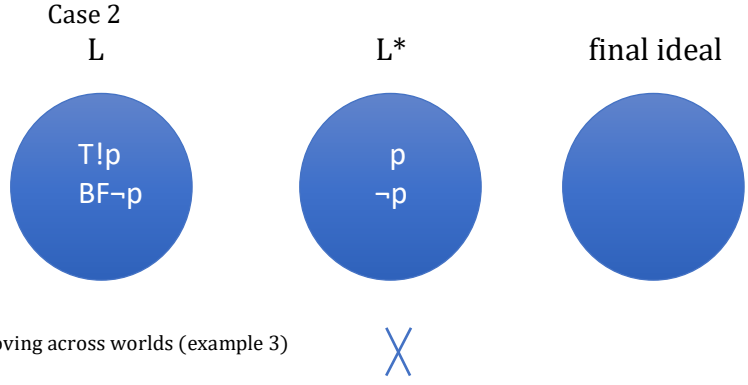


Figure 3 Moving across worlds (example 3)

[112] Hale 1993, p.357
[113] Hale 1993, p.357

Since it is implausible that the mixed sets {H!p, BF¬p} and {T!p, BF¬p} come out as inconsistent under AN, Hale concludes that AN must be rejected.

2.3.4 Are Hale's objections successful?

On Blackburn's behalf, it may be said that Hale's first objection seems to rely upon a colloquial notion of 'toleration'. However, as Blackburn uses the term, tolerating *p* is not really the same as not minding whether *p*. Rather, in LA tolerating *p* is allowing a world in which *p*. *Not minding* whether *p* seems to be closer to what is often called 'indifference'. If this is the case, 'not minding whether *p'* boils down to '*tolerating p* and *tolerating* not-p'. Not minding will be then analogous to the notion of optionality in deontic logic ('α is optional' means α is permissible and ¬α is permissible) and the notion of contingency in alethic modal logic ('α is contingent' means α is possible and ¬α is possible).

These considerations on the notion of tolerance do not help answering Hale's first objection. For the same objection holds if one interprets *toleration of p* as *not booing p*. In fact, if the above characterization of indifference is correct, Blackburn's system implies that it is inconsistent to be indifferent towards *p*. Since indifference will be equivalent to a conjunction of tolerations (T!p & T!¬p), the rule (Iiii) of LA allows us to reimport *p* and ¬p into L* and thereby give rise to contradiction.

Hale's second objection raises legitimate concerns about the formalization of mixed conditionals and the possible effects on their inferential role. Is it really the case that 'if Bill stole the money, he should be punished' cannot be read expressivistically unless the attitude operator takes large scope? In response,

Blackburn could say that p→H!q can be read expressivistically as long as we consider that one who asserts p→H!q expresses commitment towards the disjunction ¬p v H!q – the account of conditionals presented in 'Attitudes and Contents' (1988).

With respect to the third objection, the rule ER strikes me as implausible. After all, I don't want to be the case that *p* in an ideal world just because I believe that p is the case in the actual world. These two mental states are logically unrelated. So, one way of rejecting Hale's objection is to defend that attitudes and beliefs cannot enter together in logical relationships. This idea seems to be in line with the following intuitive example. I believe the proposition that there are corrupt politicians is true. However, I don't want this proposition to be the case in any ideal or next to the ideal world. As a matter of fact, I hold the opposite attitude: H! (there being no corrupt politicians).

2.3.5 Van Roojen's objections

Mark Van Roojen (1996) sees Blackburn's project as essentially an attempt to expand the notions of validity and inconsistency as to apply to logical relationships between attitudes.

Van Roojen puts forward one objection for each one of Blackburn's solutions. The first intends to pose a difficulty to Blackburn's former account. He presents an example of a valid argument that would be invalid were we to apply Blackburn's first account. Here is the argument:

1. If I don't disapprove of Y, then X is wrong.
2. If X is wrong, then Y is wrong.

3. I don't disapprove of Y.

4. Therefore, X is wrong.

5. Therefore, Y is wrong.

According to Van Roojen, in translating that argument in line with Blackburn's first account the result would be. As he writes:

1'. If I don't disapprove of Y, then B! (X).

2'. The disapproval of X involves the disapproval of Y.

3'. I don't disapprove of Y.

4'. B! (X).

5'. B! (Y).

Van Roojen claims that this translated argument is invalid because (3') and (5') are inconsistent with each other. Van Roojen says:

> If (3') and (5') are inconsistent, then the premises (1'), (2'), and (3') must be inconsistent, since they together imply both (3') and (5'). Blackburn has given us an explanation of the validity of the argument only if he has given us an argument that the premises are inconsistent. But the premises of the original argument seem consistent and support a valid argument.[114]

It might be answered that what goes wrong with Van Roojen's first objection is that (3) and (5) were already inconsistent before their translation into (3') and (5'). The kind of inconsistency involved here is arguably the same we find in the so-called "Moore's paradox" (the puzzlement involved in asserting a conjunction such as 'it is raining, but I do not believe it is'). One who sincerely utters the conjunction of (3) and (5), that is, 'I don't disapprove of Y, but Y is

[114] Van Roojen 1996, p.319

wrong' stumbles into the same sort of pragmatic incoherence as one who asserts a Moore paradoxical sentence.

The second difficulty that Van Roojen points out is that Blackburn's second proposal cannot be used to account for the validity of the following argument:

P1: It would be wrong for me to believe ill of my friends.
P2: My parents, father and mother alike, are my friends.
P3: It would be believing ill of a friend to believe that he would be duplicitous with another of one's friends.
P4: If the coded valentine is not a joke, my father is being unfaithful to my mother, and hence duplicitous.
P5: The coded valentine is not a joke.
C1: It is wrong for me to believe that my father is unfaithful to my mother. (From P1, P2 and P3)
C2: My father is unfaithful to my mother. (From P4 and P5)

Van Roojen claims that this argument is valid. His objection is that under Blackburn's higher-order account of attitudes this would not be the case because "the logic of higher-order attitudes that Blackburn uses to explain the validity of evaluative arguments must rule the two conclusions inconsistent with one another".[115] To see more clearly what Van Roojen has in mind let us translate the argument into Blackburn's language of higher-order attitudes:

P1': B! (My believing ill of my friends).
P2: My parents, father and mother alike, are my friends.
P3: It would be believing ill of a friend to believe that he would be duplicitous with another of one's friends.

[115] Van Roojen 19996, p.320

P4: If the coded valentine is not a joke, my father is being unfaithful to my mother, and hence duplicitous.

P5: The coded valentine is not a joke.

C1': B! (My believing that my father is unfaithful to my mother).

C2: My father is unfaithful to my mother. (From P4 and P5)

Excepting P1 and C1, all the rest remains the same. Van Roojen's complaint is that Blackburn's translation renders C1' and C2 inconsistent with each other, which is a problem because they were consistent in the original (untranslated) argument. In answering this objection two things may be said. The first is that it does not make sense to talk about the wrongness or rightness of having a certain belief because it presupposes that we have control over the beliefs that we perchance come to acquire. But it is false that we have this kind of control. This is particularly clear with respect to perceptual beliefs. When I see a red book in front of me I form the belief that there is a red book in front of me, and this is something involuntary that is beyond my control. What is under my control is whether or not I am going to look out for additional evidence that justify a certain belief. But these two situations are different and shall not be confused.

The second thing – as I have pointed out in the section 2.1.1 –is that beliefs and attitudes cannot be logically inconsistent because they are different types of mental states. Beliefs are cognitive mental states about the world which have a mind-to-world direction of fit. Desire-like attitudes are non-cognitive mental states and have a world-to-mind direction of fit. Indeed, C1' and C2 are not inconsistent even if we consider the Moorean sense. For one who asserts the conjunction 'my father is unfaithful to my mother, but it is wrong for me to believe that my father is

unfaithful to my mother' does not stumble into a pragmatic incoherence. Sometimes we can't help having a certain belief even though we recognize that having this belief is not a good thing for us.

In regards to Blackburn's last account, Van Roojen makes two points. The first point, in his own words, is as follows:

> the logic defined incorporates several substantive moral assumptions that, while necessary to explain the validity of standard inferences, generate contradictions where there are none. H!A and H! (not (A)) are unsatisfiable. Yet, it is obviously no contradictory to think that both the truth of a proposition and the truth of its negation are good.[116]

Van Roojen does not mention what exactly are those substantive moral assumptions. Of course, if we start with the set L = {H!A, H!¬A} and apply Blackburn's rules (stated in the section 3) we will not be able to get to a set of final ideals because the result – after adding the next approximation to the ideal – will be =0 => L* = {H!A, A, H!¬A, ¬A}, a set which contains a formula and its negation. So, Van Roojen is right in claiming that the set {H!A, H!¬A} is unsatisfiable. Indeed, it is unsatisfiable and Blackburn's logic allows us to show why. Nonetheless, what is not clear though is why Van Roojen thinks that there is a problem for Blackburn's account here. A possible explanation for that thought – which is supported by the last sentence of the quotation above – is that perhaps he confused the claim that the set {H!A, H!¬A}is unsatisfiable with the claim that the formulas H!A and H!¬A are contradictory, which is clearly not the case since a contradiction is a conjunction of a formula and its negation, and the negation of H!A is ¬H!A.

[116] Van Roojen 1996, p.321

2.3.6 Evaluating Blackburn's third solution

In addition to Hale's criticism of the notion of ideal world, I think there is another problem in Blackburn's logic of attitudes. This is to do with a fundamental assumption Blackburn makes in order to develop the semantics of LA. Blackburn considers that 'H!p' must be read as 'p is to be a goal, something to be realized in any ideal world and subsequent approximations to the ideal'.

However, this assumption does not chime well with the way we typically evaluate things. After all, there are many things that I hooray and don't want them to be realized in any ideal world. For instance, let us consider the following attitudes.

(h1) H! (people giving 5% of their income to charity).
(h2) H! (being a better philosopher than Aristotle).
(h3) H! (being richer than Bill Gates).

On Blackburn's view, h1 is the attitude expressed by the assertion of 'giving to charity is good'. What we are up to in asserting this sentence is that we want to bring about a world in which people give 5% of their income to charity. But hooraying the action of giving to charity is not equivalent to wanting to bring about an ideal world in which people give to charity. One might say that in an ideal world people would not have to give to charity in the first place; in an ideal world everyone would have their own means to survive, there would be no unemployment etc. Therefore, *hooraying* p cannot plausibly be read as 'p is to be realized in any perfect world'.

Suppose I also endorse the attitudes h2 and h3. I don't think this endorsement commits me to the idea that a world in which I'm not richer than Bill Gates or I'm not a better philosopher than Aristotle is less than ideal in virtue of these facts. Thus, hooraying *p* and considering *p* as a goal are things that can come apart. I can coherently hooray many things without considering them as goals to be realized in any perfect world. It looks as though, in order to consider *p* as a goal (assuming that I *hooray p*), I need to believe that *p* is achievable in the first place. Perhaps there is no problem in *hooraying* non-achievable things. The problem (a rationality problem, maybe?) is to consider them as goals.

2.4 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I have discussed some objections to Blackburn's solutions to the Frege-Geach challenge. Furthermore, I showed Wright and Schueler presented a case for the idea that genuine validity and inconsistency require bearers of truth-value in order to work. However, both the involvement and the higher-order accounts failed to establish that one who endorses the premises and rejects the conclusion of the moral *modus ponens* commits a logical mistake.

The third account seemed to be more promising in that regard. Apparently, Blackburn's LA provides a way of symbolizing and testing the validity of arguments constituted by moral sentences (which are read as expressive of attitudes). The semantics of LA hinges on the assumption that the ideal world, *viz.,* the world in which all of our goals are realized, is analogous to Hintikka's notion of a deontically perfect world. Nonetheless, we have seen that Hale provides reasons to call this assumption into question. In addition, as I have flagged up in the previous section,

the idea that *approving p* boils down to *wanting to be the case that p in an ideal world* is not plausible. The cases (h1)-(h3) show that these are in fact two different attitudes and, as such, they can come apart. Therefore**, i**f these objections are compelling, there are grounds to reject Blackburn's logic of attitudes.

Blackburn's position seemed promising at first blush, but the objections faced by it really put a thorn in his side. Be that as it may, it is a matter of controversy whether or not attitudes can stand in logical relations. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, one does not need to solve that issue in order to defend an expressivist view in line with Blackburn's general project. In chapter five, I present a view that is immune to the objections discussed in this chapter and provide an account of the validity of the LBA (interpreted in an expressivist way) without assuming that attitudes can be the *relata* of logical relations.

3 Chapter Three – Gibbard's solutions to the Frege-Geach problem

In this chapter I present and discuss Gibbard's solution to the Frege-Geach problem, which is based on his norm-expressivistic theory of moral discourse. Three objections – Van Roojen (1996), Blackburn (1992), Sinnot-Armstorng (1993) – are considered and critically examined. The final section presents my own objections against Gibbard's view.

3.1 Norm-expressivism: the first solution to the Frege-Geach problem

In *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (1990), the American philosopher Allan Gibbard develops a metaethical view called 'norm-expressivism'.[117] Roughly put, norm-expressivism is the view according to which moral judgments express the speaker's acceptance of a system of norms. In order to spell out Gibbard's view, I need to cast light on its central notions. Let me begin with Gibbard's conception of morality and its tie to rationality.

Gibbard contends that there are two main distinct conceptions of morality throughout the history of philosophy. The first is a broad conception, which ties morality to rationality in a strong way. According to this view, an action cannot be immoral without also being irrational: "on this conception, it makes no sense to ask 'Is it always rational to do what is morally right?' for 'the morally right' simply means the *rational*".[118] The second, the one Gibbard takes over, is a narrow conception of morality. It says that "moral considerations are just some of the

[117] In 'Thinking How to Live' (2003), Gibbard gives basically the same account of moral discourse in a different idiom.
[118] Gibbard 1990, p.41

considerations that bear on what it makes sense to do".[119]

Gibbard considers that moral judgments are part of a more general class: judgments of rationality.[120] His motivation to hold this view is twofold. Firstly, he relies on the intuition that the old and certainly one of the most important philosophical questions (the question 'How we ought to live?' pursued by Socrates) is, at bottom, a question about rationality. After all, defending that one way of living is better than other involves the appeal to reason: "to ponder how to live, to reason about how to live, is in effect to ask what kind of life it is *rational* to live".[121]

Secondly, the connection between morality and rationality has been recognized as important by several moral philosophers. In Gibbard's words: "the tie of morals to reason supports the whole of moral theory – perhaps. In any case, moral theories abound that say what the tie is or what it is not".[122] According to Gibbard, this is shown by the fact that philosophers like Hume, Kant, Mill, Sidgwick, Foot, Gauthier, Nagel and so on have written about that connection (or the lack of it).[123]

In his framework, Gibbard assumes Mill's idea that in judging a given act *A* as wrong one is claiming that there ought to be a sanction against *A*. This idea is connected to Mill's utilitarianism insofar as the word 'ought' is interpreted in accordance with the Principle of Utility – the principle according to which the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on whether the action produces

[119] Gibbard 1990, p.41
[120] More specifically, Gibbard holds that moral judgments are judgments about the rationality of certain feelings: "judgments of when guilt and resentment are apt" (Gibbard 1990:6)
[121] Gibbard 1990, p.4
[122] Gibbard 1990, p.5
[123] Cf. Gibbard 1990, p.5

happiness or pain. But Gibbard does not simply take over this idea as it is. Rather, he proposes the following modification: "When Mill says there 'ought' to be a sanction, let us read him as saying that a sanction is rational – or, perhaps, rationally required".[124] As a result, Gibbard defines 'morally wrong' as follows: "what a person does is morally wrong if and only if it is rational for him to feel guilty for having done it, and for others to be angry at him for having done it". [125]

In order to properly grasp the above definition one has to know what Gibbard means by 'rational'. However, before getting to this point, Gibbard calls our attention to the fact that there are two different senses in which one can understand the term 'wrong': one objective and the other subjective.[126] Gibbard then characterizes these two senses as follows**:**

- An act is wrong in the objective sense if it is wrong in light of all the facts, knowable and unknowable.
- An act is wrong in the subjective sense if it is wrong in light of the degrees of plausibility (or "subjective probabilities") the agent has reason to ascribe to relevant propositions.[127]

To show how the above distinction can be applied to a real case, Gibbard provides an example. He asks us to imagine that, as a result of the report of a mechanical inspection, John has good reasons to believe that his car's brakes are in perfect conditions. But in driving a friend to a certain point, the brakes fail and John runs over a pedestrian who ends up dead. One could then ask: Was the act of

[124] Gibbard 1990, p.41
[125] Gibbard 1990, p.42
[126] Gibbard 1990, p.42
[127] Cf.Gibbard 1990, p.42

driving the car wrong? For Gibbard, since John had feasible reasons to believe that his brakes were fine, driving the car was wrong solely in the objective sense, that is, in virtue of the facts unknown by the mechanic. In the subjective sense, the act was not morally wrong.

Gibbard then favors the subjective conception of 'wrong' because it meshes nicely with his analysis of what it is for act to be morally wrong. In fact, he defends the view that the objective sense of 'wrong' is fruitless. His reason for preferring the subjective rather than the objective sense is as follows. A theory that takes over the subjective sense can provide us with moral guidance, even in the situation in which we do not have all the relevant information to think over a given course of action. On Gibbard's words: "even when we know we are ignorant of the relevant facts, we can use the theory, together with what we think we do know, to decide what acts to avoid on moral grounds".[128] In this respect, he claims, a theory on the objective sense cannot offer a proper guidance. If we are ignorant of the relevant facts, we get simply stuck without knowing what to do.

Basically, Gibbard's point is that the subjective sense of 'wrong' is more suitable for moral theorizing. After all, we never – or at least rarely – find ourselves in the possession of all the relevant information we need in order to properly assess whether we ought to choose a certain a course of action. In order to flag this up**,** he offers an example of a case in which the objective sense would be useful:

> If I could place myself under the guidance of a reliable soothsayer, I would want him to tell me which of the things I might do is right in the objective rather than the subjective sense – but reliable soothsayers are hard to

[128] Gibbard 1990, p.43

find.[129]

This ironic example aims to support the view that the objective sense of 'wrong' would be useful only in the situation in which we would have all the relevant information.[130] In that unlikely situation, however, both the subjective and the objective senses of 'wrong' would be in accord with each other. The reason is that, in order to figure out what is wrong in the objective sense, all the agent would have to do is to determine what is wrong in the subjective sense.[131]

One might think that Gibbard's reason for preferring the subjective sense of 'wrong' misses the mark. For in everyday life we seem to operate with both the subjective and the objective sense of 'wrong'. Let us consider the driver's example once more. Suppose that after the fatal accident, we find out that the mechanic's car made a mistake. On this scenario, even if we agreed that the driver's action was not wrong in the subjective sense, we would still use the objective sense in order to evaluate it. Many of us would think that although the driver would not be to blame, his action would still be objectively wrong.

This slightly modified example suggests that the subjective sense seems to be tied to blame, whereas the objective sense is related to the future evaluation of current actions – namely, those for which we later find out new information, something that we lacked at the time we acted. But the example does not show, Gibbard could reply, that the subjective sense of 'wrong' is not more useful than the

[129] Gibbard 1990, p.43
[130] One could object that we do not need a reliable soothsayer, but only someone who knows more than us about a given situation. However, since Gibbard requires the possession of all the relevant information in order to assess a certain course of action, he would not accept this objection.
[131] Cf.Gibbard 1990, p.43

objective. After all, Gibbard did not say that the objective sense is irrelevant. He just held that the subjective sense is more useful because we rarely have access to all the relevant facts about a given situation. Perhaps Gibbard would agree with the idea that, in the end of the day, what matters is whether an action is wrong in the objective sense. But given our epistemic limitation, it is more plausible to operate with the subjective sense.

Having justified his endorsement of the subjective sense of 'wrong', Gibbard reformulates his definition of what makes an act wrong. The new definition hinges on a certain view of what constitutes a proper standard for evaluating actions.

> An act is *wrong* if and only if it violates standards for ruling out actions, such that if an agent in a normal frame of mind violated those standards because he was not substantially motivated to conform them, he would be to blame. To say that he would be to blame is to say that it would be rational for him to feel guilty and for others to resent him.[132]

It is not totally clear, however, how exactly the subjective sense relates to the standard employed by Gibbard. But here is a suggestion on how to interpret this relation. Once Gibbard endorses the subjective sense of 'wrong', the standard under which an agent's action will be evaluated is one that lies in what alternatives the agent can rule out based on the information he has. The objective sense could not play that role because it requires knowledge of all the relevant facts.

As you can see, the notion of rationality plays a central role in the definition of what it is for an act to be wrong. So, a natural question to ask is: What does Gibbard mean by 'rational'? In lieu of defining this notion in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, Gibbard psychologizes this question and only provides us

[132] Gibbard 1990, p.45

with an explanation of what it is for a person *to think* that something is rational. [133] And that's where his story about norms is brought up, as we can see in the following passage:

> My hypothesis is that to think something rational is to accept norms that permit it [...] it is not directly a hypothesis about what it is for something to be rational at all. It is a hypothesis about what it is to *think* or *believe* something rational, to regard it as rational, to *consider* it rational. An observer *believes* an action, belief, or attitude *A* of mine to be rational if and only if he accepts norms that permit *A* for my circumstances.[134]

This passage is important because it clearly shows that the norm-expressivist's claim put forward by Gibbard, the one according to which to judge X as rational is to accept norms that permit X, is not the conclusion of a cogent argument. Rather, it is put forward as a working hypothesis, one that serves as a basis for the development of Gibbard's solution to the Frege-Geach challenge. For now, I will put aside the question whether Gibbard's hypothesis is plausible. I will carry on with the exposition of Gibbard's theory, and leave the critical discussion of this hypothesis to the section 3.2.5.

It must be borne in mind that Gibbard's main concern about norms is not actually what a norm really is, but the psychological question of what it is to accept a norm, *i.e.,* "what it is for something to be permitted or required by the norms a person accepts".[135] Gibbard's emphasis on this psychological question is also in keeping with the subjective sense of 'right' and 'wrong' that he adopts in his theory.

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[133] Here is the passage where Gibbard makes this proposal: "What does it mean to call something 'rational'? One way of tackling such a question it to psychologize it. What, we may ask, is the psychological state of *regarding* something as rational, of *taking* it to be rational, of *believing* it rational?" (Gibbard 1990: 45-46)
[134] Gibbard 1990, pp.46-47
[135] Gibbard 1990, p.46

Gibbard holds that 'rational' can be intelligibly applied to actions, beliefs and feelings. Nonetheless, he does not hold that this predicate ascribes the mind independent property of being rational when applied to these things. Instead, Gibbard is a norm-expressivist about rationality. The key idea is that in asserting that a given action, belief or feeling is rational one expresses the state of mind of accepting a system of norms that permits the action, belief or feeling at issue.[136] And, on his perspective, the reason why an expressivist account of 'rational' is preferable to a descriptive account is that the latter "misses the chief point of calling something 'rational': the endorsement the term connotes".[137]

Gibbard endorses the view that moral judgments fall within the category of judgments of rationality. Every judgment about what is right/wrong is also a judgment about what is rational/irrational. Thus, since he suggests that in order to understand the meaning of 'rational' we have to look at what it is to think that something is rational, and given that 'rational' plays a central role in the definition of what is morally wrong, the same norm-expressivist analysis must be applied to 'wrong': "to think an act is wrong is to accept norms for guilt and resentment that, *prima facie*, would sanction guilt and resentment if the act were performed".[138]

Let us take stock and remind ourselves of the three main points of Gibbard's theory presented so far. The first is his narrow conception of morality and its tie to rationality. The second is Gibbard's endorsement of the subjective sense of 'wrong'.

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[136] Gibbard's main example of how this works is the following: "Suppose Caesar tells Cleopatra, 'It makes best sense to divide the command of your army'. He is thereby expressing a state of mind, his judgment that it makes best sense for Cleopatra to divide the command of her army. For him to make this judgment is for him to accept a system of norms that all told, as applied to Cleopatra's circumstances, tells her to divide the command of her army" (Gibbard, 1990: 85).
[137] Gibbard 1990, p.10
[138] Gibbard 1990, p.47

And the third is his hypothesis that to think that X is rational is to accept norms that permit X. All these points set the stage for what comes next.

Gibbard makes two important suggestions about what is involved in our acceptance of systems of norms. The first is that "accepting a norm is a significant kind of psychological state".[139] However, this psychological state should be distinguished from the situation in which we act on the grip of a norm without accepting it. The second is that we should understand our propensity to accept norms as something natural, *i.e.*, as a result of a biological adaptation whose function is to coordinate our behaviour, plans, expectations etc.[140]

With respect to the second point above, it is hard to see the relevance of the idea that our propensity to accept norms is natural. After all, the biological origin of a given propensity does not give it any special moral status. For instance, disposition to display a violent behaviour might be a propensity with a biological basis. However, even if it is, nothing about its moral status can be inferred from this.

Let us turn our attention to Gibbard's notion of *system of norms* and, thereafter, the way he deals with the Frege-Geach challenge. That notion is explained in the following passage:

> We can characterize any system *N* of norms by a family of basic predicates 'N-forbidden', 'N-optional', and 'N-required'. Here 'N-forbidden' simply means 'forbidden by a system of norms *N*', and likewise for its siblings. Other predicates can be constructed from these basic ones; in particular '*N*-permitted' will mean 'either *N*-optional or *N*-required. These predicates are descriptive rather than normative: whether a thing, say, is *N*-permitted will be

[139] Gibbard 1990, p.55

[140] Gibbard also suggests that "selection pressures shaped our propensities both to abide by norms and to violate them, and these pressures must have been diverse" (Gibbard 1990, p.76).

a matter of fact.[141]

In order to cope with the Frege-Geach challenge Gibbard develops a normative nogic whose semantics is an extended version of the Possible Worlds Semantics. The main difference is that instead of talking about a proposition being true or false in a given possible world, Gibbard talks about a normative sentence holding or not in a given *factual-normative* world, which is represented by the ordered pair $<w, n>$ where w is a possible world and n is a system of norms. As Gibbard adds: "Together, w and n entail a normative judgment for every occasion […] Any particular normative judgment *holds* or not, as a matter of logic, in the factual-normative world $<w, n>$".[142]

Once we already have different systems of norms in the actual world – and inasmuch as we can create many other systems – one could ask why Gibbard's notion of factual-normative world includes the reference to a given possible world w. The reason seems to be that we want to consider not only the systems of norms we actually have, but also the systems of norms we might have had if the way things actually are had been different. For instance, if tomatoes could feel pain, then it would be an important moral question whether we should have a system of norms in which cutting tomatoes is forbidden. For it is also part of our moral reasoning to consider alternative scenarios that would give rise to different systems of norms, systems that we do not consider given the way things actually are. That is the role of w in $<w,n>$: it allows us to consider alternative systems of

[141] Gibbard 1990, p.87
[142] Gibbard 1990, p.95

norms that we would otherwise not consider if we were to take into account just the way things actually are, and ignored other non-actual ways in which things might have been.

The question now is how we can use Gibbard's account to determine whether a normative sentence holds in a given factual-normative world <w,n>. According to Gibbard**,** each normative predicate we use to make moral judgments possesses a descriptive counterpart in the realm of N-predicates aforementioned. Thus, in order to determine whether a normative sentence *S* holds or not in a given factual-normative world, Gibbard tells us to apply the following schema: "replace each normative predicate in *S* with its *n*-corresponding descriptive predicate. That yields a purely descriptive statement *Sn*. Then the normative statement *S* holds in <*w*,*n*> if and only if *Sn* holds in *w*".[143] This schema allows Gibbard to formally represent the content of normative sentences, and provides the basis to talk about their meaning.

Given a normative statement *S*, we can represent its content "by the set of all factual-normative worlds <w, n> for which it holds".[144] This is the set of maximally opinionated ways in which the agent might accept *S*, which Gibbard calls 'O*s*'. For instance, O*s* might be the set {<w,n>,<w,n1>,<w,n2>}. So, how to explain the meaning of *S*? For Gibbard, the meaning of *S* is explained through the idea that in accepting *S* the agent rules out every possibility outside the set O*s*, which might be, *e.g.,* the set {<w3, n3>,<w4, n4>,<w5, n5>}).

Gibbard does not explain what exactly he means by 'maximally opinionated

[143] Gibbard 1990, p.96
[144] Gibbard 1990, p.96

way'. So, how are we to understand this? I think that one suggestion might be by making an analogy with the notion of a maximally consistent set of propositions when characterizing the notion of possible world. It says that a possible world is a set of maximally consistent propositions iff for every proposition *p*, either *p* is true or ¬*p* is true in that possible world. In applying this to Gibbard's notion we might say that a maximally opinionated way *O* in which the agent might accept a given normative statement *S* is a set of factual-normative worlds in which the agent either accepts *S* or does not accept *S* in those factual-normative world. Any maximal opinionated way is incompatible with any other maximal opinionated way. This is so because two maximal opinionated ways are distinct iff there is a normative statement S such that the agent accepts S in one of them but not in the other. However, there cannot be an opinionated way which includes both of these maximal opinionated ways, because it would have to be one in which the agent both accept S and not accept S.

Gibbard explains the meaning of normative statements (both simple and complex) as follows: "A normative statement rules out various combinations of factual possibilities with normative principles, and its meaning, we now say, lies in the set of combinations it rules out".[145] This idea of meaning as 'ruling out' is still a bit unclear without an illustration. So, in order to clarify it, let us consider Gibbard's example. He asks us to imagine that Cleopatra asserts that *S:* "Antony finds himself outnumbered or it makes sense for him to give battle".[146] For Gibbard, the meaning of *S* is what it rules out, namely, various combinations of descriptions with norms.

[145] Gibbard 1990, p.99
[146] Gibbard treats "X is rational" and "X makes sense" as equivalent (Cf. Gibbard 1990, p.38).

For instance, it rules out the combination of the description *P*: "Antony finds he slightly outnumbers the enemy" with the norm *N*: "Never give battle unless you find you vastly outnumbers the enemy". Thus, in accepting *S*, Cleopatra is in a state of mind that consists in "ruling out every combination of descriptions with normative principles that is inconsistent with what she is saying".[147]

Following this line of reasoning, we can explain the meaning of 'lying is wrong' by telling what kind of mental state the agent who accepts it is in.[148] In accepting that lying in wrong the agent is in a state of mind that consists in ruling out factual-normative worlds in which lying is n-permitted. Concerning the conditional 'if lying is wrong, getting little brother to lie is wrong', it can be handled by disjunction. We should then ask for the meaning of 'lying is not wrong or getting little brother to lie is wrong'? On Gibbard's account, the explanation would run as follows. In accepting that lying is not wrong or getting little brother to lie is wrong the agent is in a state of mind that rules out factual normative worlds in which lying is not n-forbidden or getting little brother to lie is n-forbidden.

Now we can carry on and see how to apply the above schema to 'lying is wrong'. To determine whether or not it holds in a given factual-normative world we need to replace the predicate "wrong" for its *n*-corresponding predicate "*N*-forbidden". Then we get "Lying is N-forbidden". Gibbard's schema says that "Lying is wrong" holds in $<w,n>$ if, and only if, "Lying is N-forbidden" holds in *w*, *i.e.,* if

[147] Gibbard 1990, p.98

[148] It is arguable that there is a problem for Gibbard's view here. Gibbard's three way distinction between forbidden, required and permitted do not correspond to the two way distinction between *right* and *wrong*. This may be problematic because, on Gibbard's view, to assert 'x is right becomes ambiguous: it may be tantamount to either 'x is permitted' or 'x is required', two phrases that are clearly not the birds of a feather.

there is a norm in *n* that forbids lying.

The above schema allows Gibbard to deal with complex normative sentences and, therefore, provide a solution to the Frege-Geach problem. Again, we can paraphrase the conditional premise of the little brother argument as the equivalent disjunction 'lying is not wrong or getting little brother to lie is wrong'. In order to apply Gibbard's schema, we need to replace its moral predicates by its n-corresponding descriptive counterparts. Then we get 'lying is not n-forbidden or getting little brother to lie is N-forbidden'. Thus, 'lying is not wrong or getting little brother to lie is wrong' holds in <w, n> if, and only if, 'lying is not n-forbidden or getting little brother to lie is n-forbidden' holds in w.

Gibbard claims that this way of representing the content of normative sentences also plays a central role in the explanation of validity: "Given the representation, we can treat entailment in the usual way: content *P* entails content *Q* if and only if *Q* holds in all the factual-normative worlds in which *P* holds".[149]

In order to see how this works, let us consider the little brother argument once more (lying is wrong; if lying is wrong, getting your little brother to lie is wrong; getting little brother to lie is wrong). First, we need to apply Gibbard's schema and translate all the normative sentences that constitute the argument into their descriptive counterpart.

Lying is *N*-forbidden.

If lying is *N*-forbidden, then getting your little brother to lie is *N*-forbidden.

Ergo, getting your little brother to lie is *N*-forbidden.

[149] Gibbard 1990, p.101

Now we have a *modus ponens* with descriptive components. Following Gibbard's line of thought, we can define validity along these lines: an argument with normative components is valid if, and only if, every factual-normative world in which the premises hold, the conclusion also holds. And this is clearly the case in the argument above. For it is impossible for both P1 and P2 to hold in a given factual-normative world $<w,n>$, and for C not to hold in it. As one might expect, the validity of the former argument with normative components is then guaranteed by the validity of its descriptive counterpart.[150]

3.2 Reactions against Norm-Expressivism

3.2.1 Van Roojen's objection

Van Roojen (1996) puts forward a particular objection against Gibbard's account, and a general objection designed to refute the very expressivist project. Since Gibbard considers that moral judgments are a species of judgments of rationality, Van Roojen turns his attention to this latter class of judgments. He then proceeds in three steps. Firstly, he points out that there is another way (apart from making judgments of rationality) of expressing acceptance of norms, and that "if Gibbard's analysis is correct, any such expression should function logically just as judgments of rationality do".[151] Secondly, Van Roojen tries to show that it is not the case that expression of norms function in the same way as judgments of rationality. Finally, he argues that assuming Gibbard's account leads us to mistakenly

[150] In *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (2010), Schroeder formulates and discusses what he calls a "Gibbardish semantics" for moral judgments, a semantics inspired on Gibbard's theory, but with some features that deviate from the original one that I have presented here.
[151] Van Roojen 1996, p.325

categorize certain supposedly consistent sentences as being inconsistent with each other. And this gives rise to a further problem because it also compels us to categorize as 'invalid' an intuitively valid argument.

Concerning the first step, Van Roojen asks us to think over the following sentence:

> (I) I hereby express acceptance of norms requiring that I remain silent, as well as some higher-order norm requiring acceptance of those norms, and furthermore prescribe that others do likewise.[152]

According to Van Roojen, Gibbard's account implies that one who asserts (I) expresses acceptance of a system of norms in the same way as one who asserts (II) 'remaining silent is rational'. In addition, an implausible consequence of Gibbard's account is that (I), apart from its expressive content, also has a descriptive content. The expressive content, as one can imagine, is the attitude of acceptance of the norm requiring one to remain silent. The descriptive content, according to Van Roojen, is the "perfectly truth-assessable propositional content of claiming that it expresses those commitments".[153]

Van Roojen claims that this is an odd result. For it seems that expressive and descriptive contents are mutually exclusive. Thus, it is not plausible that Norm-expressivism implies that (I) has the same content as:

(II) Remaining silent is rational

which is obviously inconsistent with

[152] cf. Van Roojen 1996, p.325
[153] Van Roojen 1996, p.325

(III) Remaining silent is not rational.

Van Roojen's objection can then be put as follows. If it is true that (II) and (III) are inconsistent and that (II) has the same content as (I) – as Gibbard's account implies –, then it also follows that (I) and (III) are logically inconsistent. But it is an implausible result of Gibbard's account that (I) and (III) should be classed as logically inconsistent. To show why this is unreasonable Van Roojen invites us to consider the following argument:

> "(1) If I express acceptance of norms requiring that I remain silent, as well as some norm requiring acceptance of those norms, and furthermore prescribe that others do likewise, it will be due to a phobia of public speaking (Premise)
> (2) Acting on norms of which one expresses acceptance due to phobia is a manifestation of irrationality (Premise)
> (3) If an action is a manifestation of irrationality, it is not rational to do it.
> (4) Remaining silent would be acting on norms requiring that I remain silent.
> (5) I hereby express acceptance of norms requiring that I remain silent, as well as some higher-order norm requiring acceptance of those norms, and furthermore prescribe that others do likewise. (Premise)
> (6) Acting on the norms accepted in 5 would be acting on norms I express acceptance of due to phobia. (From 1 and 5).
> (7) Acting on the norms accepted in 5 would be a manifestation of irrationality. (From 2 to 6).
> (8) Remaining silent would be a manifestation of irrationality. (From 7 and 4).
> (9) Remaining silent is not rational. (From 3 and 8)".[154]

The above argument seems to be perfectly valid. Nonetheless, assuming Norm-Expressivism leads us to class it as invalid because the sentence (I) – now the premise (5) – will be inconsistent with (III), the argument's conclusion (9). Nevertheless, on Van Roojen's perspective, it is more plausible to accept that the above argument is valid than that Gibbard's account is correct. Therefore, it is not

[154] Van Roojen 1996, pp.326-327

the case that (I) and (II) have the same content; in other words, it is not the case that Norm-Expressivism is the right account of rationality judgments.

Let me now present Van Roojen's general objection. As we just saw, Van Roojen holds that Norm-Expressivism implies that (5) and (9) are logically inconsistent, when, intuitively speaking, they are pragmatically inconsistent (of course, if Gibbard's account of rationality judgments is correct). Van Roojen thinks that this is a problem because it makes us confuse the distinction between logical and pragmatic inconsistency. However, he argues that this problem does not arise only for Gibbard's account of rationality judgments. It is something related to an essential characteristic of the very expressivist project, so that it will arise for any of expressivist account of moral discourse that takes up this project. Here is the passage where Van Roojen explains what is that characteristic :

> Any expressivist account that wishes to explain how evaluative judgments can be inconsistent with other judgments must extend the notion of inconsistency beyond an application to judgments whose contents are truth-evaluable. So, the noncognitivist's conception of "inconsistency" will be less stringent than our ordinary one, in that it will allow inconsistency where the ordinary account (applying only to truth-evaluable judgments) does not.[155]

And afterwards, he states his conclusion:

> I conclude that any account that enriches the notion of logical inconsistency so as to allow such inconsistency between non-truth-evaluable contents will be subject to similar objections (p.330).

Thus, according to Van Roojen, not only Gibbard's expressivist account of moral judgments faces the above objection, but the expressivist project as a whole runs into trouble because it is not able to preserve the "commonsense distinction

[155] Van Roojen 1996, pp.329-330

between logical consistency and mere pragmatic inconsistency or incoherence".[156] The trouble, Van Roojen says, is that this is a distinction we are able to make even in the non-evaluative domain, as one can see if he considers Moore's paradox.

The so called 'Moore's paradox' consists in the absurdity of asserting sentences of the form 'P, but I do not believe that P'. It is often noted that it does not involve a logical inconsistency in the standard sense. After all, according to the standard notion, a set of sentences is inconsistent if, and only if, its members cannot all be true at once. But it certainly may occur that P is true, and that 'I do not believe that P' is also true.

The paradoxical feature of Moore's paradox cannot be accounted for by using the standard notion of inconsistency. For that feature relies on a tension between what is said and what is expressed. Let us consider Moore's example. Suppose that *S* asserts 'It is raining, but I don't believe it'. The first conjunct says something about the weather and, at the same time, expresses the speaker's belief about the weather. The second conjunct says something about the speaker's belief about the weather, and expresses the lack of belief on the truth of the proposition that it is raining. Once it is assumed that a sincere utterance of P expresses the belief that P, what the first conjunct expresses is at odds with what the second conjunct says. Therefore, it is pragmatically inconsistent to assert that sentence. With this example, Van Roojen intends to show that that even in the descriptive domain we are able to distinguish between pragmatic and logical inconsistency (something that he thinks the expressivist is unable to do).

[156] Van Roojen 1996, p.332

3.2.2 Assessing van Roojen's objection

In this section, I will assess and respond both Van Roojen's particular and general objections presented in the last section. Before this, I would like to make clear that I do not agree with Gibbard's general view. I just think it fails for reasons other than those presented by Van Roojen. These reasons will be presented in the section 3.2.5 of the current chapter.

So, let us start with his objection to Gibbard's account of rationality judgments. Basically, as has been stated earlier, Van Roojen claims that assuming Norm-Expressivism leads one to class as 'inconsistent' some sentences that are consistent and, consequently, to class as 'invalid' an argument that is intuitively valid.[157] Let us remind the sentences used by Van Roojen:

> (I) I hereby express acceptance of norms requiring that I remain silent, as well as some higher-order norm requiring acceptance of those norms, and furthermore prescribe that others do likewise.
> (II) Remaining silent is rational.
> (III) Remaining silent is not rational.

[157] As we have seen in the Chapter 2, Schueler (1988) put forward a similar objection against Blackburn's account of moral judgments developed in *Spreading the Word* (1984). In this book, Blackburn explained the inconsistency involved in asserting conflicting moral judgments (such as "X is good" and "X is not good") in terms of the notion of clash of attitudes. For Blackburn, a clash of attitudes leads to what he calls "a fractured sensibility", that is, "a sensibility that cannot fulfil the practical purposes for which we evaluate things" (Blackburn 1984:195). According to Schueler, this account of inconsistency is not successful because a clash of attitudes is at most a moral mistake, not a logical one. Blackburn (1988) replied to this by saying that having a clash of attitudes can involve a mistake inasmuch as we consider that our attitudes are related to our goals. He then developed a logic of attitudes in order to show that even though moral sentences express attitudes, these attitudes are also subject to logical constraints. Given this – as one can see in Blackburn 1988:502-503, where he argues against what he calls "the restrictive view of validity"– Blackburn's reaction to Van Roojen's objection against the Expressivist project might be to say that 'logical inconsistency' and 'validity' are notions whose meaning is relative to the logical system one is assuming.

According to Van Roojen, it follows from Norm-Expressivism that (I) and (III) are logically inconsistent. But I think that that claim is mistaken. To begin with, we should notice that Van Roojen takes (II) and (III) as having truth-value. He assumes that the sentence "remaining silent is *n*-permitted holds in *w*" can be read as "remaining silent is *n*-permitted is true in *w*". Gibbard does not explicitly talk about the question whether 'truth' and 'falsity' can be applied to normative statements. Rather, he talks about a given normative sentence holding or not in a given factual normative world.

But even if one accepts Van Roojen's view about the truth-aptness of (II) and (III), it does not follow that (III) contradicts (I). For this to be the case it must be true that (I) and (II) are equivalent. However, since the conditions under which (I) would be true are different from the conditions under which (II) would be true, it follows that (I) and (II) are not equivalent. As it happens, it is no wonder that this is the case. After all, (I) and (II) are about different things. The first sentence is about what a given agent is doing when he utters a certain string of words. The second is about a norm holding or not in a given possible world.

On the one hand, the truth-conditions of (I) are dependent on the agent's speech act. (I) is true if, and only if, the agent who utters it expresses acceptance of a norm requiring him to remain silent. On the other hand, the truth-conditions of (II) have no such dependence. On Gibbard's reading, to say that (II) is true is to say that there is a factual-normative world $<w,n>$ in which it holds. That is to say, 'remaining silent is n-permitted' holds in *w*. Therefore, since (I) and (II) are not equivalent, (III) cannot be inconsistent with (I).

Let us now respond the general objection. As we saw, Van Roojen considers that the supposed problem faced by Norm-expressivism is something that will arise for any expressivist account of Moral Discourse: "any account that enriches the notion of logical inconsistency so as to allow such inconsistency between non-truth-evaluable contents will be subject to similar objections".[158] But why on earth should we accept Van Roojen's claim that the notion of pragmatic inconsistency is either less stringent or worthy of the title 'mere'? Apart from the fact that the pragmatic inconsistency encompasses cases that the logical inconsistency doesn't, Van Roojen does not provide any reason for that claim. But, as far as I am concerned, 'pragmatic' does not mean *unimportant* or *not worth heeding*. Hence, encompassing different cases is certainly not sufficient to justify the claim that pragmatic inconsistency is less stringent. At most, it justifies the claim that it is different from logical inconsistency, which is not something strikingly surprising. Moreover, they are notions applied to different things: the former applies to non-cognitive attitudes, and acts; the latter applies to truth-bearers, such as beliefs and propositions.

In formulating a full-fledged reply to the general objection, it may be said that the expressivist is not, so to speak, extending or enriching the notion of logical inconsistency. Contrary to Van Roojen's belief, what the expressivist does is not a matter of allowing inconsistency where there is none. Rather, it is a matter of accounting for a different kind of conflict by using a different notion of inconsistency.

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[158] Van Roojen, 1996 p.330

I conclude this section with the claim that Van Roojen's general objection against the expressivist project does not work. The fact that pragmatic inconsistency encompasses different cases does not show anything about its supposedly lack of stringency. It merely shows that it is different from logical inconsistency. However, if one accepts that both are part of the general category 'metaphysical inconsistency', that difference will not be as acute as Van Roojen thought.

3.2.3 Blackburn's objection

In "Gibbard on Normative Logic" (1992) Blackburn put forward a simple and straightforward objection to Gibbard's solution to the FGP. He claims Gibbard's solution fails because it does not meet what he considers to be an important constraint for any adequate solution to this challenge: "a solution to the Frege-Geach problem must explain, and make legitimate, the propositional surface. But it must do this without invoking properties of evaluative discourse that go beyond the expressivist starting point".[159]

By 'propositional surface' Blackburn means the fact that evaluative sentences can be embedded in various different linguistic constructions, a fact that suggests that they express propositions just like ordinary indicative sentences do.[160] Blackburn's example is that this constraint "would not be met if we simply invoked the fact that evaluative judgments can be negated: negation is itself in need of a theory – it is itself part of the propositional surface".[161] What Blackburn means is

[159] Blackburn 1992, p.948
[160] Cf.Blackburn 1992, p.947
[161] Blackburn 1992, p.948

that what is required for an expressivist is, among other things, an explanation of how is it possible that moral judgments do not express propositions and can still be negated.

Blackburn thinks that the same goes for Gibbard's notion of system of norms. As we saw in the section 2, a system of norms is characterized by Gibbard as a family of basic predicates (*viz.*,'forbidden', 'optional', 'required'). But since these predicates are already part and parcel of the propositional surface of our evaluative language, Gibbard cannot use them in a legitimate way. For Blackburn, what calls for an explanation is how is it possible to develop an expressivist view on these predicates compatible with the propositional surface.

Blackburn's general view is that everything that is part of the propositional surface of moral language needs an explication as to why, at bottom, is just an appearance. That is, the task of a proper expressivist account is to tell us why the evaluative discourse has the shape it does, on the supposition that moral realism is false. Hence, what goes wrong with Norm-Expressivism is that its starting point (the notion of a system of norms) is not suitable for accomplishing that task, once it takes material from the propositional surface of the evaluative language in order to account for it.

In response to Blackburn, two things might be said on behalf of Gibbard's account. The first is that it might not be the case that Gibbard takes material from the propositional surface because there are certain ordinary uses of 'forbidden' and 'required' that are in keeping with Gibbard's theory.

- Ex1: In asserting 'it is forbidden to drive without seat belt' one is referring

to a system of norms (in this case, traffic regulations) rather than ascribing some property to the act of driving without seat belt.

• Ex2: If you are writing the sentence 'close the door please' it is required that you use a comma after 'door'.

These examples show that even though 'forbidden' and 'required' are, as Blackburn thinks, part of the propositional surface of moral language, they are also used in a clearly non-propositional way. This suggests that Blackburn's constraint could be modified in this fashion: an expressivist view on evaluative discourse must explain the propositional surface, but it must do this without appealing to notions of that surface that are exclusive to it; however, if there is a notion that is used both in a propositional and in a non-propositional way (like, as we saw, 'forbidden' and 'required'), then this notion can be used as part of the explanation. This modification might block Blackburn's objection. In any case, even if it does, I think that Gibbard's account fails for other reasons (which I shall lay out in the last section of this chapter).

3.2.4 Sinnot-Armstrong's objections

Sinnot-Armstrong (1993) raises some more difficulties to norm-expressivism. He starts his move by pointing out that Gibbard's theory consists of two fundamental claims, a positive and a negative:

• **Positive claim:** the meaning of normative statements is explained through the states of mind they express.

• **Negative claim:** normative statements do not ascribe properties or refer to facts.

According to Sinnot-Armstrong, these two claims are independent from each other.

> It is important to realize that Gibbard's negative claim does not follow from his positive claim. One should agree that to assert a normative judgment is to express a special state of mind and also think that normative judgments simultaneously state normative facts. If so, Gibbard's positive claim is true, but his negative claim is false.[162]

As a result of their independence, we have the following possible combinations that give rise to four distinct metaethical views: pure expressivism, pure descriptivism, mixed theories and the negators.[163] Sinnot-Armstrong concentrates himself on the mixed theories, which accept the positive claim, but deny the negative one. The first problem that arises for Gibbard's theory is that it does not preclude the possibility of mixed theories. As Sinnot-Armstrong points out, "even pure descriptivists can agree that the term 'rational' is *usually* used to endorse, and Gibbard never shows that the term 'rational' in this sense must *always* be used to endorse (or to express)".[164]

In other words, Sinnot-Armstrong holds the idea that Gibbard's proposal fails as a genuine expressivist alternative because it is compatible with the truth of moral realism – the view according to which there are moral facts and properties whose existence is independent of our minds.

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[162] Sinnot-Armstrong 1993, p.298

[163] Sinnot-Armstrong defines these views in the following passage: "Pure expressivists make Gibbard's negative claim as well as his positive claim. Pure descriptivists deny both claims. Mixed theories see normative judgments as a mixture of expression and description, so they accept Gibbard's positive claim but reject his negative claim. Negators think normative judgments are neither expressive nor descriptive, so they deny Gibbard's positive claim but accept his negative claim" (Sinnot-Armstrong 1993:298).

[164] Sinnot-Armstrong 1993, p.299

To support that idea, Sinnot-Armstrong provides an argument from analogy. He invites us to consider the view that asserting '*X* causes *Y*' is to express a mental state that rules out "various combinations of causal laws with non-causal states".[165] Even if this were the case, it could still be true that causal claims are claims about certain relations that hold or not independently of our minds. In the same vein, even if Gibbard is right with respect to the expressive power of normative statements, his view does not preclude the possibility that those statements also refer to facts or ascribe properties whose existence is mind-independent.[166]

With respect to this first objection, one thing we should ask is what exactly Sinnot-Armstrong means by 'independent' when he talks about the relation between Gibbard's positive and negative claims. On first glance, Sinnot-Armstrong's view is persuasive. Nonetheless, there is an important question that he leaves behind: with respect to the possible kinds of relations between the positive and the negative claim, how should one interpret them? Two suggestions might be the following. The first is to consider that the truth of the positive claim implies the truth of the negative claim, which is a quite strong claim for which Sinnot-Armstrong provides no ground. After all, why should one accept that there is such a relation between the expression of a state of mind and the question whether or not moral facts and properties are part of the world's furniture? Indeed, it is even difficult to imagine how these two things might be related.

The second interpretation is that the truth of the positive claim can be taken

[165] Sinnot-Armstrong 1993, p.300

[166] On his own words: "Gibbard's analysis of the content of normative judgments and his explanation of the validity of *modus ponens* seem just as compatible with a fully realistic view of normative claims as claims about an independent world" (Gibbard 1993:301).

as a reason to accept the negative claim as probably true. This would be a reasonable move if we assume that there are two main candidates for explaining the meaning of normative statements, and also assume that they are incompatible with each other (the first candidate would be the mental states an agent expresses in accepting those statements, and the second the moral facts that would make them true). Of course, this interpretation does not show that Gibbard's explanation of the meaning of moral statements is not compatible with moral realism. However, given this interpretation, Sinnot-Armstrong's objection loses its bite because it makes plausible to accept the negative claim once one accepts the positive one.

Another way of answering Sinnot-Armstrong's first objection is to say that, even if it is the case that the positive and the negative claim are in some sense independent, this is not surprising given that expressivism is an approach to moral language, not a theory against the existence of moral facts. Following Blackburn's line of thought, the expressivist project might be understood as a story about the moral language that shows that we can have a plausible account of how it works, regardless of whether moral realism is true. But, by itself, it does not constitute an ontological argument against the existence of moral facts.[167]

Sinnot-Armstrong claims that a second problem faced by Gibbard's theory is that it does not provide a satisfactory account of the value of consistency in the normative domain, something that a descriptivist view on moral discourse can easily do.

[167] An advocate of Gibbard's view could reply by saying that Gibbard should be free to pursue his own version of expressivism, which does not need to be totally in line with Blackburn's ideas about the general expressivist project.

> Descriptivists (including mixed theorist) can answer that inconsistent normative judgments cannot all be true, and truth is the goal of moral inquiry. Gibbard can't say this, as he recognizes, since he denies that normative judgments are true or false. Instead, Gibbard has to introduce a pragmatic account of the value of consistency.[168]

According to Gibbard, the pragmatic account of the value of consistency goes along these lines. Pragmatic consistency is valuable because "inconsistency lays us open to a special kind of self-frustration".[169] We must avoid inconsistency in the normative domain because it leads to the opting out of normative discussion, and to the result that people will not take each other's claim seriously. For Gibbard, this result would be bad in virtue of a pragmatic element, *viz.,* the fact that we need the benefits of normative discussion.

Sinnot-Armstrong's claim that truth is the goal of moral inquiry strikes me as implausible. If this were the case, then an expressivist would have to defend that moral inquiry has no goal at all. However, this is clearly not the case. An expressivist typically thinks that moral inquiry has a goal (or goals), *e.g.,* to express our attitudes, to coordinate our sensibilities, and also to guide action.

The third problem has to do with Gibbard's account of rationality judgments. Sinnot-Armstrong challenges Gibbard's biconditional thesis according to which *S* calls X rational if, and only if, *S* expresses acceptance of norms that permit X. To reject the first part of this thesis he says the following:

> People often call a particular act rational or irrational without formulating any general norm (much less any system of norms) that permits or forbids that act. For example, I believe that it is rational to scratch my head right now, but I

[168] Sinnot-Armstrong 1993, p.301
[169] Gibbard 1990, p.289

doubt I could formulate general norms about it.[170]

In order to dismiss the second part of the biconditional, Sinnot-Armstrong provides a case in which one expresses acceptance of norms, but nonetheless does not call anything rational. Consider the following: 'It is not impolite to smoke when you are alone'. In making this judgment, even if we assume that one is expressing acceptance of norms about politeness, he is definitely not calling the act of smoking alone 'rational'. Thus, in virtue of the problems above, Sinnot-Armstrong concludes that Gibbard's theory does not plausibly account for rationality judgments, and, consequently, it also fails to provide a proper account of moral discourse.

3.2.5 Two arguments against norm-expressivism

Now I shall provide two arguments in order to shed doubt on Gibbard's view. The first points to the lack of justification of one of Gibbard's central moves throughout the development of his metaethical theory. The second aims at challenging Gibbard's idea according to which moral judgments fall within the category of judgments of rationality.

As we saw in the first section, Gibbard provides a norm-expressivist analysis of the term 'rational'. He tells us that in order to understand what 'rational' means we have to look at what mental state is expressed by one who deploys this term in a given judgment, namely, the mental state of accepting a norm. Thus, one who judges that X is rational expresses acceptance of a system of norms that permits X. Afterwards, as we have also seen, Gibbard applies the same analysis to

[170] Sinnot-Armstrong 1993, p.307

moral terms. The meaning of 'wrong', *e.g.,* was explained through the idea of what it is to think that a given action is wrong, *viz.,* to express acceptance of a system of norms that forbids the action.

Gibbard's account of 'rational' and 'wrong' faces additional two problems. The first is about his aforementioned hypothesis that to think something is rational is to accept norms that permit it. This hypothesis goes against our ordinary practice of judging morally. Typically, in making moral judgments, we do not entertain in our minds any specific system of norms. I agree with the idea that in judging that stealing is wrong I am in some way expressing disapproval of stealing. However, why on earth an ordinary and straightforward judgment like this would commit me to accept a given system of norms? And how could it be the case that I express acceptance of a system of norms that I'm not even aware of (one that I did not even considered)?

After making that judgment, if someone asked me whether I would accept a system of norms in which the norm 'stealing is forbidden' holds, I think that an appropriate reply would be something along these lines: 'That depends. What are the other norms that constitute the system?'. After all, the norm against stealing could figure (and, in fact, it does) in various different systems, and many of them may be either inconsistent with each other or inconsistent with something that I currently accept.

It might be replied that Gibbard does not need to be committed to the idea that we entertain a system of norms in our mind every time we make a moral judgment. However, even if the previous hypothesis is accepted as plausible, there

is still a problem with Gibbard's account of rationality. For the psychologization of the question about the nature of rationality is not well-motivated. The problem is that there is a significant logical leap in the steps he follows to get to his so-called *norm-expressivistic analysis*. Gibbard departs from a definition of what it is for an act *to be* wrong in terms of what feelings is rational to feel, and ends up psychologizing the question of what 'rational' means. Yet he does not provide a good reason in favor of this psychologization.[171] In fact, he explicitly acknowledges that it is merely a hypothesis, one that he puts forward in order to prepare the terrain for the development of his response to the FGP.[172] Thus, in presenting this objection, I'm not presupposing any form of realism about rationality (something that Gibbard would not accept). My point here is not that Gibbard's analysis of 'rational' is wrong. Rather, it is to stress the lack of reasons to adopt this kind of analysis in the first place.

Given this, one way to defend Gibbard's approach is to say that although it is true that he does not justify that move, assuming his expressivist account of the terms 'rational' and 'wrong' leads to good theoretical results*, viz.,* an adequate solution to the FGP. However, I'm suspicious about whether the philosophical cost of Gibbard's theory is worth paying. The reason is that we end up with a notion of rationality that does not look to fit well with some ordinary facts. For instance, the fact that one can accept a norm that does not make any sense – or even seems to be

[171] As we have seen in section 3.1, Gibbard's idea that a descriptive account of 'rational' would not make justice to the typical endorsement this term connotes does not work.
[172] As we can see in the following passage: "What does it mean to call something "rational"? One way of tackling such a question is to psychologize it. What, we may ask, is the psychological state of *regarding* something as rational, of *taking* it to be *rational*, of *believing* it rational".(Gibbard 1990, pp.45-46).

irrational in the common descriptive sense that the term has – is something that tells against Gibbard's approach. For instance, I could accept a norm that requires me to wear yellow pajamas on the first Tuesday of each month. Intuitively speaking, the acceptance of this norm has nothing to do with rationality.

One might reject my example and say that in some circumstances the acceptance of such a norm would be rational, *e.g.,* if wearing yellow pajamas on a certain day served some symbolic (or political) purpose. This is true. There can be such cases as well. But I think this kind of case does not disprove my point. For the possibility my example raises is sufficient to refute the universal claim that for every norm *n*, if *S* expresses acceptance of *n*, then *S* judges that *n* is rational. After all, I did not deny that in some cases it might be rational to accept norms that in normal circumstances would not be rational to accept. My point was that acceptance of norms does not seem to be tied to judgements of rationality in the strict way envisaged by Gibbard.

Now let me present the second argument. As you might remember, Gibbard holds that the set of moral judgments is a subset of the set of judgments of rationality. We have seen that it is not part of his strategy to define 'rational' in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Alternatively, Gibbard provides an account of what it is *to call* a given X 'rational', *viz.,* to express acceptance of a system of norms that allows for X. Thus, if it is true that moral judgments are judgments of rationality, then we should understand the meaning of moral terms in the same way: to call X 'wrong' is to express acceptance of a system of moral norms

that forbids X; to call X 'right' is to express acceptance of a system of moral norms that permits X.

But there is a reason to demur the claim that every moral judgment is a rationality judgment (at least in the way Gibbard characterizes 'rational'). Consider, for instance, a person from Sudan who judges that female genital mutilation (FGM) is wrong. In addition, imagine that the person also believes that preserving tradition is more important than the physical pain and the psychological suffering inflicted upon the girls who are forced to undergo this procedure. Is the Sudanese person expressing acceptance of a system of norms that forbids FGM? Not necessarily. Given the person's belief about the primacy of tradition over women's suffering, he might accept Sudan's system of norms and yet disapprove of the particular norm about FGM.

In order to answer this objection, one might invoke Gibbard's distinction between accepting a norm and acting in the grip of a norm. On the one hand, **"**accepting a norm is whatever psychic state, if any, that gives rise to this syndrome of avowal of the norm and governance by it".[173] On the other hand, acting in the grip of a norm *n* is to act in accordance with *n* without accepting it, or without ascribing to *n* the greatest weight in a given circumstance. In order to shed light on this last notion, Gibbard talks about a famous experiment (in the field of psychology) carried out by Stanley Milgram (1974).

In his experiment, Milgram asked the participants to give electric shocks in another subject. But the participants did not know that the subject was Milgram's

[173] Gibbard 1990, p.75

accomplice and, therefore, was just pretending to get electrocuted. As Milgram ordered the participants to gradually increase the shock's intensity, many of them complained. Even so, it turns out that two-thirds of the participants did all they have been asked to do. But why is that so?

On Gibbard's interpretation, the participants have faced a conflict between two norms: the first telling them not to cause harm to another person, and the second telling them to honour the agreement they made and cooperate with the experimenter, even though he was getting them to inflict harm upon another person. Even though most participants did what they did, Gibbard thinks that it is implausible to say that they have genuinely accepted the second norm and taken it as outweighing the first. The right thing to say is that the participants have acted in the grip of the second norm.

If one takes over Gibbard's interpretation, it is arguable that the Milgram's case is similar to my example. After all, the Sudanese person is also facing a conflict between two norms: a norm that tells him that FGM is forbidden and a norm that tells him to preserve tradition (even though part of the tradition consists in the norm according to which FGM is required). Thus, as the participants of the Milgram's experiment, the Sudanese person would be acting in the grip of a norm, were he to perform or encourage others to perform FGM.

I think that even if we admit that there is such a thing as acting in the grip of a norm, the objection still stands. Were the Sudanese person to perform (or get others to perform) FGM in the grip of the norm that that practice is required, this would not change the fact that, in judging that FGM is wrong, he would be making a

moral judgment that is not a rationality judgment (neither in the descriptive sense of 'rational' nor in Gibbard's norm-expressivistic sense).

In addition, Gibbard's distinction faces an epistemic problem that he does not address in his book: how could we possibly know whether someone has acted in the grip of a norm or actually accepted the norm that guided his action? Gibbard's view is against the plausible commonsensical idea that the best way to know what norms a person accepts is to look at how he acts or what actions he encourages people to perform. Oddly enough, it is a genuine possibility that the participants of Milgram's experiment gave the electric shocks because they really thought the norm of cooperativeness outweighs the norm of non-inflicting pain. Likewise, the Sudanese person that performs (or even gets others to perform) FGM might think that the norm about the preservation of the tradition outweighs the judgment that FGM is wrong.

4 Chapter Four – Schroeder on expressivism

Schroeder (2008) gives what he considers to be the most defensible expressivist account of moral discourse and then rejects it at the end. This chapter presents Schroeder's expressivist theory and critically examines the main objections directed against it.

Schroeder holds that one of the main motivations to accept expressivism is that it is able to avoid the modal and the disagreement problems, something that other anti-realist views, e.g., ethical subjectivism, cannot achieve. Ethical subjectivism is the view according to which moral judgments *report* the speaker's attitude. The sentence 'murder is wrong' means, on this view, the same as 'I disapprove of murder'.

Although it may sound plausible for many people, this account faces two problems. The first – the modal problem – is that, in considering moral sentences with modal terms, we get the wrong predictions about their truth-value. For instance, ethical subjectivism implies that the sentence 'If I did not disapprove of murder, then murder would not be wrong' is true. The second – the disagreement problem– is that ethical subjectivism cannot give an appropriate account of moral disagreement. Suppose that John asserts 'murder is wrong' and Paul asserts 'murder is not wrong'. According to ethical subjectivism, this would not be a genuine disagreement. After all, John would be asserting 'I disapprove of murder' and Paul would be asserting 'I do not disapprove of murder'. There is not even a whiff of inconsistency here. For both John and Paul could even agree with each other about the attitudes they have.

Schroeder points out that the modal and disagreement problems do not arise within the domain of descriptive language. Consider, e.g., 'grass is green'. Since we can clearly distinguish between the expression of the belief that grass is green and the self-report that one has that belief (namely, when one asserts 'I believe that grass is green'), the sentence 'If I did not believe that grass is green, then grass would not be green' is obviously false.

Likewise, the disagreement problem does not arise within the descriptive domain of discourse. If John asserts 'grass is green', and Paul asserts 'grass is not green', they are clearly having a disagreement about the color of the grass. It is not the case that they are just reporting their mental states as if they were respectively saying 'I believe that grass is green' and 'I do not believe that grass is green'.

The expressivist can solve both problems by adopting what Schroeder calls 'the Basic Expressivist Maneuver'. The Basic Expressivist Maneuver is to appeal to a common feature shared by the moral and the descriptive language and say that whatever explains why these problems do not arise for the descriptive language will also explain why they do not arise for the moral language. For, as we have previously seen, the reason why the modal and the disagreement problems do not arise for a sentence like 'grass is green' is that we can trace a clear-cut distinction between the act of expressing a mental state and the act of reporting it.

In order to carry out this strategy, Schroeder says that the expressivist must be committed to the *parity thesis*, the idea that "normative sentences bear the same relation to non-cognitive attitudes as ordinary descriptive sentences bear to

ordinary propositional beliefs".[174] The relation at issue is the *expression relation*. Roughly, the idea is that just as the assertion of 'grass is green' expresses the belief that grass is green, the assertion of 'murder is wrong' expresses disapproval of murder. But neither the belief that grass is green nor the attitude of disapproval towards murder are reported by those assertions.

Schroeder holds that adopting the parity thesis does not commit one to any specific view about the nature of the expression relation. In fact, he claims that this is what makes the previous solution to the modal and disagreement problems 'beautiful':

> Notice that the beauty of this solution is that it requires taking no view at all about what this relationship is. Whatever this relationship turns out to be, the expressivist will say, it must be adequate to explain why there is no modal or disagreement problem for 'grass is green'. For we all agree that there is no problem there. So obviously, she will go on, it must be sufficient to explain why there is no modal or disagreement problem for 'murder is wrong'.[175]

Thus, according to Schroeder, by adopting the parity thesis the expressivist can avoid both the modal and the disagreement problems. The modal problem is avoided because the sentence 'If I did not disapprove of murder, then murder would not be wrong' does not come out as true. After all, on the expressivist view, 'murder is wrong' does not even have truth-value, and surely does not mean the same as 'I disapprove of murder'. With respect to the disagreement problem, suppose John asserts 'murder is wrong' and Paul asserts 'murder is not wrong'. In expressing these conflicting attitudes they are certainly disagreeing with each other, in the same way as they do when they express conflicting beliefs by

[174] Schroeder, 2008b, p.89
[175] Schroeder 2008, p.18

respectively asserting 'grass is green' and 'grass is not green'. For, as the parity thesis has it, 'murder is wrong' is to 'I disapprove of murder' as 'grass is green' is to 'I believe that grass is green'.

4.1 Assertability expressivism and the solution to the composition problem

Schroeder characterizes the composition problem as the problem of giving a compositional account of the meaning of moral sentences, that is, a semantics that includes the principle according to which the meaning of a complex sentence is a function of the meaning of its constituent parts and the way those parts are concatenated. Before presenting his solution to this problem, Schroeder holds that a proper expressivist account needs to endorse two general semantic commitments about both the descriptive and the normative language.

The first semantic commitment is to do with the sentential connectives: "in order to give a compositional semantic for normative sentences, expressivists must treat sentential connectives, 'not', 'and', 'or' and 'if…then' as operating on mental states".[176] The second semantic commitment is with what Schroeder calls *mentalism*, "the view that descriptive language gets its content from the contents of corresponding mental states".[177] In other words, mentalism is the idea that both the meaning of a descriptive sentence and the meaning of a normative sentence rely on the mental states they express – a belief in the former case, and a desire-like attitude in the latter.

[176] Schroeder 2008, p.22
[177] Schroeder 2008, pp.23-24

We have seen that, according to expressivism, the meaning of normative sentences boils down to the mental states they express. For Schroeder, this leads the expressivist to be committed to the same idea with respect to descriptive sentences. The reason is that we use the same connectives to conjoin both purely normative sentences, purely descriptive sentences, and also mixed sentences (normative + descriptive). In order to understand why Schroeder thinks that his expressivist framework requires the aforementioned commitments, consider the following sentences:

(a) Snow is not white.
(b) Murder is not wrong.
(c) Snow is white and grass is green.
(d) Murder is wrong and grass is green
(e) Murder is wrong and stealing is wrong.
(f) Snow is white or grass is green.
(g) Murder is wrong or grass is green.
(h) Murder is wrong or stealing is wrong.
(i) If snow is white, then grass is green.
(j) If murder is wrong, then stealing is wrong.

As you can see, in the first two cases, the connective 'not' is apparently used in the same way to deny both a descriptive and a normative sentence. In the sentences (c)- (j), the connectives 'and, 'or' and 'if…then' are used to form three different types of complex sentence: descriptive + descriptive, descriptive + normative (mixed sentence), and normative + normative. On Schroeder's view, if the expressivist does not want to hold that these connectives have different senses depending on which kind of sentence they are being used to link, then he will have

to provide an univocal account of them. As Schroeder points out:

> there are compelling arguments that any satisfactory account will have to give a univocal treatment of the sentential connectives. Any account that does not will require syntactic markers to distinguish between normative and descriptive sentences, simply in order to evaluate whether a sentence is well formed, and natural languages have no such markers.[178]

The commitment to mentalism is, at bottom, a commitment about the relation between mental states and semantic contents in the case of descriptive sentences. In considering that the meaning of both normative and descriptive sentences rely on the mental states they express, and also that the connectives operate on them, Schroeder is able to provide an univocal account of those connectives. As we will in the section 4.9, this is going to give rise to the so-called *mixed sentences problem* because the kind of mental state expressed by descriptive and normative sentences are supposedly different.

Having the commitments above means, among other things, giving up the ordinary compositional semantics for descriptive sentences. For instance, consider the conjunction 'grass is green and snow is white'. According to the ordinary compositional semantics, the content of 'grass is green' is the proposition that grass is green, the content of 'snow is white' is the proposition that snow is white, and 'and' denotes a function from the contents of the parts to the content of the whole – a conjunctive proposition.

But, according to Schroeder, expressivists must reject this account. Since they do not endorse the view that moral sentences have propositional contents,

[178] Schroeder 2008, p.22

they must be committed to the claim that the sentential connective 'and' denotes a function that takes mental states as arguments, whether those states are beliefs or desire-like attitudes. On Schroeder's words, expressivists are committed to the idea that "the meaning of 'and' in 'grass is green and snow is white' is a function from the mental states expressed by 'grass is green' and by 'snow is white' to the mental state expressed by the whole".[179]

As you can see, the notion of expression plays a central role in the expressivist account of the moral language. Since there are many senses in which this notion can be used, the expressivist must clarify what exactly he means by 'expression'. Schroeder develops what he calls *assertability expressivism*. He sustains that any adequate account of the expression relation must satisfy the requirement that it should be possible for a given agent to express a mental state that he is not currently in.[180]

The justification of this requirement is the need to cover cases of insincere assertions. If we assume that the meaning of a sentence is given by the mental state that it expresses, and do not satisfy this requirement, then a sentence such as "York is the Capital of England" will have different meanings depending on who is asserting it. If it is asserted by one who believes that York is the Capital of England, then its meaning will be that belief. However, if it is asserted by one who does not believe it, and therefore makes an insincere assertion, then the sentence will have a different meaning. But since this is implausible, we have to accept that one can express a mental state one is not currently in.

[179] Schroeder 2008, p.23
[180] Cf. Schroeder 2008,p.26

Schroeder holds that an adequate account of expression does not have to be in keeping with any commonsensical conception of expression that people may have: "there is no reason why we should think that expressivists are wedded to *expression* being something of which we have any pre-theoretical understanding".[181] With respect to the nature of the expression relation, the only thesis the expressivists are committed to is the parity thesis.

Schroeder proposes that the problem of giving an account of the expression relation can be solved by appealing to the assertability conditions of the sentences under consideration. Assertability conditions can be understood as a set of norms that establish when it is semantically appropriate to assert certain sentences. Each sentence is then associated with a condition under which it is permissible for the speaker to assert it. The condition is that the speaker must be in the corresponding mental state. Schroeder writes:

> It is permissible to assert 'grass is green' only if you believe that grass is green. It is permissible to assert 'snow is white' only if you believe that snow is white. It is permissible to assert 'grass is green and snow is white' only if you believe that grass is green and snow is white.[182]

On Schroeder's view, to say that a given sentence *S* expresses the mental state *M* is to say that *S* is semantically associated with the condition under which the speaker is in *M*. The content of *S* is derivatively inherited from the content of *M*. Thus, the sentence 'grass is green' comes to have the content that *grass is green* in virtue of the belief that grass is green. [183]

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[181] Schroeder 2008, p.29
[182] Schroeder 2008, p.30
[183] Cf.Schroeder 2008, p.31

Schroeder's semantic picture is different from the standard one. On the standard semantic picture of the descriptive language each simple sentence is assigned to a proposition. Then the sentential connectives generate complex propositions by a mapping from the simple ones. The account put forward by Schroeder inverts the explanation order. The core of Schroeder's semantic picture is in the following passage:

> The 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. So 'grass is green' gets assigned directly to the belief that grass is green (which I write as 'BF (*grass is green*)'), and similarly for 'snow is white'. Then the sentential connectives like 'and' operate at *this* level of semantic content, semantically contributing a mapping from the mental states associated with the atomic sentences to the mental state associated with the conjunction.[184]

Thus, the sentence 'grass is green', rather than being assigned to a proposition, is directly assigned to the belief that grass is green. In other words, 'grass is green' gets its semantic content from the belief that grass is green. Now let's have a look at the advantages of assertability expressivism.

Schroeder claims that assertability expressivism has two main advantages. The first is that it satisfies the requirement of allowing for insincerity, *i.e.*, the speaker can express a mental state that he is not actually in. This happens when the speaker violates the assertability condition norm and asserts a sentence that is associated with a mental state that he is not in. For example, the sentence 'York is the capital of England' is associated to the belief that York is the capital of England.

[184] Schroeder 2008, p.33

Although I do not have this belief, when I assert 'York is the capital of England', I express it.

Assertability expressivism claims that a sentence expresses a mental state when it is semantically associated with the condition under which it is permissible for the speaker to assert it. To say that 'murder is wrong' expresses disapproval of murder is to say that this sentence is associated with the condition under which someone who disapproves of murder asserts it. The condition at hand is that it is permissible for one to assert 'murder is wrong' only if one disapproves of murder. The same goes for 'defenestration is wrong'. Its meaning is associated with the condition under which it is permissible to assert it, namely, when the speaker disapproves of defenestration.

How about the evaluative conditional 'if murder is wrong, then defenestration is wrong'? Since on Schroeder's account expressing a mental state is not something that the speaker does in virtue of performing a speech act, he thinks that "the assertability conditions of complex sentences are a function of the assertability conditions of their parts, where this function is given by the meaning of the sentential connectives that are used to form the complex sentences".[185]

This passage tell us that the conditions under which it is permissible to assert 'if murder is wrong, then defenestration is wrong' are a function of the assertability conditions of 'murder is wrong' and 'defenestration is wrong'. However, this is not particular illuminating because Schroeder never tells us what mental state the speaker has to posses in order to be permissible for him to assert

[185] Schroeder 2008, p.32

the previous conditional. So, this raises a suspicion as to whether assertability expressivism can really solve the composition problem.

4.2 Inconsistency-transmitting attitudes

The standard notion of inconsistency says that a set of propositions is logically inconsistent just in case they cannot be simultaneously true. For instance, on this notion, the propositions *snow is white* and *snow is not white* are logically inconsistent. But expressivists are not allowed to use the standard notion in order to account for the inconsistency between moral sentences, such as 'murder is wrong' and 'murder is not wrong'. For they believe that these sentences are not truth-apt in the first place. So, how can the expressivists account for the inconsistencies that take place in the moral domain of discourse?

According to Schroeder, "an expressivist account of their inconsistency is going to have to work by appealing to some 'inconsistent' feature of the attitudes that each expresses".[186] Once again, since we can form complex sentences by mixing descriptive and normative sentences, the expressivist will need to have another commitment about the workings of the descriptive language and to develop an uniform account of inconsistency – 'uniform' in the sense that it can be applied across the descriptive and the normative domains of discourse.

In order to explore the limits of expressivism, Schroeder takes over this task and focuses on what descriptive and normative sentences have in common, namely, the fact that both express attitudes (cognitive attitudes, in the case of descriptive sentences, and non-cognitive in the case of normative sentences). He

[186] Schroeder 2008, p.39

points out that some mental states have the following feature: "having them toward inconsistent contents makes the agent 'inconsistent' in such a loaded way".[187] Then he introduces the notion of inconsistency-transmitting attitude:

> **inconsistency-transmitting:** An attitude A is inconsistency-transmitting just in case two instances of A are inconsistent just in case their contents are inconsistent.[188]

Schroeder holds that not all attitudes are inconsistency-transmitting. For instance, the attitudes of supposing, wondering and desiring are not inconsistency-transmitting. One can suppose that *p* and also suppose that not-p, wonder whether *p* and not-p, desire that *p* and desire that not-*p* without stumbling into any logical inconsistency.Beliefs, however, are inconsistency-transmitting, for it is inconsistent to believe both that p and that not-p.

But this observation about beliefs is not sufficient. In order to develop an uniform account, the expressivist needs to argue that there are non-cognitive mental states that are also subject to this kind of inconsistency. Intention, for instance, is a desire-like state that is inconsistency-transmitting: intending that p and intending that not-p makes the agent inconsistent as well.

Schroeder then assumes that disapproval is also inconsistency transmitting. [189] With this assumption in tow, assertability expressivism manages to give an account of the inconsistency between 'murder is wrong' and 'murder is not wrong'.

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[187] Schroeder 2008, p.40
[188] Schroeder 2008, p.43
[189] It is important to point out that people that accept the idea that there are genuine moral dilemas might disagree with the thesis according to which disapproval is inconsistency-trasnsmitting in such cases. If one has the obligation to perform *A* and also the obligation to perform ¬*A*, although it is not possible to perform both, one might disapprove of A and also disapprove of ¬A without being inconsistent.

The explanation goes as follows. 'Murder is wrong' expresses DISAPPROVAL (murder) and 'Murder is not wrong' expresses DISAPPROVAL (not murder). Since disapproval is an inconsistency-transmitting attitude and the contents of the attitude of disapproval are inconsistent (namely, 'murdering' and 'not murdering'), it follows that 'murder is wrong' and 'murder is not wrong' are inconsistent.[190]

4.2.1 Schroeder's solution to the negation problem

Assertability expressivism, together with the other notions introduced by Schroeder in the last section, supposedly allows one to solve some of the problems typically faced by expressivists (at least this is the way Schroeder sees things so far). But they are still not sufficient to solve the so-called 'negation problem'. Even though this thesis focuses on expressivist accounts of conditionals and the validity of the moral modus ponens, it is worth considering briefly Schroeder's attempt to show how an expressivist could solve the negation problem.

The negation problem was raised by Nicholas Unwin (1999, 2001). Unwin argued that expressivism is not able to give an explanation of the variety of ways in which we can negate a sentence such as (A) '*S* thinks that murder is wrong'. This is because expresivism holds that (A) means the same as (A*) '*S* disapproves of murder'. But there is a good reason to think that (A) and (A*) have different meanings. For there are 3 places in which we can place the negation operator in (A), whereas there are only two places in which we can place the negation in (A*). Let us compare (A1) – (A3)

(A1) *S* does not think that murder is wrong.

[190] Cf. Schroeder 2008, p.44

(A2) *S* thinks that murder is not wrong.

(A3) *S* thinks that not murdering is wrong.

with the sentences

(A1*) *S* does not disapprove of murder.

(A2*) ???

(A3*) *S* disapproves of not murdering.

For Unwin, the key problem here is that expressivism cannot account for the three ways in which (A) can be negated. Now let us see how Schroeder deals with this problem.

First of all, Schroeder points out that the same problem would arise for the descriptive language if we assumed that each descriptive predicate is associated with a particular attitude. In his own words:

> suppose that we did think that each descriptive predicate corresponded to its own attitude. In particular, suppose that we thought that 'green' was used to express the unanalazyble *believes–green* attitude, so that 'grass is green' expressed BELIEVED-GREEN (grass). Then we would have a problem.[191]

In order to see the problem that would arise, Schroeder tells us to consider the following sentences:

g Jon thinks that grass is green.
n1 Jon does not think that grass is green.
n2 Jon thinks that grass is not green.

With the above supposition in tow, the account of these sentences would be this:

g* Jon believes-green grass.
n1* Jon does not believe-green grass.
n2* ???

[191] Schroeder 2008, p.56

This is obviously implausible. For we know that to think that grass is green and to think that grass is not green do not involve two distinct attitudes. Rather, it involves one general attitude (believing) towards different propositional contents. Once we get clear about this, we understand why the negation problem does not arise for 'Jon thinks that grass is green'.

So, in order to deal with the negation problem, Schroder defends that the only available option for the expressivist is to get rid of the assumption that gave rise to the problem in the first place, viz., that each normative predicate is associated with a particular attitude:

> An adequate expressivist solution to the negation problem needs to take the same form. It needs to reject the assumption that led to the problem – the assumption that to each normative predicate corresponds a distinct attitude, such that atomic sentences ascribing that predicate express that attitude toward the subject of the sentence.[192]

Schroeder's next step is to postulate a general non-cognitive attitude called 'being for'. Schroeder's schema is as follows:

- **Schroeder's schema**: For each predicate, F, there is a relation, Rf, so that 'F(a)' expresses FOR (bearing Rf to a).

Thus, in applying this schema to A-A3* we get the following result:

(A**) *S* is for blaming for murdering.
(A1**) *S* is not for blaming for murdering.
(A2**) *S* is for not blaming for murdering.
(A3**) *S* is for blaming for not murdering.

[192] Schroeder 2008, p.57

Here it might be objected that this account is implausible because *wrong* and *blaming* can come apart. It could be held that people often perform wrong actions without knowing that they are wrong. In many of these cases, it is arguable that they are not to blame, even though they were wrong in performing them. However, this objection does not seem to be compelling. After all, like Gibbard, Schroeder is not telling us what it is for an action to be wrong. Rather, Schroeder is just giving an account of what it is to think that something is wrong. It may perfectly be the case that the action that is being judged is not wrong, but the agent thinks that this is the case. And, according to Schroder, in thinking that the action is wrong the agent is in the state of being for blaming for it.[193]

The interpretation of the negation as a truth-functional connective strikes many people as intuitive or 'natural'. However, this restricted view on negation does not allow us to make sense of the cases in which negation is successfully used even though the question of truth does not arise. The most compelling case is that of imperatives. Since imperatives are not truth-apt, the workings of negation in sentences of the form 'do not do α' cannot be explained in the same way as in an indicative sentence such as 'Paris is not the capital of England'.

4.3 Schroeder's semantics of moral language

[193] There is a more compelling objection against Schroeder's solution. Sinclair (2011) holds that Schroeder's account is problematic because it does not satisfy what Sinclair calls the Fregean Condition, namely, the ability to explain the meaning of moral sentences as uniform across negated and unnegated contexts. In chapter five, I argue against the Fregean Condition as an appropriate requirement to be imposed upon the expressivist. In addition, Sinclair also rejects Schroder's idea that, as far as the negation problem is concerned, Schroeder's account is the only way out for the expressivist. He develops two alternative accounts: commitment-semantics and the expression account.

Before spelling out Schroder's semantics, three important things must be noted here about the attitude of being for: (i) on Schroeder's account, each atomic moral sentence gets a state of being for assigned to it; (ii) the attitude of being for is not one taken towards propositions (but rather towards properties[194], like 'blaming for murdering' in the examples above), and that (iii) Schroeder uses gerunds in order to express those properties.

Schroeder then goes on to show how the same sort of account can be given to the other connectives. He writes:

> PROPOSITIONAL LOGIC
>
> **base** Atomic sentences 'A' and 'B', and so on express states of being for: FOR (α), FOR(β), and so on.
>
> **not** If 'A' expresses FOR (α), then '~A' expresses FOR (¬α)
>
> **and** If 'A' expresses FOR (α) and 'B' expresses FOR(β), then 'A&B' expresses FOR (α ∧β).
>
> **or** If 'A' expresses FOR (α) and 'B' expresses FOR(β), then 'A º B' expresses FOR (α v β).[195]

The conditional is handled by disjunction. Consider 'If murder is wrong, then defenestration is wrong'. On Schroeder's account, it expresses the state of being for (not (blaming for murdering) or (blaming for defenestration)).

Schroeder assumes that the attitude of being for is inconsistency-transmitting. This means that two instances of being for are inconsistent just in

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[194] Here is Schroeder's justification for treating the attitude of *being for* as taking properties as objects: "Properties are how I think about things that you can do, in the broadest sense, and so I've been thinking of being for as concerned with what you can *do*, rather than how things *are*. Blaming for murder is something that you can do; so are avoiding murdering and preferring stealing to murdering. They are the kinds of properties that you are for, when you have normative thoughts" (Schroeder, 2008, p.84).

[195] Schroeder 2008, p.66

case their contents are inconsistent. Since what matters is the inconsistency between the contents toward which the attitude of being for is taken, "the problem of explaining why sentences in our expressivist language are inconsistent reduces to the problem of explaining why the contents of their expressed states of being for are inconsistent".[196]

Schroeder's key move is to say that the contents toward which the attitude of being for is taken are also descriptive. Here is a very important passage for understanding his view:

> Each normative predicate 'F', we said, when ascribed to some subject expresses the state of bearing some relation, Rf, to that subject. But since Rf is some descriptive relation, the states of being for that are expressed by the sentences in our language all have purely descriptive contents, and hence we can be confident that we can appeal to ordinary descriptive logic in order to understand why those contents are inconsistent when they are.[197]

Schroeder makes an underlying appeal to ordinary descriptive logic in order to elucidate normative logic. The reason for this is as follows. If the contents of normative sentences were themselves normative, his account would not work because "we would be appealing to the logic of a normative language in order to explain the logic of a normative language".[198] It is not completely clear what this passage means, but Schroeder seems to hold that the account would be circular. But this does not seem to be a problem. After all, we explain the inconsistency between descriptive sentences appealing to their propositional content (which is also descriptive).

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[196] Schroeder 2008, p.67
[197] Schroeder 2008,p.68
[198] Schroeder 2008, p.68

4.3.1 Validity and inconsistency

Now let us turn our attention to Schroeder's definitions of logical inconsistency, logical entailment and validity. Schroeder claims that a proper account of logical inconsistency must be formal, that is, it should not matter what semantic interpretation we give to the non-logical terms. In order to understand this idea, consider the sentences:

(1) Murder is wrong.
(2) Murder is not sphrong.

If 'wrong' and 'sphrong' have the same semantic interpretation, then (1) and (2) are inconsistent. But, according to Schroeder, they are not logically inconsistent. The inconsistency at issue is metaphysical, like the inconsistency between (3) and (4):

(3) 'Lake Winnebago is filled with water'.
(4) 'Lake Winnebago is not filled with H2O'.

Since the inconsistency between (3) and (4) does not arise only from the meaning of the logical constant 'not', it can't be logical. The notions of logical inconsistency, as well as entailment and validity, are then defined as follows:

> • **Logical inconsistency:** a set of n sentences is logically inconsistent just in case for some enumeration of those sentences, {'P1', . . . ,'Pn'}, {'P1&. . .&Pn−1','Pn'} is pairwise inconsistent, thereby reducing the more general case to the less general one.
> • **Logical entailment:** a sentence 'A' entails a sentence 'B' just in case {'A','∼B'} is logically inconsistent.
> • **Validity:** an argument with premises 'P1', . . . ,'Pn' and conclusion 'C' is logically valid just in case the set {'P1', . . . ,'Pn','∼C'} is logically inconsistent.[199]

[199] Cf. Schroeder 2008,p.70

On the above definition of validity, the little brother argument comes out as valid. For the states of mind expressed by the premises P1: 'lying is bad and P2: 'either lying is not bad or getting your little brother to lie is bad are inconsistent with the negation of the conclusion C: 'getting your little brother to lie is bad', which is read as FOR (not blaming for getting your little brother to lie). Putting everything on Schroeder's terms we get:

F1: FOR (blaming for lying).
F2: FOR (not blaming for lying or blaming for getting your little brother to lie).
F3: FOR (not blaming for getting your little brother to lie).

The sets {F1, F2} and {F3} are pairwise inconsistent. Thus, on Schroeder's definition, the argument is valid.

Before I finish this section, I will consider whether there is an analogy between Schroeder's view and Blackburn's second-order account of moral sentences. As we saw in chapter two, Blackburn uses the notion of second-order attitude in order to account for the meaning of complex moral sentences. Roughly, Blackburn's view is that a sentence such as 'murder is wrong' expresses *booing* towards murder, and 'defenestration is wrong' expresses *booing* towards defenestration. The conditional 'if murder is wrong, then defenestration is wrong'expresses a second-order attitude, that is, it expresses *hooraying* towards both attitudes taken together – *booing* murder and *booing* defenestration.

At first blush, there seems to be a big similarity between Schroeder and Blackburn's views. But after careful examination, we see this is just a wrong impression. For, as Schroeder's schema has it, the attitude of being for is not a second order attitude because it takes properties – not other attitudes – as objects: "for each predicate F, there is a relation, Rf, so that 'F(a)' expresses FOR (bearing Rf to a)".[200] Thus, on Schroeder's framework, the sentence 'murder is wrong' expresses FOR (blaming for murder), where 'blaming' is a relation that the agent bears with murder, the action under evaluation.

One might wonder why Schroeder did not consider the attitude of being against. For it may be objected that *blaming* is just a way of *being against*. On this perspective, 'murder is wrong' is read as expressing FOR (being against murder), where being for is now a second-order attitude taken with respect to the first-order attitude *being against*. If this move makes sense, then Schroeder's view is tarred with the same brush as Blackburn's second-order account. In this case, it would face the same objections as well. I think this is actually a fair point to make. But I do not wish to fully criticize Schroeder's account in this section. Since my main purpose here is to present his version of expressivism and the way in which it purports to solve the FGP, I will leave the critical appraisal of Schroeder's view for the section 4.4.1

Now let us take stock and summarize what has been said so far. We have seen that the driving force behind Schroeder's account of moral language is the parity thesis – the idea that normative sentences express desire-like attitudes in

[200] Schroeder 2008, p.57

the same way as descriptive sentences express beliefs. This thesis plays a central role in explaining why both the modal and the disagreement problems are avoided by expressivism. After this, we have presented Schroeder's account of the expression relation in terms of assertability conditions whose two main advantages are: allowing for insincerity and providing a solution to the composition problem. Finally, we have seen that Schroeder postulates the attitude of *being for*, a general non-cognitive attitude that agents take towards properties, in order to solve the negation and the composition problems.

4.3.2 Skorupski's objections

In "The Frege-Geach objection to expressivism: still unanswered" (2012), John Skorupski argues that Schroeder's solution to the Frege-Geach problem fails. He holds that Schroeder's semantics for complex normative sentences has a basic problem: it does not preserve the scope of the connectives when one translates the normative sentences by using his vocabulary. That is to say, when one applies Schroeder's reading to certain normative sentences, there is a misplaced scope interchange whose result is the impossibility of tracing a distinction between pairs of sentences that are clearly different.

Before presenting Skorupski's objection, let us remind ourselves of Schroeder's semantics for the sentential connectives:

> *base* Atomic sentences 'A' and 'B', and so on express states of being for: FOR (α), FOR(β), and so on.
> *not* If 'A' expresses FOR (α), then '∼A' expresses FOR (¬α)
> *and* If 'A' expresses FOR (α) and 'B' expresses FOR(β), then 'A&B' expresses FOR (α ∧β).

or If 'A' expresses FOR (α) and 'B' expresses FOR(β), then 'A ° B' expresses FOR (α v β).[201]

Skorupski notices that, apart from sentences like 'murder is wrong', Schroeder does not tell us what other normative sentences can be used to replace the letters 'A' and 'B' above. Since the set of normative sentences is certainly more vast than that, Skorupski proposes that sentences of the form 'you should do α' and 'it would be good to do α' are also ways in which one can express the state of being for α.

Let us begin with Skorupski criticism of how Schroeder's account might be used to deal with the following negated sentences:

(A) It is not the case that you should take a taxi.

(B) You should not take a taxi.

On Schroeder's semantics, (A) and (B) get the same interpretation: 'FOR (not taking a taxi)'. However, Skorupski claims, this is a problem because (A) and (B) are distinct: one who asserts (A) does not express a favoring attitude towards the action (more precisely, the inaction) of not taking a taxi. But one who asserts (B) expresses a favoring attitude towards not taking a taxi. [202]

With respect to conjunction, Skorupski holds that Schroeder's account does not allow us to distinguish (C) from (D):

(C) It would be good to climb the mountain this morning and it would be good to explore the valley this morning.

[201] Schroeder 2008, p.66
[202] Skorupski treats the phrases 'being for x' and 'favouring x' as equivalent.

(D) It would be good to climb the mountain and explore the valley this morning.

On Schroeder's semantics, both sentences would get the same reading: 'FOR (climbing the mountain and exploring the valley this morning)'. However, this seems to be only an appropriate reading of (D). Someone who asserts (C) does not seem to express a favoring attitude towards doing both activities (climbing and exploring). It looks as though someone asserts (C) would be happy to do any of them. The whole issue here is that Schroeder's interpretation does not preserve the large scope of the conjunction in (C). For what has large scope in 'FOR (climbing the mountain and exploring the valley this morning)' is the attitude of being for.

In the case of disjunction, the problem is to do with scope interchange. Now, the sentences Skorupski asks us to consider are the following:

(E) Either it's wrong to murder or it's wrong to steal.

(F) It's wrong either to murder or to steal.

Once again, (E) and (F) would also get the same reading: 'FOR (blaming for murdering or blaming for stealing)'. Nonetheless, this reading is implausible because these sentences are plainly distinct. For instance, one important difference has to do with their logical properties: (E) follows by the rule of disjunction introduction from 'murder is wrong', whereas (F) doesn't follow. Another difference is that in asserting (F) the speaker expresses a negative attitude towards both murdering and stealing, which is not the case in (E). Once more, using Schroeder's semantics led us to give the same interpretation to two intuitively different sentences.

According to Skorupski, the basic problem explained above prevents Schroeder from giving a proper account of the validity of the little brother argument. Let us consider it again:

(P1) Lying is wrong.
(P2) Either lying is not wrong or getting your little brother to lie is wrong.
(C) Getting your little brother to lie is wrong.

We have already seen that, on Schroeder's perspective, this argument is valid because one who endorses (P1) and (P2) but denies (C) expresses the following inconsistent combination of attitudes:

(F1) FOR (blaming for lying).
(F2) FOR (not blaming for lying or blaming for getting little brother to lie).
(F3) FOR (not blaming for getting little brother to lie).

Skoruspki claims that this account of validity fails because F2 does not preserve the scope of the disjunction in the second premise. It promotes a scope interchange that 'ruins' the translation. As he points out:

> in Schroeder's treatment the problem has not yet been solved, for an equally fundamental reason. F2 is not an admissible reading of P2. The problem is that F2 places the disjunction within the content of the attitude, whereas P2 has it with the dominant scope.[203]

Skorupski's conclusion is that the pairs of sentences (A)-(B), (C)-(D), and (E)-(F) are clearly distinct. However, since they get the same reading if we adopt Schroeder's semantics of the sentential connectives, we must reject Schroeder's

[203] Skorupski 2012, p.17

account. In addition, we also have the result that Schroeder's account of the validity of the moral *modus ponens* also fails.

4.4 Schroeder's reply and Skorupski's counter-reply

In the paper "Skorupski on Being For" (2012) Schroeder tries to reply to some of the previous objections. The word 'some' is appropriate here because he neither addresses the problems raised for conjunction and disjunction of 'should sentences', nor Skorupski's point about negation, namely, that of explaining the difference between 'It is not the case that you should take a taxi' and 'You should not take a taxi'.

Instead of addressing Skorupski's negation problem, Schroeder repeats his explanation of the difference between 'stealing is not wrong' and 'not stealing is wrong'. He writes: "the former has the semantic value, *not blaming for stealing*, and the latter has the semantic value, *blaming for not stealing*".[204] As we will see next, Skorupski will once again point out that this account is not enough to solve the general problem about the scope interchange in some normative sentences.

Let's examine how Schroeder deals with the charge that his account of validity fails. He provides a parody argument in order to hold that Skorupski's objection does not work. Schroeder asks us to consider the way in which a cognitivist would read the little brother argument.

(S1) BELIEF (lying is wrong).

(S2) BELIEF (lying is not wrong or getting your little brother to lie is wrong).

(S3) BELIEF (getting your little brother to lie is wrong).

[204] Schroeder 2012, pp.737-738

Then he tells us to imagine that someone who opposes cognitivism argues in the following way:

> Nonetheless, in the cognitivist's treatment the problem has still not been solved, for an equally fundamental reason. S2 is not an admissible reading of P2. The problem is that S2 places the disjunction within the content of the attitude, whereas P2 has it with dominant scope.[205]

As you can see, this is a paraphrase of Skorupski's point about scope interchange. Schroeder's idea is that if you consider that this argument is confused, you should treat Skorupski's argument in the same way. For both arguments tell us that the scope variation of 'or' in the second premise makes the argument invalid. Therefore, if you do not consider Schroeder's parody argument convincing, you should not be persuaded by Skorupski's version as well.

Skorupski (2013) provides a counter-reply to Schroeder. He argues that Schroeder's account of the difference between 'stealing is not wrong' and 'not stealing is wrong' is not enough to address the general problem of scope variation. After all, apart from those with the form 'x is wrong', there are other sorts of normative sentences that can be negated (e.g., 'you should do α'). Skorupski writes: "the question is not about the particular case of negation and 'wrong', where Schroeder has offered a solution to the particular case, but about the way negation can exchange scope with normative predicates in general".[206]

In order to flag this up, Skorupski puts the problem in more abstract terms. He asks us to consider a normative predicate N such that 'N(α)' expresses the

[205] Schroeder 2012, p.739
[206] Skorupski 2013, p.4

attitude of being for α. In this case, there would still be a problem for Schroeder's expressivist theory, namely, that of explaining the difference between '¬Nα' and 'N¬α', 'Nα v N β' and 'N(α v β), etc.

Now the parody argument. Skorupski classifies it as 'bizarre'.[207] For there is a crucial difference between the argument from (F1) and (F2) to (F3), and the parody one. In the parody argument, as Skorupski rightly points out, "the contents of beliefs are propositions, among which relations of propositional logic can hold (and in which scope differences can occur)".[208] But in the argument from (F1) and (F2) to (F3) the contents of the attitude of being for are not propositional. Therefore, since there isn't a relevant similarity between the two cases, Schroeder's reply does not work.

As I see it, Skorupski's counter-reply is successful. For although it is true that the cognitivist accepts that the sentences (P1) – (C) express beliefs, he does not have to agree with the claim that those beliefs are part of their meaning or even that they play a central role in the understanding of their meaning. In fact, for the typical cognitivist, what a moral sentence means is something different from the mental state that it expresses. Thus, since (S1)- (S3) totally misrepresents the way in which a cognitivist would read the little brother argument, Skorupski is right in thinking that the parody argument does not go through.

4.4.1 Woods' reply to Skorupski

In his short paper "Reply to Skorupski", Jack Woods defends Schroeder's account from Skorupski's objections. Woods provides an interpretation of the

[207] Cf.Skorupski 2013, p.4
[208] Skorupski 2013, p.5

examples brought about by Skorupski that is able to distinguish their meaning. Let us consider again the sentences (A) and (B)

(A) It is not the case that you should take a taxi.
(B) You should not take a taxi.

Woods' reply is on a pair with the way in which Schroeder solves the negation problem posed by Unwin. The novelty is that Woods' reading of (A) and (B) involves the introduction of the notion of 'recommending that'. Then he asks us to assume that this notion is tied to 'should' in the same way as 'blaming for' is tied to 'wrong'. Thus, we get the following readings:

(A') FOR (not recommending that you take a taxi).
(B') FOR (recommending that you do not take a taxi).

Now we can clearly distinguish the meaning of (A) from the meaning of (B). According to Woods, this procedure can also be applied to distinguish the scope of the connective 'or' in sentences such as 'you should do α or you should do β' and 'you should do α v β'. By using the notion of 'recommending that', those sentences get, respectively, the following readings: 'FOR (recommending that you do α or recommending that you do β)' and 'FOR (recommending that you do α v β)'.

Is it plausible, as Woods suggests, to tie 'should' to 'recommend that' in order to deal with the aforementioned sentences? In my view, Woods' reply does not work. In order to explain the extent to which I agree with it, I must trace a distinction between a weak and a strong reading of 'should'. On the weak reading, 'you should do α' does not imply that it is not permissible not to do α. For instance, when a careful mother asserts (G) You should wash your hands before eating or

when you warn your friend about the rain by saying (H) 'You should take an umbrella'. In this kind of case Woods' suggestion can be successfully applied:

(G) FOR (recommending that you wash your hands before eating).

(H) FOR (recommending that you take an umbrella).

Woods' proposal works here because, in both cases, it is not impermissible to refuse from doing what is recommended (even though it may be advisable to do it). It also works for cases in which 'good' is used to express moral optionality (an action that is both permissible to perform and permissible not to perform). For instance, the sentence 'it would be good to give all your income to charity'. The idea is that it is both permissible to give all your income to charity, but also permissible not to give it. It would be implausible to interpret 'good' as expressing moral obligation in this case.

How about the strong reading of 'should'? In contrast, the strong reading tells us that 'you should do α ' implies that it is not permissible not to do α, and that 'you shouldn't do α' implies that it is not permissible to do α. This is the reading we typically employ in moral discourse. For instance, (I) 'You should keep your promise' implies that it is not permissible not to keep your promise. (J) 'You should not cheat on your wife' implies that it is not permissible to cheat on your wife.

As you can see, there are situations in which the association of 'should' to 'recommending that' does not work, namely, the cases where 'should' gets a strong reading. Thus, (J) cannot be plausibly interpreted as 'FOR (recommending that you do not cheat on your wife'. Although it is true that one who utters (J) might also be

making a recommendation, one is not *merely* doing this. The meaning of (J) goes further than this because it carries the idea that it is not permissible to cheat on your wife. And the same observations go for the other sentences where 'should' gets a strong reading.

Therefore, Woods' response must be rejected because it is limited and cannot be generalized in order to cover the two readings of 'should'. It is a limited proposal because it works only for the cases in which 'should' gets a weak reading. It works well for distinguishing (A) 'It is not the case that you should take a taxi' from (B) 'You should not take a taxi'. However, as we saw, it does not work for interpreting sentences such as (I) and (J), which is a fundamental task for one who wants to defend Schroeder's view from Skorupski's objection.

4.4.2 Assessing Skorupski's objection

One might get the impression that Skorupski's objection is tarred with the same brush as Unwin's point about negation. Nonetheless, this impression is misleading. There is, in fact, an important difference between them. Unwin's point is all about the negation of sentences through which we make third person ascriptions of attitude, *i.e.*, sentences of the form '*S* disapproves of α'.[209] But Skorupski's objection is not only about the negation of normative sentences with the term 'should'. It is a general point about scope interchange that applies across various linguistic constructions we can make with normative sentences. In contrast, the sentences addressed by Unwin are not even normative. After all, to assert a sentence of the form '*S* disapproves of x' is not to make a normative

[209] I'm following Schroeder's reading of Unwin's negation problem.

judgment.

In order to brush Skorupski's objection aside, I will put forward a reply that employs the property of blaming for in the interpretation of his examples. Before presenting this reply, I would like to stress that I do not wish to fly Schroeder's flag. Rather, I do this just to indicate how a response to Skorupski might be developed. I'll provide my own objections to Schroeder's account in the last section of this chapter.

So, let us start with (A) and (B). By using 'blaming' we can read them in the following way:

(A*) FOR (not blaming for not taking a taxi).
(B*) FOR (blaming for taking a taxi).

As you can see, 'blaming' can do the job. For there seems to be a connection between what one should do and whether or not one is to blame. The idea that there is such a connection is justified by the following intuitive claims. If it is not the case that you should do α, then you are not to blame for not doing α. Since it is not the case that you should give all your salary to charity, you are not to blame for not giving all your salary to charity. But if you should do α, then you are to blame for not doing α. For instance, assuming that you should give £5 to charity, then you are to blame for not doing it. Finally, if you should not do α, then you are to blame for doing α. For if one should not lie, then one is to blame for having lied.

The reading of (C) proposed by Skorupski looks right. According to him, the problem was about the reading of (D). But why should an expressivist bother to explain (C) and (D) since they are not even moral sentences? Clearly, the sense in

which 'good' is being used is not moral. So, let us think about a better example and see whether Skorupski's point still holds. Consider:

(C*) It would be good to tell the truth and it would be good to return the lost wallet to its owner.

(D*) It would be good to tell the truth and return the lost wallet to its owner.

Now the sense in which 'good' is being used in (C*) and (D*) is clearly moral. Thus, assuming the plausible claim that if an action is good, then you are to blame for not doing it, we can read them as follows:

(C**) FOR (blaming for not telling the truth) and FOR (blaming for not returning the lost wallet).

(D**) FOR (blaming for not (telling the truth and returning the lost wallet).

How about (E) and (F)? In order to read these sentences in a way that the large scope of the disjunction is preserved we need to assume that 'FOR' can occur within the scope of the sentential connectives. In fact, Schroeder does not provide any reason as to why this cannot be done. But it seems to be a perfectly natural move to make, once it is plausible to conjoin, disjoin and even deny sentences expressive of attitudes.

Thus, in order to preserve the large scope of the disjunction (E) must be read as expressing FOR (blaming for murdering) or FOR (blaming for stealing). Finally, to preserve the large scope of 'wrong', the sentence (F) must be read as expressing 'FOR [(blaming for (either murdering or stealing))]'. If these readings are possible within the framework of Schroeder's semantics, then Skorupski's objection does not justify its rejection.

Finally, let us consider (I) and (J). On the kind of interpretation I'm proposing, these sentences would be read in the following way :

(I*) FOR (blaming for not keeping your promise).

(J*) FOR (blaming for cheating on your wife).

How about the little brother argument? As you may probably remember, Skorupski holds that Schroeder does not provide a proper account of the little brother argument. The reason is that, on Schroeder's framework, the second premise (P2) gets the wrong reading because the large scope of 'or' is not preserved. Now let us see what happens if we apply the reading proposed in this section. The argument goes as follows:

(P1*) FOR (blaming for lying).
(P2*) FOR (not blaming for lying) or FOR (blaming for getting little brother to lie).
(C*) FOR (not blaming for getting little brother to lie).

As you can see, now the argument goes through. For the large scope of the disjunction is preserved in the second premise (which originally was 'either lying is not wrong or getting little brother to lie is wrong').

This response seems to block one of Skorupski's objections. The question that arises now is whether Schroeder is entitled to this move. On reflection, it seems that Schroeder cannot go down this road because of his commitment to mentalism, *viz.*, the view that moral sentences get their meaning from the mental states they express. As a consequence of this commitment, Schroeder has to defend that the attitude operator should always take the large scope in a given moral

sentence. The commitment to mentalism is, as we have seen in section 4.1, a crucial part of Schroeder's position. Therefore, Skorupski's objection can be avoided only at the cost of abandoning Schroeder's position and assuming a novel one that rejects the mentalist thesis.

4.5 Schroeder's rejection of expressivism

Now we must have a look at the way in which Schroeder rejects his own expressivist account. We have seen that one of the central assumptions of Schroeder's framework is that the sentential connectives operate on mental states. Then we apply compositional rules to form complex descriptive sentences: 'grass is green or snow is white' is formed out of 'grass is green' and 'snow is white', both of which express beliefs that are linked by 'or', giving rise to a complex belief. The same goes for normative sentences. 'Murder is wrong or stealing is wrong' is formed out of 'murder is wrong' and 'stealing is wrong', both of which express states of being for that are linked by 'or', giving rise to a complex state of being for. According to Schroeder, this is possible because each kind of sentence has a different kind of mental state as its content. The content of a descriptive sentence is a belief, and the content of a normative sentence is a state of being for.

No problem so far. But, on his perspective, as soon as we start to think about mixed sentences (complex sentences with both a descriptive and a normative part), a problem will arise – the problem of mixed sentences. This problem can be put as follows: assuming that the sentential connectives operate on mental states, and also assuming that descriptive and normative sentences express different kinds of mental states, how can one account for the meanings of mixed sentences,

e.g., 'murder is wrong or grass is green'? What mental state would this sentence express? A cognitive (belief) or a non-cognitive (being for)?

For Schroeder, in order to solve the mixed sentences problem, "there is really nothing for it, but to conclude that all sentences must really express the same kind of attitude". [210] For he assumes that in order to be possible for the connectives to link two mental states, these mental states must be of the same type. This being the case, the expressivist has two options. Either the expressivist holds that both descriptive and normative sentences express beliefs or he holds that both kinds of sentences express non-cognitive states. Since the first option amounts to the end of expressivism, the expressivist must obviously choose the second one. Schroeder then shows how to develop an account of belief in terms of being for.

Schroeder's account appeals to the notion of proceeding as if.[211] He suggests that believing that *p* is being for proceeding as if *p* (pai *p*, for short). But what is it to proceed as if *p*? On Schroeder's words: "to proceed as if *p* is to take *p* as settled in deciding what to do. So being for proceeding as if *p* is being for taking *p* as settled in deciding what to do".[212] On this account, 'grass is green' expresses the state of being for proceeding as if grass is green. 'Murder is wrong' continue to express being for blaming for murder. Thence, the mixed sentence 'murder is wrong or grass is green' expresses being for blaming for murdering or proceeding as if grass is green. On Schroeder's own vocabulary:

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[210] Schroeder 2008, p.91

[211] It may be objected that it is implausible to interpret believing that *p* in terms of proceeding as if *p*. After all, the term 'proceeding' suggests some relation to practice. But it is often the case that our beliefs are not related to practice at all. For instance, consider the belief that all bachelors are unmarried. It is not even clear what it would mean to proceed as if all bachelors are unmarried.

[212] Schroeder 2008, p.93

• 'Murder is wrong or grass is green' = FOR (blaming for murdering or pai grass is green).

Apparently, things are starting to look better for expressivism. Nonetheless, according to Schroeder, if the expressivist adopts this account of belief, he is going to stumble into a new negation problem. To see this, compare the following two groups of sentences:

Group 1
g Jon thinks that grass is green.

gn1 Jon does not think that grass is green.

gn2 Jon thinks that grass is not green.

Group 2
g* Jon is for pai grass is green.

gn1* Jon is not for pai grass is green.

gn2* Jon is for not pai grass is green.

gn3* Jon is for pai grass is not green.

We have seen that, as regards to the negation problem raised by Unwin, the issue was that the previous expressivist accounts could not cope with the three ways in which the sentence '*S* thinks that murder is wrong' can be negated. The new negation problem is precisely the opposite. The problem with the proceeding as if account is that it allows for too many ways in which g can be negated.[213] It should allow for two, but it allows for three.

One might wonder whether the new negation problem is actually a problem. For it is arguable that if one can make sense of the difference between gn2* and gn3*, then the fact that there is an extra place for placing the negation in g* does

[213] Cf. Schroeder 2008, p.96

not affect our ordinary way of talking. However, this is not the way Schroeder sees this issue. He thinks it is a real problem and tries to provide a solution to it.

In order to solve the new negation problem, Schroeder gives a new treatment of belief. Now he considers that believing is a biforcated attitude, in the sense that believing that *p* involves being for pai *p*, but also being for not pai ¬*p*. Schroeder represents this idea as 'BF (*p*) = <FOR (pai *p*)*, FOR (¬ pai ¬*p*)>', and traces a distinction between major and minor attitudes, where a commitment to the first leads to a commitment to the second. [214]

Under the biforcated-attitude semantics, the account of negation is as follows:

'P'	expresses	<FOR (pai *p*)*, FOR (¬pai ¬*p*)>	meaning postulate
'∼P'	expresses	<FOR (¬pai *p*), FOR (¬¬pai ¬*p*)*>	from∼
BF (¬*p*)	=	<FOR (pai ¬*p*)*, FOR (¬pai ¬¬*p*)*>	analysis of belief

How does this solve the new negation problem? In fact, Schroeder does not tell us how exactly g, gn1, and gn2 are reinterpreted in terms of the biffocarted attitude account, but based on the table above I think it would be something along the following lines:

> Group 2
> **g**** Jon is for *pai* grass is green and is for not *pai* grass is not green
> **gn1**** Jon is for not *pai* grass is green and for pai grass is not green
> **gn2**** Jon is for *pai* grass is not green and is for not *pai* it is not the case that grass is not green.

[214] Schroeder uses the asterisk (*) in order to indicate which attitude is the major one.

Now, since there is no extra spot to place the negation, the new negation problem is solved. Once again, this sounds like good news for the expressivists. However, this solution gives rise to another problem – which Schroeder calls 'the new new negation problem', a problem that arises out of his solution to the new negation problem.

On Schroeder's proposal, even normative sentences will express pairs of attitudes. But this will not change anything for this class of sentences, except the need to write everything twice.[215] For it turns out that the major and minor attitudes are exactly the same. For example:

> Ex1) 'murder is wrong' *expresses* <FOR (blaming for murder)*, FOR (blaming for murder)>.
>
> The same goes for the negation:
>
> Ex2) 'murder is not wrong' *expresses* <FOR (not blaming for murder)*, FOR (not blaming for murder)>.

In order to fully understand the new new negation problem, we have to look at Schroeder's definition of disacceptance: "disaccepting 'A', we can say, is being in the minor attitude of the state expressed by '~A'".[216] Schroeder thinks that disacceptance of p and acceptance of $\neg p$ are two different states. But his definition of disacceptance only works well for descriptive sentences. The reason for this is that, under the biforcated-attitude account, the disacceptance of p (when p is a

[215] Cf.Schroeder 2008, p.105
[216] Schroeder 2007, p.104

normative sentence) turns out to be the same as acceptance of $\neg p$. After all, to accept 'murder is not wrong' is to be for not blaming for murder.

According to Schroeder's definition, to disaccept 'murder is wrong' is to be in the minor attitude expressed by 'murder is not wrong'. So, the new new negation problem is that, as we can see in Ex2, the minor state is exactly the same as the major one. Consequently, we have the result that disaccepting 'murder is wrong' turns out to be equivalent to accepting 'murder is not wrong'. This result is implausible because one who disaccepts 'murder is wrong' is not compelled to accept 'murder is not wrong', for one can be neutral (in the sense of withholding his judgment) on the issue.

In addition, Schroeder points out that the account of belief in terms of proceeding as if creates yet another problem, namely, that of not allowing us to assign truth-conditions to ordinary descriptive sentences. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, Schroeder thinks that expressivism must be committed to the idea that descriptive language gets its content from the content of the corresponding mental states (mentalism). However, if beliefs are interpreted in terms of the attitude of proceeding as if (which is a non-cognitive attitude), the expressivist cannot ascribe truth-conditions to descriptive sentences. For the ascription of truth-conditions to descriptive sentences depends on their contents having truth conditions in the first place.

Schroeder then rejects the expressivist view that he himself formulated. As we saw, he tries to make the most of expressivism. Since the very beginning, his purpose was only to show how an expressivist could develop an account of moral

discourse that is able to deal with the various facets of the Frege-Geach problem. But it turned out that his successive attempts to emend the theory have increasingly led him to other problems. In his concluding remarks Schroeder says: "Expressivism, I hope to have shown, is coherent, interesting, and potentially explanatorily powerful. But I also hope to have assembled significant cause to believe that it is false".[217]

4.5.1 Final remarks on Schroeder's account

In this section, I will raise three objections against Schroeder's expressivist account. The first objection is that Schroeder's commitment to mentalism gives rise to the Frege-Geach problem for descriptive sentences. Mentalism, as you may probably remember, is the claim according to which the semantic content of descriptive sentences derives from the contents of the corresponding mental states (beliefs). That is to say, 'grass is green' gets its content from the belief that grass is green, 'snow is white' gets its content from the belief that snow is white, and so forth.

Does this account can be generalized to cover embedded occurrences of descriptive sentences? The answer seems to be negative, for 'grass is green' does not seem to express a belief when it occurs embedded in the conditional 'if grass is green, then snow is white'. In this occurrence, what would be the content of 'grass is green'? Schroeder's account, in virtue of its commitment to mentalism, leaves us in the dark as to what this content might be. Therefore, there must be something wrong with his position, for the way he sets things up implies that the Frege-Geach

[217] Schroeder 2008, p.179

problem kicks in for beliefs just as it does for desire-like attitudes.

The second objection is against Schroeder's account of belief in terms of proceeding as if. This account is dubious because *believing* and *proceeding as if* can come apart. For there are cases in which we proceed as if some proposition is true, even though we do not believe it. In fact, people often have practical reasons to act on the basis of false beliefs or even without believing the proposition in question. For instance, I can proceed as if I will finish to write my whole PhD thesis in one week, even though I do not believe I will be able to do it. But as long as this gives me some motivation to keep writing, I can proceed as if I were able to finish it in such a short period of time. Likewise, an actor who is playing Napoleon's role on the stage might proceed as if he was Napoleon (or at least partially proceed as if…), even though the actor does not believe that he is.

Although it is compelling, this objection does not imply that the notion of proceeding as if is totally useless. For the notion of proceeding as if might be an appropriate way to analyze the concept of supposition. As a matter of fact, it seems that this is what supposing is all about. We take some proposition and proceed as if it were true. So, let's say that to suppose that *p* is being for proceeding as if *p*. Is this analysis plausible? The following example indicates the answer must be positive. In the course of a criminal investigation, in order to prove some point through a *reductio* argument, a detective might suppose that John is the murderer, even though he does not believe it. Under the previous analysis, in supposing that John is the murderer the detective is proceeding as if John is the murderer. Proceeding as if, in this case, means conducting the investigation, examining the evidence,

allocating resources, etc. In the light of new information, the detective might discard the supposition and then stop proceeding as if John is the murderer. But this would not change anything about his belief in John's innocence. After all, it might be said that the detective was just proceeding as if John was the murderer. Thus, even though the notion of proceeding as if does not provide a proper account of belief, it does for supposition.

The third problem is related to Schroeder's account of normative sentences in terms of being for. The objection is that his account does not make justice to the complexity of our psychological reality. Suppose we accept the view according to which in judging that murder is wrong we express the state FOR (blaming for murder). Still, we could then ask: how about the cases in which we are indifferent to something? Nothing in Schroeder's account allows us to deal with this case. And this is actually a big deal because there are situations in which we clearly have an attitude of indifference. For instance, if someone asks your opinion about a controversial issue that you did not make up your mind yet, *e.g.,* the morality of human cloning you may well answer: 'I'm neither for nor against it'. This may be seen as the expression of an attitude of indifference towards human cloning.

Therefore, in addition to what Schroeder himself says against his version of expressivism, we have three extra reasons to believe his view cannot get off the ground.

In the next chapter, I challenge the view that the expressivist has to go down the road pointed out by Schroeder. But before moving on to the next chapter, it is important to explain why I am not going to discuss the ecumenical expressivist

view and its attempt to solve the FGP. The main contemporary advocate of this view is Michael Ridge. Indeed, Ridge (2006) presents a new way of understanding the metaethical debate between cognitivism and expressivism. He defines them as follows:

- Cognitivism: For any moral sentence M, M is conventionally used to express a belief such that M is true if and only if the belief is true.
- Expressivism: For any moral sentence M, M is not conventionally used to express a belief such that M is true if and only if the belief is true.

This way of defining the views under dispute makes the distinction between cognitivism vs. expressivism exclusive but no exhaustive, so as to make room for a hybrid view.[218] Ridge then holds that ecumenical expressivism is the view that "moral utterances express both beliefs and desires but denies that a moral utterance is guaranteed to be true just in case the belief it expresses is true".[219] With respect to validity, Ridge claims that "an argument is valid just in case any possible believer who accepts all of the premises but at one and the same time denies the conclusion would thereby be guaranteed to have inconsistent beliefs".[220]

Since an agent is said to have inconsistent beliefs just in case the propositions in which the agent believes cannot be simultaneously true, we can see that the notions of *proposition*, *belief* and *truth* play a central role in Ridge's account. For this reason, as plausible as it may sound for people that are keen on hybrid theories, I am not going to discuss in detail the ecumenical expressivist view

[218] Cf. Ridge 2006, p.307. For more on ecumenical expressivism see Ridge (2014)
[219] Ridge 2006, pp.307-308
[220] Ridge 2006, p.326

in this thesis.[221] For, as it will become clearer in the next chapter, my goal is to develop further a more 'pure' or 'extreme' expressivist framework – some may call it a *bone fide* type of expressivism. I am aware of the fact that this form of expressivism –*i.e.,* one that makes as little reference as possible to propositions or any other notion that the realist considers himself to have a special claim over it – is not popular nowadays. However, I wish to show that a *bona fide* type of expressivism is still alive and kicking.

[221] By the same token, I'm not including in this thesis a discussion of the view put forward by Blackburn in *Ruling Passions* (1998). Contrary to Blackburn, I do not think that expressivism needs to clothe itself in propositional garment and earn the right to a notion of *truth* (even if this notion is minimalist). In addition, much of what Blackburn defends in his that book – for instance, the idea that in asserting a conditional we tie ourselves to a tree of possibilities – is a restatement of what he defended in 'Attitudes and Contents' (1988), something that I have already discussed in detail in this thesis (see section 2.3).

5 Chapter Five – Dispositional expressivism: a new account of moral discourse

This chapter is divided into five parts. First, I argue that Geach's original requirement begs the question and propose a reformulation of this requirement (which turns out to be neutral). Second, I show how an expressivist can meet the neutral requirement. Third, I use a version of Moore's paradox to show that attitudes and prescriptions are related via the notion of conversational implicature. Fourth, I explain the main aspects of the logic of prescriptions developed by the Greek Philosopher Peter Vranas (2008, 2011). Fifth, I provide a two-level account of validity: the psychological account is carried out at the agent level (relations between attitudes), and the logical account is carried out at the prescriptive level (relations between prescriptions). In doing this, it is important to clarify at the outset that I'm not making a general point about moral discourse, but trying to develop further an expressivist picture of this domain of discourse.[222] So, the approach here is modest. I provide an account of evaluative conditionals and explain the validity of the little brother argument within an expressivist framework, one that does not suffer from the same problems that affect previous expressivist views. More importantly, my account does not rely on the controversial assumption that attitudes can stand in logical relations. It shows how an expressivist can help himself to conversational implicatures to get to logical relations between prescriptions.

[222] Given that the subject matter of this thesis is the Frege-Geach problem, which is only a problem for expressivists, this strategy is justified. As I see it, in order to deal with the Frege-Geach problem, one has to show that it is possible to develop a plausible account of conditionals and validity within an expressivist framework.

5.1 Does the Frege-Geach objection beg the question?

In this section, I argue that Geach's original challenge to expressivism begs the question. I trace a distinction between neutral and question-begging requirements and hold that the Frege point falls into the latter category. Before getting into the details of my argument, it is important to clarify at the outset the way in which I see the debate between cognitivism and expressivism. Here I provide a way of setting out the debate that has an advantage over the others in virtue of being neutral, that is, it does not favour any of the views from the outset of the discussion.

Expressivism and cognitivism can be thought of as two broad frameworks for the interpretation of moral discourse. This interpretation involves, among other things, the evaluation of people's moral views as well as the assessment of the arguments they formulate within this domain. In the expressivist framework, one typically encounters four main claims:

(e1) Moral anti-realism: there are no moral facts and properties.
(e2) Moral language does not fall within the realm of descriptive language.
(e3) Moral sentences do not express propositions (they lack truth-values).
(e4) Moral assertions express desire-like states (non-cognitive attitudes such as approval and disapproval).

In contrast, in the cognitivist framework one finds their respective contradictories:

(c1) Moral realism: there are moral facts and properties.[223]

[223] It is important to point out that there is an exception to the claim that all cognitivist views defend the existence of moral facts and properties. Error theory is a cognitivist and anti-realist account of moral discourse. This view is defended by Mackie (1977).

(c2) Moral language falls within the realm of descriptive language.

(c3) Moral sentences express propositions.

(c4) Moral assertions express beliefs.

Regardless of what framework one assumes, one will need to provide an account of complex evaluative sentences, *e.g.*, conditionals, and important logical notions, such as validity and inconsistency and, in general, an account of the logical relations moral sentences seem to bear to one another. However, neither the expressivist nor the cognitivist can plausibly demand from each other the fulfilment of a requirement that is at odds with their fundamental claims. Otherwise, one will beg the question against the other. Later on this chapter, I will explain in more detail the notion of question-begging that I have in mind here.

I shall argue next that begging the question is exactly what Geach does when he holds that the Frege point is a *desideratum* to be satisfied by the expressivist account of the moral domain of discourse. Let me remind you of the passage in which Geach formulates the Frege point:

> A thought may have just the same content whether you assent to its truth or not; a proposition may occur in discourse now asserted, now unasserted, and yet be recognizably the same proposition. This may appear so obviously true as to be hardly worth saying; but we shall see it is worth saying, by contrast with erroneous theories of assertion, and also because a right view of assertion is fatal to well-known philosophical views on certain other topics. I shall call this point about assertion *the Frege point*.[224]

Among the 'other topics' mentioned in this passage is the problem of explaining the meaning of moral sentences – indicative sentences containing moral predicates such as 'good' and 'bad'. According to Geach, the earlier form of

[224] Geach 1965, p.449

expressivism – which he coined *act-condemnation theory of 'bad'* – is an erroneous view of what the assertion of moral sentences amounts to.[225] The reason is that the act-condemnation theory of 'bad' theory, according to Geach, does not comply with the Frege point.

Nonetheless, as we have seen in the first chapter, Frege did not mean to apply his requirement to another domain of discourse other than the propositional one. With respect to the propositional domain of discourse, it is widely accepted that we are dealing with truth-apt sentences. But it is a controversial metaethical issue whether moral sentences are truth-apt and can stand in the same logical relations as ordinary indicative sentences stand. Therefore, the two cases are not analogous and it is sensible to ask whether Geach's attempt to apply the Frege point to other domains of discourse is legitimate.

In chapter one, we have also seen that the only evidence that Geach provides for the claim that 'lying is bad' means the same whether or not embedded – where 'meaning' is understood as thought/proposition – is that the little brother argument (LBA) is valid. In the standard format, Geach's argument (GA) is as follows:

(g1)If moral sentences do not express the same proposition whether or not embedded, then LBA is invalid.
(g2) LBA is valid.
(g3) Moral sentences express the same proposition whether or not embedded.

[225] The condemnation theory of 'bad' is an earlier version of expressivism which says that the meaning 'bad' is to be explained by reference to the fact that it is used to condemn things.

The first premise relies on the Frege point. Geach holds that the expressivist view must be rejected because it implies the negation of g3, which is a dreadful result because g3 it is the conclusion of an apparently sound argument. As a matter of fact, Geach thinks that his argument was a knockdown one. As he writes: "the fourfold unequivocal occurrence of "bad" in that example [the little brother argument] is enough to refute the act-of-condemnation theory".[226] I don't intend to claim that Geach's argument is completely mistaken. I still think that Geach sets an important challenge. However, I believe that the challenge is not as conclusive as he reckoned.

As we saw in chapter one, Frege did not mean to apply the Frege point to expressivism or any other metaethical theory. It was originally formulated as a *desideratum* for theories designed to account for the propositional domain of discourse. But this is not the reason why Geach's argument is problematic. After all, even though Frege did not foresee it, it might have been the case that the Frege point could be used in an objection against the expressivist view of moral discourse.

As I will argue in the next section, the reason why Geach's argument is problematic is that the Frege point is a question-begging requirement when used against the expressivist view of moral discourse. Since it is a controversial metaethical question whether or not moral sentences express propositions, it strikes me as natural to wonder whether Geach's move is actually legitimate: is it plausible to demand from the expressivist the fulfilment of Frege's requirement?

[226] Geach 1965, p.464

There have been a great number of attempts to solve the Frege-Geach problem. Nevertheless, as far as I know, nobody has carefully examined the very idea according to which the Frege point, as formulated by Geach, is a legitimate constraint to be imposed upon the expressivist.

My claim is that the Frege point is not a legitimate requirement to be used in the metaethical debate on the nature of moral discourse. Rather, it is a question begging one. The claim that a requirement can beg the question may sound odd to many people. After all, the phrase 'question-begging' is typically used to refer to a certain type of argument, namely, the type that assumes as true what is in dispute. However, I will show that no inconsistency or conceptual difficulty arises in the definition I will provide. But before that, in order to shed some light on the notion of begging the question, I shall present Sinnot-Armstrong's proposal.

5.2 Sinnot-Armstrong's account of begging the question

Sinnot-Armstrong (1999) holds that whether or not an argument begs the question is a matter of use, for it depends on the purpose of the person who presents the argument: "a particular purpose can properly be ascribed only to a particular person's use of a particular argument on a particular occasion".[227] Since the very same argument may be used in different contexts with different purposes, it follows that the same argument may be used in a question-begging way in one situation, and in a non question-begging way in another situation.

Sinnot-Armstrong adopts what he calls the epistemic approach on question-begging: "the epistemic approach claims that whether a use of an argument begs

[227] Sinnot-Armstrong 1999, p.175

the question depends on whether one has the right kind of reason to believe the premise".[228] Additionally, he traces a distinction between a subjective and an objective version of that approach. On the subjective approach, the question whether an argument begs the question depends on one's actual beliefs. On the objective approach, this will depend solely on the propositions.

Sinnot-Armstrong favours the epistemic subjective approach, which is based on a further distinction between arguer justification *vs*. audience justification.[229] The main idea here is that in order to understand the nature of what it is to be question-begging, we need to consider the typical purpose for which a given argument is put forward, namely, justification.[230] Sinnot-Armstrong points out that, strictly speaking, it is a categorical mistake to ascribe purpose to an argument: "a particular purpose can properly be ascribed only to a particular person's use of a particular argument on a particular occasion".[231]

A person's purpose in using a particular argument *is arguer justification* when the arguer seeks to show to the audience that he himself has a reason to believe in a certain proposition *p*. In contrast, a person's purpose in using a particular argument is *audience justification* when the arguer tries to show to the audience that the audience has a reason to believe in *p*: "the audience might already hold other beliefs that commit her to that belief, but she has not yet seen that (or how) her other beliefs commit her to that belief".[232]

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[228] Sinnot-Armstrong 1999, p.179
[229] For arguments against the objective epistemic approach, see Sinnot-Armstrong (1999, p.174)
[230] Sinnot-Armstrong acknowledges that there are other purposes for which we use arguments: explanation, refutation, simplification, organisation, and figuring out.
[231] Sinnot-Armstrong 1999, p.175
[232] Sinnot-Armstrong 1999, p.181

Thus, on Sinnot-Armstrong's account, the achievement of the justification purpose leans on the beliefs of the arguer and the audience. He presents us with the following conditions:

> There are two sufficient conditions of begging the question: dependence on one's belief in the conclusion and dependence on one's reason to believe the conclusion. Contrapositively, to avoid begging the question one's reason to believe the premise must be independent of both (a) one's belief in the conclusion and also (b) one's reason to believe the conclusion.[233]

An important question that arises when one carefully reads this passage is about how one should interpret the notion of *independence*. A plausible candidate is the notion of causal dependence. David Lewis (1973) characterises *causal dependence* in counterfactual terms: "if *c* and *e* are two actual events such that *e* would not have occurred without *c*, then *c* is a cause of *e*".[234] On Lewis's definition, the *relata* of causal dependence are events. However, he also recognises that this relation holds between propositions: "counterfactual dependence among events is simply counterfactual dependence among the corresponding propositions". [235] Thus, given two propositions *p* and *q*, *p* depends on q iff the following holds: if q were the case, p would also be the case, and if q were not the case, then p would not be the case.

There is apparently no reason preventing us from applying the above notion of dependence to beliefs. A belief that *p* is dependent upon a belief that *q* if, and only if, the following conditions are satisfied: (a) if the agent did not believe that q,

[233] Sinnott-Armstrong 1999, p.183
[234]Lewis, 1973, p.563
[235]Lewis, 1973, p.562

he would not believe that p (b) if the agent did not believe that q, he would not have a reason to believe that p.

Let me consider two different situations where the same argument is used with the purpose of audience justification.

Situation 1

Suppose I'm trying to convince Chris that Tom lives in the chocolate city. Chris tells me that he has never heard about the chocolate city. 'I believe that Tom lives in York, but I know nothing about the chocolate city', he says. In order to convince Chris, I present him with the following argument:

(A1)

Premise 1: York is the chocolate city.
Premise 2: Tom lives in York.
Conclusion: Tom lives in the chocolate city.

On Sinnot-Armstrong's analysis, this is a perfectly legitimate (non question-begging) use of A1. Chris and I agreed from the outset that Tom lives in York. However, Chris did not have any belief about York being the chocolate city. So, in presenting the first premise I have just added new information. If Chris has no reason to suspect that I'm lying or that I'm wrong about York being the chocolate city, he may accept the first premise and (in conjunction with the second premise) draw the conclusion that Tom lives in the chocolate city. Now let us consider the same argument used in another situation.

Situation 2

Suppose I'm trying to convince Mary that Tom lives in the chocolate city. Mary tells me that she believes Tom lives in York. 'It cannot be the case that Tom

lives in the chocolate city. After all, Tom lives in York. Newcastle is the chocolate city', she says. In order to convince Mary, I present her with the same argument A1. But now there is a problem here. Since Mary believes that York is not the chocolate city, she will not accept the first premise and, therefore, will not accept the conclusion. For her reason to believe in the conclusion is not independent from her reason to believe in the first premise. Therefore, on Sinnot-Armstrong's account, I beg the question in using A1 to persuade Mary.

Now let me apply the above analysis to GA in order to show that Geach's use of it begs the question against the expressivist. Let me first consider g1. If 'invalid' means 'invalid according to the standard notion of validity' the expressivist will actually agree with this premise. After all, the standard notion of validity can only be applied to arguments constituted by sentences that express propositions. However, under this interpretation of 'valid' g2 becomes problematic. For Geach's reason to believe in g2, namely, the fact he believes c3, is not independent from his reason to believe g3. In other words, if Geach did not believe that moral sentences express propositions, he would not believe that the LBA is valid according to the standard sense. Thus, since Geach's purpose is audience justification and the second premise of GA assumes the negation of a proposition that the expressivist believes, *viz*., e3, his use of GA begs the question.

Geach's use of GA is similar to my use of A1 in the situation 2 above, where the audience (Mary) believed that York is not the chocolate city and was presented with a premise that contradicted a proposition that she already believed. In addition, the reason why a cognitivist who would agree with Geach believes that g2

is true is that the cognitivist believes that c3 is true. It turns out that c3 is also the reason why a cognitivist believes in the g3, the conclusion of Geach's argument. But c3 is the negation of e3, one of the fundamental expressivist claims. In fact, the expressivist does not have any independent reason to accept g1. For the reason to believe in g1 is not independent of the reason to believe in g3.

Since we have established that the use of an argument may beg the question in some cases, but not in others, GA might still be useful if presented to a non-expressivist audience. For instance, a person who believes g2, but has no belief about g1 whatsoever might be led to accept both premises and then derive the conclusion g3.

Not only the argument presented by Geach, but also the requirement on which it is based, is problematic. In the next section, I provide a definition of a question-begging requirement. My definition is inspired by Sinnot-Armstrong's analysis of question-begging arguments. Then, I argue that the Frege point falls into the category of question-begging requirements.

5.2.1 Question-begging requirement

We can now use Sinnot-Armstrong's notion (with some adjustments) of question begging in order to formulate a definition applicable to requirements. It is important to point out that the following requirement expresses two conditions for belief in a theory, not for the truth of a theory. The definition goes as follows.

> **Question-begging requirement =df**. Given a theory T (one of the candidate theories to solve a certain problem or explain certain range of phenomena), and a proposition p such that $p \in T$, using the requirement r for T is question begging if, and only if, the following holds: (a) complying with r presupposes a belief in a proposition p^* that is inconsistent with p or (b)

complying with r presupposes a belief in a proposition p^* that is inconsistent with one's reasons to believe T.

Given the above definition, the Frege point is a question-begging requirement when used against expressivism. After all, in order for the expressivist to be able to comply with the Frege point he has to believe c3. However, the expressivist believes e3, which is inconsistent with c3.

By contrast, a requirement can also be neutral. Given a theory T and proposition p such that $p \in T$, a requirement r is neutral if, and only if, the following holds: complying with r does not presuppose a belief in a proposition p^* that is inconsistent with p and complying with r does not presuppose a belief in a proposition p^*that is inconsistent with one's reasons to believe T.

One might object that the above definition of question-begging requirement is implausibly strong because it rules out the possibility of an agent having a good reason to adopt a given requirement. There may be cases where a requirement instantly precludes the defence of certain theories and we do not find it problematic. For instance, suppose one holds that a requirement that any metaphysical theory has to comply with is that it should be consistent with our best current physical theories. This seems to be a well-motivated requirement. However, it may be protested that according to my definition this requirement begs the question against astrology. After all, astrology is not consistent with our best physical theories, as these theories assume that it is false that the relative positions of the planets have a bearing on people's attitudes and behaviour.[236]

[236] I thank Dr. Neil Sinclair for calling my attention to this objection.

This objection points to a fair general worry, even though the analogy on which it is based is problematic. For it seems that the astrologists are not even considered to be in the game of explaining certain range of phenomena. That is to say, they are not considered to be genuine opponents neither by the metaphysicians nor by the physicists. But the same is not true in the metaethical debate between cognitivists and expressivists. Both parties compete to show who can provide the best account of moral discourse and judgment.

Despite the problem with the analogy, the previous objection calls our attention to the fact that there might be independently well-motivated reasons for endorsing a question-begging requirement. But my main worry here is specifically about the metaethical debate, namely, whether there are good reasons for the realist to hold that the standard notion of validity is also applicable to moral arguments and, consequently, the absolute requirement endorsed by Geach. This is certainly a genuine possibility. However, as Geach himself did not do articulate such reasons in his original formulation, the burden of providing them is on the realist side.

Some cognitivists appeal to the realistic appearance of moral discourse. This appeal has to do with its syntactical characteristics, e.g., the fact that moral sentences are formulated in the indicative mood and can appear embedded as sub-clauses of complex sentences. As the cognitivist philosopher Shafer-Landau (2003) points out:

> Cognitivists assume that moral predicates are meaningful and can be used to describe the subjects they are predicated of. We use the indicative mood when issuing moral judgements. We assert that practices, character traits, or states are vicious, morally attractive, or deserving; we state that motives

> or actions exemplify such things as goodness, generosity, benevolence. When using evaluative language, most people would find it perfectly natural to characterize their doings as instances of describing things as good or bad, or as attributing to things certain qualities—goodness or badness. Moral talk is shot through with description, attribution, and predication. This makes perfect sense if cognitivism is true. The non-cognitivist story cannot be nearly as natural or simple.[237]

Shafer-Landau's remarks are not out of place. It is true that moral discourse has a realistic appearance. This is something that can be perfectly recognised by the expressivist. Now the natural worry is about what can we conclude from the realistic shape of moral discourse. So, a central question that arises is this: does the fact that 'lying is bad' is in the indicate mood and behaves (syntactically) in the same way as 'grass is green' suffice to justify the belief that 'lying is bad' has descriptive content? One reason to reply negatively to this question is that there are cases of sentences that satisfy the above criteria (indicative mood and syntactical behavior), but nonetheless do not have descriptive content. For instance, the sentence 'Elizabeth Bennet loves Mr. Darcy' does not have descriptive content, despite its mood and its potential to occur embedded in conditional sentences.

In addition, as I have laid out in chapter two (section 2.2.), the expressivist can appeal to an argument Blackburn provides in his 1984's book. Even though this argument has been neglected, I think it makes a good point. As the reader may recall, Blackburn holds that the realistic appearance of moral discourse does not give an advantage for realism. The reason is that even if we had a purely expressive language Eex, that is, a language containing just simple evaluative devices such as

[237] Shafer-Landau 2003, p.24

'hooray' and 'boo', Eex would evolve in order to satisfy our expressive needs. The idea here is that, as sophisticated beings, we need ways of expressing complex thoughts, formulating hypothesis, negating etc. Thus, even if we had begun with Eex, this language would eventually turn into something similar to current English.[238]

I have argued that the Frege point, as formulated by Geach, is a question-begging requirement when used against an expressivist theory. Perhaps I should provide an example of a neutral requirement. My aim is to show that, unlike Frege's requirement, the example I provide does not beg the question. Consider the discussion about the problem of universals. Roughly put, there are two main competing views on that issue: realism and nominalism. The first view defends that universals (properties and relations) exist, whereas the latter denies it. One might consider the realist view to be more in line with our intuitions and that, therefore, the burden of proof is on the nominalist.

Let us suppose that the realist has a point and formulates the following requirement *r1*: any view that denies the existence of universals has to come up with an explanation of why we have the impression that universals exist. Under our definition above, this requirement is neutral. Given the nominalist view, complying with *r1* neither presupposes a belief that is inconsistent with the proposition that

[238] The main intuition in play seems to be that the evolution of the language has little (or nothing) to do with the reality that the speakers often try to describe by using the language. It is in fact unclear how a linguistic practice can serve as a guide to what there is. Blackburn's general point is then that one cannot draw an ontological conclusion from a premise about the way we use language and its syntactic features.

universals do not exist nor presupposes a belief that is inconsistent with one's reasons to believe in nominalism.

Since I have provided reasons against the idea that the original Frege-Geach problem is a knockdown objection against expressivism, one might wonder about its exact strength. Could it be completely dismissed by the expressivist? Or is there a non-question begging version of the Frege-Geach objection that still puts a thorn in the expressivist's side? I think the answer to the last question is positive, as I shall explain in the next section.

5.2.2 A neutral metaethical requirement

There is a watered-down version of the FGP that hinges on a neutral version of the Fregean requirement. I argue that this neutral requirement can be legitimately used in the metaethical debate. Let me call it FR*. FR* says that any account of moral discourse has to explain what we are up to when we use moral sentences in both embedded and unembedded linguistic constructions, as well as the validity (which is not necessarily understood in the standard sense) of arguments in which these sentences occur. FR* turns out to be a neutral requirement according to the definition above. This means that one can comply with FR* regardless of both one's conception of meaning and the metaethical theory one adopts.

I shall call dispositional expressivism the position I want to defend here. Dispositional expressivism involves two core claims: (d1) desire-like attitudes (approval, disapproval and tolerance) are dispositional in nature; (d2) moral

sentences have a wide range of uses, which include expressing attitudes (in asserted occurrences), and masking attitudes (in unasserted occurrences).

I use 'disposition' to refer to a tendency that an object or an agent has to behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (these circumstances are often called 'manifestation conditions').[239] Let us consider an intuitive example. It is often said that a porcelain mug is fragile. Its fragility is a disposition. One way of explaining this is to say that being fragile means having the disposition to break when struck. This is one possible manifestation condition of the disposition to break. Thus, if I throw the mug at the wall, the mug will manifest its disposition and break. However, as Fara (2008) notices: "an object's having a disposition to behave in a certain way in certain circumstances in no way guarantees that it will behave in that way in those circumstances".[240]

Fara's point is plausible. Suppose someone wraps up the porcelain mug with an indestructible material. Now even if I throw the mug at the wall, the mug will not manifest its disposition to break. But the claim that it will not break does not entail that the mug has lost its fragility. The mug's disposition to break has just been masked. From this, it follows that an object or agent may retain dispositions over time and yet not manifest them.

Let me consider an example more closely related to the point I want to make. It is no surprise that, throughout the years, an agent may retain a disposition

[239] The term 'behave' must be understood in a broad sense so as to encompass linguistic behaviour as well (a speech act is a type of behaviour in this sense). In asserting a moral sentence of the form 'X is bad' the agent behaves in a way that manifests his disapproval.
[240] Fara 2008, p. 843

to either like or dislike something without losing his disposition. Suppose Tom dislikes cabbage since he was first presented with it. Let us imagine that it has been ten years since Tom was presented with cabbage for the last time. Over the last ten years Tom has not manifested his dislike of cabbage simply because the manifestation conditions (the stimuli) have not been presented to him. But this does not mean Tom did not *dislike* cabbage during 10 years. It means just that his *dislike* was not manifested. Of course, he might as well have lost the disposition, which is something that any account of dispositions has to accommodate. But the important lesson to take away is that an object or agent may retain the disposition for a certain period and yet not manifest it. This is compatible with the intuitive idea that objects may acquire and lose properties throughout their existence.

I think that similar considerations apply to moral attitudes. Let me consider a different case to illustrate how this works. Suppose John disapproves of lying. To say this is to say that John has a certain attitude towards lying. But John is not constantly manifesting his attitude (either linguistically or by other means). For instance. when John is playing cards and not thinking about morality at all, he does not lose his negative attitude towards lying. Certain manifestation conditions have to be present in order for John to manifest his disapproval of lying. One situation in which John might express his disapproval is one where he witnesses someone telling a lie. Suppose that in this situation John sincerely utters 'lying is bad'. On the dispositional expressivist view, John is manifesting disapproval towards lying. And, as it is obvious, a necessary condition for an object O to manifest a disposition D at t' is that O has the disposition at t (an instant of time previous to t') and retain D

until t'. Therefore, if John manifests disapproval of lying at t', then John had the disposition to disapprove of lying at t and retained this disposition until t'. Therefore, the attitude of disapproval is dispositional in nature.

It is worth noticing that the real situation does not have to take place in order for the attitude to be manifested. Sometimes, only the thought of the object of disapproval is enough to get an agent to manifest his disposition. When the agent is profoundly outraged by a certain action even a thought experiment in which the action takes place is sufficient to trigger the agent's negative response.

5.2.3 Conditionals

Now let me consider conditional sentences. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the case in which a moral sentence occurs embedded as the antecedent of a conditional has been the focus of the discussion among the philosophers who deal with the Frege-Geach problem. Indeed, Geach's main argument is built around the idea that the expressivist cannot make sense of what is going on when we use a conditional whose antecedent is evaluative, especially when the conditional occurs as part of an argument that displays a valid form (such as *modus ponens*). I'll also place my attention on conditional of that kind as well as their inferential role. More specifically, following up on Blackburn's project of giving an account of what we are up to in asserting an evaluative conditionals (in particular, what he called *slow track quasi-realism*[241]), I consider three cases in which agents may assert an

[241] See section 2.3 for a brief explanation of the difference between slow track and fast track quasi-realism.

evaluative conditional.[242] Therefore, in order to give an account of what we are up to in asserting evaluative conditionals, we need to deal with at least three cases in which agents might use a pure evaluative conditional.

Let me consider again the evaluative conditional 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad'. In the first case, the agent who asserts the conditional has the attitude that would be manifested by the antecedent were it to occur asserted. However, the agent does not manifest disapproval by uttering this conditional. Rather, the if-clause works as a mask. To use a metaphor based on the porcelain mug case: it is as if the agent is putting his attitude of disapproval into some wrapping. In the second case, the agent is indifferent towards lying; that is to say, the agent neither approves nor disapproves of lying. In the third case, the agent approves of lying, so that he also does not have any the attitude that would otherwise be manifested were the antecedent to occur asserted. Let us have a closer look at these cases:

- Case 1: one who disapproves of lying and asserts 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad' masks one's disposition and hoorays the relation between *boo! lying* and *boo! getting your little brother to lie*.

- Case 2: one who is indifferent towards lying and asserts 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad' hoorays the relation between *boo!lying* and *boo! getting your little brother to lie*.

- Case 3: one who approves of lying and asserts 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad' supposes himself to have the attitude *boo! lying* and hoorays the relation. In supposing himself to have this attitude, the

[242] There might be more cases, but I guess these are the main ones.

agent may be using his imagination in order to investigate a possible relation between the attitude in question and whatever the consequent is about (in this case, disapproval of getting your little brother to lie).

What the three cases have in common is that in all of them the agent hoorays the relation between *boo! lying* and *boo! getting your little brother to lie*. This second order attitude is represent as H! [B! (lying) => B! (getting your little brother to lie)]. One might wonder whether it is appropriate to employ this reading, given the objections against Blackburn's higher-order account that have been presented in chapter two. But there is nothing to worry about here because I don't use Blackburn's account in order to explain the logical properties of conditionals. In other words, the account of validity I provide later does not rely on the controversial assumption that attitudes can stand in logical relations. So, the symbol '=>' is not a logical operator in my account. It is a device to represent a psychological connection between attitudes – a connection that Blackburn called *involvement* and mistakenly considered to it to have logical features. The role of '=>' will become clearer in the section 5.5.1. For now, let me put this aside for a while and consider some cases of mixed conditionals. Let us see what an agent may be up to in asserting each one of them. The first combines an evaluative sentence with an imperative. The second combines an evaluative sentence with a descriptive one. Let me consider them in turn:

EI: If lying is bad, don't lie.

ED: If lying is bad, John will not get the job.

One who asserts EI is either masking one's attitude *boo! lying* or supposing oneself to have this attitude in order to investigate its relation to the prescription expressed by the consequent. The agent may have done this in order to ponder on whether to issue the prescription *don't lie* under the supposition that he *boos! lying.* Similarly, one who asserts ED is either masking one's disapproval of lying or supposing oneself to have this attitude in order to investigate what is the relation between *boo! lying* and the belief expressed by the consequent, namely, the belief that John will not get the job.

There certainly are more uses of conditionals. But I don't have to go further into this issue and deal with all of them. Since my primary concern is to explain what we are up to in asserting pure evaluative conditionals – taking *assertion* as an speech act that requires sincerity on the part of the speaker to be successful– the cases I have covered are sufficient given the scope of this thesis. After all, the use of evaluative sentences in conditionals has been the focus of the philosophical debate around the plausibility of expressivist accounts of moral language.

Dispositional expressivism, as it complies with FR* and explains what we are up to in putting commitments into conditionals, represents an advance for the general expressivist project set out by Blackburn. In addition, it explains how an agent can retain the attitude without manifesting it. Unlike previous expressivist views, dispositional expressivism gives an account of the different cases in which the speaker asserts an evaluative conditional, namely, cases where the speaker holds the antecedent-attitude and cases where he does not hold the antecedent-attitude.

But there is still a problem a left for expressivism, namely, the logical side of the FGP that I talked about in chapter one (section 1.2). The reason is that complying with FR* does not suffice to solve an important part of the Frege-Geach problem, namely, the logical one. For even if we get clear about the role of evaluative sentences in conditionals, this does not guarantee that attitudes can stand in logical relations. That is to say, complying with FR* does not suffice to show that what is expressed by 'lying is bad' and 'if lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad' logically imply what is expressed by 'getting your little brother to lie is bad'. Failing to draw this conclusion might as well be, as Schueler and Wright defend, a moral mistake rather than a logical one.

In what follows, I provide an account of the validity of the LBA that does not rely upon the controversial assumption that attitudes can stand in logical relations. There seems to be a bit of a conflict here. After all, one might wonder how is it possible to give an account of the validity of the LBA without assuming that the attitudes expressed by its constituent sentences do not stand in logical relations. I think this is surely a legitimate concern. In the remainder of this chapter, I show how to solve this apparent conflict.

5.3 Attitudes, prescriptions and conversational implicature

In chapter two, I discussed Schueler and Wright's arguments for the idea that attitudes cannot stand in logical relations. If these arguments are sound, it is arguable that Blackburn's LA is merely a formal system with no correspondence to reality. A system that would work if attitudes were the *relata* of logical relations. Whether or not Schueler and Wright's arguments succeed is still an open question.

In this section, I argue that even if their arguments succeed in proving that attitudes do not stand in logical relations, we can still provide an account of validity within an expressivist framework. This section paves the way for this account, which is presented in the section 5.5.2.

Let us assume that attitudes cannot be the *relata* of logical relations. How can an expressivist give an account of the apparent *follow from* relation that holds between the premises and the conclusion of the little brother argument? The key move is to hold that attitudes conversationally implicate things that can stand in logical relations, namely, prescriptions. I shall call 'AP thesis' the view according to which there is a relation between moral assertions and prescriptions. Instead of logical entailment, I hold that this relation is best understood in terms of the Gricean notion of conversational implicature.

As it is well known, Paul Grice (1989) develops a theory about the dynamic of the conversations that people engage by using natural language. Roughly put, Grice holds that a conversation involves a cooperative effort in which the participants recognise a common goal, which is often related to finding out the truth about a given subject matter *m* or to get someone to change his belief about *m*. This idea gets expressed in his so-called *cooperative principle:*

> • **Cooperative principle**: make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

According to Grice, this principle can be applied across a set of conversational maxims, which include *quantity, quality, relation* and *manner*. Let us consider the category of quality:

- Supermaxim: try to make your contribution one that is true.

(Max1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
(Max2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.[243]

By examining these maxims, we get to the conclusion that Grice was clearly thinking about the conversation exchanges that take place in the descriptive domain of discourse, where the goal of the speakers is typically to find out the truth about a given subject matter, and to avoid falsity.

My argument for the AP thesis, in the standard format, goes as follows:

Premise 1. If the expression of moral attitudes don't conversationally implicate prescriptions, then the assertion of 'Lying is bad, but go ahead and lie' is not pragmatically incoherent.
Premise 2. The assertion of 'Lying is bad, but go ahead and lie' is pragmatically incoherent.
AP. The expression of moral attitudes conversationally implicate prescriptions.[244]

The phrase 'moral attitude' is used to refer to the elements of the following set of desire-like attitudes: {approval, disapproval, and tolerance}.[245] The sense of

[243] Grice 1989, p.27

[244] Here I follow a strategy that is similar to the one employed by Jack Woods in 'Expressivism and Moore's paradox' (2014). Woods uses Moore's test to argue against the parity thesis, a principle that, according to Schroeder, expressivism must rely on.

'pragmatic incoherence' I have in mind is akin to the one identified by Moore in sentences of the form 'P, but I don't believe that P' and 'Not-P, but I believe that P'. Given these characterizations, the claim I want to defend is that sentences of the form 'X is bad, but go ahead and do X' and 'X is good, but don't do X' display, if not the same, a sort of pragmatic incoherence similar to that displayed by the so-called *Moore-paradoxical sentences*. Let us consider the following cases:

(MP) It's raining, but I don't believe that it is raining.
(L) Lying is bad, but go ahead and lie.

MP is an instance of a Moore paradoxical sentence. It strikes many people as a contradiction. However, since a contradiction is a conjunction of a sentence and its negation, MP is certainly not an example of it. Contradictions are inconsistent, *i.e.,* their conjuncts cannot be simultaneously true. Thus, since the conjuncts that constitute MP can be simultaneously true, we know for a fact that no logical inconsistency is in the offing. But lack of logical inconsistency does not mean lack of any problem at all. There is still something unexplained that causes us perplexity.

A common view is that the perplexity impinged upon us stems from the fact that, in asserting MP, the speaker seems to contradict himself (in the performative sense) without uttering a contradiction.[246] This view relies on the general

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[245] Here I maintain the view – defended in the previous section – that these attitudes are dispositional in nature, that is, tendencies to behave in certain ways under certain *stimuli*.

[246] There is a vast literature where one can find different treatments of Moore's paradox. It is arguable that the fundamental point about Moore paradoxical sentences is that there are some true propositions that are not accessible, *i.e.,* they cannot be thought or believed (cf. Sorensen (1988) and Wolgast (1977)). Hintikka (1962) holds a stronger claim, namely, that the main feature of Moore paradoxical sentences is that they are necessarily unbelievable. I think we have to trace a distinction between two levels, the epistemic and the pragmatic. As Sorensen (1988:58) notices: "Moore's problem is epistemologically interesting because it reveals a way in which truths can be inaccessible". But there is also the pragmatic level which has to do with the relation between

assumption that in asserting 'it is raining' the speaker expresses the belief that it is raining. In addition, it is plausible to say that this assertion conversationally implicates that the speaker believes that it is raining. As A.P. Martinich (1980) remarks: "One of the conditions for a non-defective speech act of assertion is that the speaker must believe the propositional content of what he says. In general, a speaker who asserts that *p* conversationally implies that he believes that p".[247]

Martinich makes a fair point. After all, in asserting (MP) the speaker flouts a Gricean maxim of quality, *viz.,* according to which one shall not say what he believes to be false. Since the first conjunct expresses the speaker's belief that it is raining, the second conjunct says something that the speaker believes to be false, namely, the proposition that the speaker himself does not believe that it is raining.

The fact that MP is pragmatically incoherent strongly suggests that there is a connection between the assertion of ordinary descriptive sentences and the expression of beliefs. By the same token, if (L) is pragmatically incoherent, this should strongly suggest that that that there is a connection between the expression of disapproval towards lying and the prescription *don't lie*.

Nonetheless, with respect to (L), things are not as straightforward as with (MP). For one might well argue that there are some contexts in which (L) can be read as perfectly coherent, namely, when an exception to a rule is made due to an unusual circumstance. For instance, one who asserts (L) might mean something

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assertion and conversational implicature. What is more fundamental (in the sense of important) depends, at bottom, on the interests one has. Thus, given that my main purpose is to give a pragmatic account of the conversational exchanges within the moral domain of discourse, I will focus on the pragmatic level.

[247] Martinich 1980, p.24

along the following lines: 'In general, lying is bad, but you can go ahead and lie in this particular case'.

The above interpretation strikes me as plausible. No incoherence is in the offing if we apply the previous reading. But if the context is specified, the previous reading loses its bite:

(L') Lying is bad in the context *c,* but go ahead and lie in *c*.

One could replace *c* by any phrase describing a situation in which one might be faced with a decision about whether or not to lie. For instance, *c* might be replaced by 'getting personal gains', 'deceiving your partner', 'escaping from the traffic officer', etc. Given these examples, it is clear why the previous reading struck us as feasible, namely, because the context was not specified. Now, one who asserts (L') can be plausibly described as one who stumbles into a pragmatic incoherence.

Another objection worth considering is that there is another way of making an exception to a rule, namely, by considering the agent who is going to perform the action and break the rule special. On this view, (L) would be read as *lying is bad in general, but you (an agent who has a special status) can go ahead and lie*. Although this objection seems to cause some alarm, I think there is a simple way of overcoming it. For this reading seems to be tarred with the same brush as the previous one. After all, the case where an agent is considered special is just an instance of an unusual circumstance. Intuitively, considering that a certain agent is special goes against the universal character of moral rules. Even though there might be cases where this is a plausible thing to do, it is certainly something unusual. This intuition supports the idea that the second way of making an

exception to a rule is just an instance of the first one. Therefore, it can be rejected on the same grounds.

The fact that Moore-paradoxical sentences are incoherent suggests that there is a connection between the assertion of ordinary indicative sentences, expression of belief and the implicature that one has the corresponding belief. Analogously, the fact that (L') is incoherent suggests that there is a connection between the assertion of 'lying is bad', the attitude *boo! lying* and the imperative *don't lie.* In both cases, (MP) and (L') the way to eliminate the incoherence is to negate the second conjunct. The result is 'it is raining & I believe it' and 'lying is bad & don't lie' – two perfectly coherent conjunctions.

I have argued that (MP) involves the violation of Grice's first maxim of quality. But Grice did not formulate any maxim about moral evaluations. So, how can we hold that what is wrong with (L') can be understood in terms of implicature? The way to go is as follows. It is arguable that the assertion of (L') violates some plausible maxims that might be added to the category of maxims of quality. The reason to expand this category is that its two maxims cannot serve as guiding principles in other conversational exchanges, namely, those in which finding out the truth is not the common goal shared by the participants.

I think that the above point about adding new maxims of quality is quite general. Regardless of what metaethical framework one endorses, one can accept that we need specific principles to regulate the conversational exchanges that take place in the moral domain of discourse. I therefore suggest the following maxims to be added to the category of quality:

(Max3) Be sincere in your evaluations.

(Max4) Do not prescribe an action that you disapprove

(Max5) Do not prescribe an action you would not be willing to perform under the same circumstances.

The maxim (Max3) proposes that, as opposed to what Grice's maxims of quality might suggest, sincerity is not exclusively connected to truth. For it makes sense to say that one who disapproves of X and asserts 'X is good' is being insincere. The same goes for one who approves of X but sincerely judges that 'X is bad'. With respect to (Max4), it helps us to explain the initial puzzlement we feel when we come upon an assertion of a conjunction such as (L'). Indeed, (Max4) and (Max5) find support in common sense. People are often criticized for prescribing actions toward which they have expressed disapproval (either linguistically or non-linguistically), and praised for performing actions they have once approved. Likewise, people may also be criticised for not acting in a way they have prescribed if the same circumstances in which the prescription was issued obtain.

One might object to my argument by holding that Moore paradoxical sentences are not analogous to sentences like (L') because what is implicated by the assertion of an ordinary indicative sentence such as 'it is raining' (namely, that the speaker believes that it is raining) is not cancellable. If it is not cancellable, it is not a conversational implicature. On the other hand, what is implicated by the assertion of 'lying is bad' is cancellable provided that the context is specified or that an exception to a rule is stated.

As a matter of fact, Grice holds that all conversational implicatures are cancellable: "a putative conversational implicature that *p* is cancellable if, to the form of words the utterance of which putatively implicates that *p*, it is admissible to add *but not p*, or *I do not mean to imply that p".*[248] However, Grice's claim has been recently challenged. Weiner (2006) provides us with two ingenious examples of implicatures (both generalised and particularised) that are not cancellable.[249]

In the first example, Weiner asks us to suppose that Sarah and Alice are in a packed train. Sarah is standing and Alice is sat in a way that occupies two seats. Sarah asserts: 'I am curious as to whether it would be physically possible for you to make room for someone else to sit down'. Since in this context it is obvious that Alice is physically apt to make room, the message got across by Sarah is that *Alice should make room*. As Weiner points out, this is a conversational implicature because Sarah has violated the first maxim of quality. After all, she said something that she believes to be false. Indeed, Sarah has no curiosity on whether it would be physically possible for Alice to make room because she knows that Alice is able to make room.

Now suppose that Sarah adds: **'**not that you should make room; I'm just curious'. According to Grice, this additional sentence should work as a device to cancel the implicature that Sarah should make room. Nonetheless, rather than cancelling it, the additional sentence intensifies the implicature carried by the

[248] Grice 1989, p.44
[249] For more on the discussion about Grice's cancellability test, see Blome-Tilmann (2008) and Dahlman (2012)

original utterance. But it is still a *bona fide* implicature, even though a non-cancellable one.

In the second example, Weiner urges us to consider the song 'God Save the Queen' by the anarchist rock band *Sex Pistols*.

> God save the queen, the fascist regime
> They made you a moron, a potential H bomb
> God save the queen, she's not a human being
> and there's no future
>
> And England's dreaming, don't be told what you want
> Don't be told what you need, there's no future
> No future, no future for you
>
> God save the queen, we mean it man
> We love our queen, God saves
>
> God save the queen, 'cause tourists are money
> And our figurehead is not what she seems
> Oh God save history, God save your mad parade
> Oh Lord God have mercy, all crimes are paid
>
> Oh when there's no future, how can there be sin
> We're the flowers in the dustbin
> We're the poison in your human machine
> We're the future, your future.

When Sex Pistols sing 'God Save the queen', we know that what is actually being implicated is 'down with the queen!'. In this case, the maxim they flout is something along the following lines: 'do not express a sentiment that you do not feel'. The chorus goes on with the sentence 'we mean it, man!', which is a potential candidate to cancel the implicature carried by the utterance of 'God save the queen'. Nonetheless, as in the previous case, the implicature is not cancelled. Instead of cancelling the implicature *down with the queen!*, the utterance of *we*

mean it man "merely intensifies the hostile sentiments expressed, flouting the same maxim again".[250]

One might call the second example into question by saying that there is nothing special about the fact that the utterance of 'we mean it' does not cancel the implicature got across by the utterance of 'God save the queen!'. After all, it is arguable that 'we mean it' is always a device to reinforce an implicature, as opposed to a potential cancelling device.[251] To a certain extent, I agree with this objection. The utterance of 'we mean it' seems to work better as an intensifier rather than a cancelling device. However, if we replace 'we mean it' by 'we don't mean it', the implicature 'down with the queen' still holds. For what is at issue here is not the question whether 'we mean it' can ever be used to cancel an implicature. What is relevant for Weiner's point is that there is an implicature that is not cancellable, which goes against the Gricean view previously stated.

The lesson we learn from Weiner is that there are implicatures which are not cancellable. This provides us with grounds for rejecting the objection that (MP) and (L') are not analogous. Since cancellability is not an essential feature of implicatures, the supposed fact that what is implicated by the assertion of an ordinary declarative sentence such as 'it is raining' cannot be cancelled does not suffice to show that it is not a conversational implicature.

5.4 Vranas's Logic of Imperatives

[250] Weiner 2006, p.129
[251] I thank Dr. Christian Piller for calling my attention to this objection.

Vranas (2008) starts by justifying the need for a logic of prescriptions. He holds that there are three main reasons for the conclusion that prescriptions can have a logic: (i) prescriptions can be combined (conjoined) by sentential connectives, e.g., 'open the door *and* close the window', 'do *not* open the door', 'if it is cold, close the window' etc.; (ii) some prescriptions are inconsistent with each other: 'open the door' is inconsistent with 'do not open the door'; (iii) some prescriptions follow from (or are entailed by) others: 'Close the window*' follows from* 'open the door *and* close the window'.

A prescription is defined as an ordered pair $<S,V>$ of logically incompatible propositions, where S is the satisfaction proposition and V is the violation proposition. For instance, the prescription *kiss me* corresponds to the pair <you kiss me, you don't kiss me>. According to Vranas, there is a parallel between propositions and prescriptions: "if propositions are (as I take them to be) abstract entities, existing regardless of whether they are ever expressed, then so are prescriptions".[252]

Apart from straightforward prescriptions such as *kiss me*, there are also conditional prescriptions. Conditional prescriptions are expressed by a combination of indicative and imperative sentences: if you love me, kiss me. If we use *q!* to formally represent the prescription *kiss me* and *p* to represent the proposition that *you love me*, the previous conditional prescription can be formalized as $p \rightarrow q!$.

[252] Vranas 2008,p.5

Vranas points out that imperative logic and classical logic are not isomorphic. Whereas in classical logic we have only two semantic values (true and false), in imperative logic we have three: a prescription can be *satisfied, violated* or *avoided*.[253]

Another important distinction traced by Vranas is that between binding and non-binding prescriptions. A prescription *p!* is binding if one has reasons to act in accordance with *p!*. A prescription *p!* is non-binding if one does not have a reason to act in accordance with *p!*. A reason is defined as a fact or consideration that counts in favour of a proposition.[254] According to Vranas, the prhrase 'x is a reason for y' denotes a relational property. It is like *being a brother of*: one cannot be a brother without being a brother of someone else. Among the things that can be favoured by reasons Vranas includes actions, beliefs and propositions.

A natural question to ask at this point is about the satisfaction and violation conditions of a prescription. A prescription *p!*, which boils down to the pair <S,V>, is satisfied if its satisfaction proposition *S* is true, and is violated if its violation proposition *V* is true. The prescription *kiss me* is satisfied if the proposition that you *kiss me* is true. Every prescription has a *context* and an avoidance proposition. Nonetheless, avoidance only comes into play when we talk about conditional prescriptions.

Vranas' next step is to define the satisfaction conditions of the sentential connectives. Let us consider, first, negation. The negation of p!, which is ¬p!, is

[253] The value *avoided* can only be assumed by conditional prescriptions. Unconditional prescriptions are either satisfied or violated.
[254] Vranas 2011, p.381

satisfied if p! is violated. That is to say, if the violation proposition of p! is true. As one might expect, the satisfaction conditions of the negation of a conditional prescription are different. Given a conditional prescription such as "if he proposes, marry him", the satisfaction conditions of its negation, namely, "if he proposes, don't marry him" are as follows. It is satisfied if the negated prescription is violated, *i.e.,* if he proposes and you don't marry him; it is violated if the negated prescription satisfied, that is, if he proposes and you marry him; and it is avoided if he does not propose in the first place, *i.e.,* if the negated prescription is avoided.

The conjunction *kiss and hug me*, whose formalization is (p! ∧ q!) is satisfied if both conjuncts are satisfied, and violated if at least one of them is violated. The disjunction *kiss me or hug me* (p! v q!) is satisfied if at least one of them is satisfied, and violated if both p! and q! are violated.[255]

With respect to conditionals, Vranas tells us the following. A conditional of the form p → q! can assume one out of three values. It is satisfied if *p* is true and *q!* is satisfied. It's violated if *p* is true and *q!* is violated, and, finally, it is avoided if *p* is false. To take an example, the conditional prescription 'if you love me, kiss me' is *satisfied* if you love me and kiss me, is *violated* if you love me, but don't kiss me, and *avoided* if you don't love me in the first place (regardless of whether or not you kiss me).[256]

Finally, the bi-conditional 'marry him if, and only if, he loves you' is satisfied if he loves you and you marry him or if he does not love you and you don't marry

[255] Vranas holds that De Morgan laws apply to conjunction and disjunction of prescriptions: ¬ (p! & q!) ≡ ¬p! v ¬q! and ¬ (p! v q!) ≡ ¬p! & ¬q!.
[256] Cf. Vranas 2008, p.5

him, and is violated if he loves you and you don't marry him or he does not love you and you marry him.

Now, can we apply this logical apparatus in order to provide a solution to the logical side of the Frege-Geach problem? I think the answer is positive. In the previous section, I held that prescriptions are conversationally implicated by moral assertions, which is not tantamount to say, as Hare suggests, that moral judgments are themselves disguised prescriptions. In what follows, I show how the prescriptions conversationally implicated by the constituents of the moral modus ponens fit together and give rise to a purely prescriptive argument. To conclude, I use Vranas's logic of prescriptions in order to formalise it and apply tableau rules to prove its validity.

5.4.1 A problem for Vranas' logic?

One might wonder whether Vranas' Logic allows is to distinguish between (a) and (b):

(a) p! v q!
(b) (p v q)!

In (a), the disjunction has large scope; so, we can say it is a disjunction of prescriptions. In (b), by contrast, it is the exclamation mark that takes large scope. It then makes sense to say that (b) is a disjunctive prescription. A disjunction of prescriptions seem to be different from a disjunctive prescription. So, if Vranas' Logic does not allow us to distinguish between (a) and (b), two problems arise.[257]

[257] I thank Dr. Christian Piller for raising this objection.

The first problem has to do with inference. To see the point, let us first consider the following inference containing the deontic operator *O* (obligation).

Inference 1	Inference 2
O (p→q)	(p v q)!
Op	¬p!
Oq	q!

The inference 1 is invalid. The conclusion Oq does not follow from O (p→q) and Op because obligation does not agglomerate across the conditional. Analogously, the objection goes, the inference 2 must also be invalid because the exclamation mark does not agglomerate across disjunction either.

A way of getting round this objection is to say that '!' is not analogous to 'O'. The exclamation mark is a sign of force, not a logical operator. Thus, the symbol '!' is analogous to Frege's assertion sign '⊢'. Consider:

⊢ (p v q)

⊢ ¬p

⊢ q

The inference is still valid even though we have added the assertion sign. By the same token, Inference 2 should also be valid.

The second problem is that *p! v q!* does not look like a command, because it looks as though an embedded command loses its prescriptive force. If this is the case, only (p v q)! has prescriptive force. On this view, (i) 'get beer or get wine' is not tantamount to (ii) 'beer or wine, get it!'. Only the last one is a command. For in

the first case we have two uncommanded commands under the scope of a disjunction.

The idea of an uncommanded command strikes us as incoherent. However, following Vranas (2011), we may consider that prescriptions are, in a sense, analogous to propositions: they are abstract entities that imperative sentences express. So, there might be uncommanded prescriptions just as there are unasserted propositions. Therefore, it is not implausible to suppose that an uncommanded prescription might be embedded under the scope of a connective. We then have three levels:

- Linguistic level: indicative, imperative (grammatical moods)
- Pragmatic level: assertion, command (speech acts)
- Abstract level: proposition, prescription (abstract entities)

Therefore, against the second objection, my claim is then that (i) and (ii) are merely stylistically dissimilar, but they share the same logical and pragmatic properties. After all, the conditions under which (i) and (ii) would be satisfied/violated are the same: they would be satisfied if the listener brings at least one out of the two drinks, and violated if he does not bring any. Likewise, the same goes for the intended perlocutionary effect of (i) and (ii), which is to get the listener to bring out at least one out of two drinks for you.

The partial conclusion we get is that not all embedded contexts seem to delete the illocutionary force of imperative sentences. Another exception is the conjunction: get beer and get wine. Even though 'get beer' and 'get wine' are embedded, their prescriptive force is still there. The satisfaction conditions of 'get

beer and get wine' and 'beer and wine, get it!' are the same: the listener satisfies the conjunction if, and only if, the listener gets both drinks for the speaker.

5.5 Validity

In this section, I provide a two-level account of validity within the new expressivist framework I have developed so far. The first level concerns the psychological states that are expressed when one puts forward an argument for a moral conclusion or faces a clash of attitudes. The second level concerns the logical relations between the prescriptions that are conversationally implicated by the assertion of moral sentences. Following up on what I have laid out in section 5.3, the role of Grice's notion of conversational implicature is that it bridges the gap between the two levels and gets us from attitudes to prescriptions.

5.5.1 Psychological validity

Let me start by considering the little brother argument once again.

P1: If lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad.
P2: Lying is bad.
C: Getting little brother to lie is bad.

My claim is that this argument is both psychologically and logically valid. In this section I explain the former sense, and in the next section I explain the latter. I use the phrase 'psychological validity' to refer to the relation between the attitudes expressed by P1, P2 and C. This is not *bona* fide validity, but validity in an inverted commas sense. Before carrying out this explanation it is important to specify the reading of the first premise. In section 5.2.2, I have considered three cases in which one might assert P1. We have seen that what those cases have in common is that in

all of them the speaker expresses endorsement of the idea that the attitude *boo!lying* involves the attitude *boo!getting your little brother to lie.* So, here I adopt this second order reading, which in addition is more plausible than the others because it accommodates the intuition that a speaker may successfully assert an evaluative conditional even if the speaker does not hold any of the attitudes expressed by its parts. As regards to P2 and C, these are read in the standard expressivist way. P2 expresses *boo! lying* and the conclusion expresses *boo! getting your little brother to lie*. Using Blackburn's Eex language to symbolize the argument above we get:

P1: H! (B!p => B!q).[258]

P2: B!p.

C: B!q.

The relation between the attitudes expressed by P1, P2 and C is such that, holding P1 and P2 gives rise to a rational pressure to endorse C. However, as opposed to what happens in a valid argument, the source of rational pressure is not the truth-preserving relation that the premises and the conclusion stand in. Rather, the source of rational pressure stems from the role that attitudes play in the coordination of our actions. To steal an example from Blackburn (1988): a person who believes both that it is raining and it is not raining cannot represent the world properly. Likewise, a person who approves of taking an umbrella and disapproves of taking an umbrella cannot act in the world properly (if the person has, for

[258] In this formula, the symbol '=>' is not being treated as a logical operator, but as a device to represent a psychological connection, not a logical one. Therefore, the problem pointed out in chapter two does not arise.

instance, the goal to avoid getting wet). By the same token, a person who disapproves of lying, and approves of the combination of negative attitudes towards lying and getting your little brother to lie, and yet fails to disapprove of getting your little brother to lie, cannot act in the world properly. In Blackburn's words, this person "cannot fulfil the practical purposes for which we evaluate things".[259]

Blackburn's view is in keeping with the plausible idea that our use of language is guided by a purpose. Descriptions, prescriptions, questions etc. all have a certain goal. Typically, our goal in asserting an ordinary indicative sentence is to describe how things are. This seems to hold in most cases, even though there are exceptions. For instance, in some situations one might indirectly issue a prescription by using a declarative sentence: 'it is very warm in this room', uttered in a particular context with a particular tone of voice, may get across the prescription *open the window!* to the person who is sharing the room with you.

A concept that may be useful to shed light on the psychological conflict between attitudes that I have been talking about is that of *cognitive dissonance*. The American social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) uses the phrase 'cognitive dissonance' to denote the uncomfortable state of mind we experience when holding two or more nonfitting mental states, or even performing (as well as refraining to perform) an action that is incompatible with one of those states. According to Festinger, "two elements are dissonant if, for one reason or another,

[259] Blackburn 1984, p.195

they do not fit together. They may be inconsistent or contradictory".[260] The elements that may exemplify dissonance are what he calls *cognitions*. The word 'cognition' is used to refer to "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior". [261]

It is plausible to consider that desire-like attitudes fall within the set of elements referred by 'cognition' as they can also be taken as opinions or standpoints about people's behavior.[262] For it is reasonable to put forward the view that conflicting desire-like attitudes also display a sort of dissonance, which explains why we cannot harmonically accommodate them in our moral sensibility. For we experience a mental distress when faced with conflicting attitudes, and also seek to reduce and eliminate it.

In addition, it is arguable that the best way to judge a person's character is to look at the person's actions. As Hare (1952) suggests in the beginning of his famous book *The Language of Morals*: "If we were to ask a person 'What are his moral principles?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he *did*".[263] Paraphrasing Hare, we can say that if we were to ask a person 'How is his character like?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would also be by studying what he did.

Festinger designed a series of experiments that exhibited two important results. First, that cognitive dissonance is intrinsically motivating: "the presence of

[260] Festinger 1957, p.13
[261] Festinger 1957, p.3
[262] After all, approval, disapproval and tolerance are typically taken towards actions, even though they can also be taken toward a person's character.
[263] Hare 1952, p.1

dissonance leads to action to reduce it just as, for example, the presence of hunger leads to action to reduce the hunger".[264] Second, that people have a natural tendency to strive for consistency: they seek to reduce or eliminate the cognitive dissonance in order to achieve consistency.[265]

Let me consider an example. Suppose I am a pescatarian. I approve of eating fish because I believe that those animals are not sentient beings. It turns out that tomorrow I read a scientific paper that provides me with good reasons to think that fish are sentient beings. Since the belief on which my approval hinged on has been undermined, I tend to change my attitude towards eating fish. Be that as it may, the attitude switch is not a hair-trigger response. There is a point at which I have a dissonance between approval and disapproval of eating fish. After undergoing this psychologically uncomfortable state of mind, I might end up switching my attitude and disapproving of eating fish. I change my attitude because I can't accommodate conflicting attitudes in my moral sensibility.

We experience dissonance between desire-like attitudes, but what it takes to solve such conflict is different from what it takes to solve dissonance between beliefs. Perhaps this is an extra reason to believe that moral thoughts are not beliefs. Rational pressure to change belief comes from the fact that we can't represent the world properly if we have inconsistent beliefs. Rational pressure to change attitude comes from the fact that we can't act in the world properly if we

[264] Festinger 1957, p.18
[265] See Festinger (1957) for ways of reducing dissonance and Cooper (2007) for experiments verifying the theory of dissonance.

have conflicting attitudes as our guide. The definition of psychological 'validity' goes as follows.

> • *Psychological 'validity' =df.* A moral argument is psychologically valid iff holding the attitudes expressed by the premises, but failing to hold the attitude expressed by the conclusion, leads the agent to experience cognitive dissonance.

It turns out that the little brother argument is psychologically valid. One who holds the premises and rejects the conclusion has the following set of attitudes: {H! (B! (lying) => B! (getting your little brother to lie), B! (lying), not-B! (getting your little brother to lie). An agent with this combination of attitudes certainly experiences a clash of attitudes. The reason is that endorsing an involvement between attitudes, endorsing the antecedent attitude and failing to endorse the consequent attitude, gives rise to a cognitive dissonance.

As we have seen in the second chapter, many philosophers (e.g., Wright, Schueler and Hale) have put into question the very idea according to which attitudes can stand in logical relations. But I don't want to engage is that controversy here. My claim is that even if these philosophers are right and, therefore, it is true that desire-like attitudes do not stand in logical relations, the expressivist can still give an account of the validity of moral arguments. For, as it has been argued for in this chapter, the attitudes expressed by moral assertions conversationally implicate prescriptions – which do stand in logical relations.

5.5.2 Logical validity

Now let us turn our attention to the logical level of explanation. This is carried out by translating the little brother argument into the prescriptions conversationally implicated by each one of the attitudes expressed by its parts. The result is a prescriptive version of the little brother argument. In order to establish what prescription is conversationally implicated by each attitude we have to apply the Moorean test. Let me start with the simpler cases. P2 conversationally implicates the prescription *don't lie*. The reason for this is that it does not pass the Moorean test: 'lying is bad, but go ahead and lie' is pragmatically incoherent. The same goes for C. Since 'getting your little brother to lie is bad, but go ahead and do it' is also incoherent in the Moorean sense, C conversationally implicates the prescription *don't get your little brother to lie.*

Now the first premise. What prescription is conversationally implicated by the assertion of P1? In order to answer this, we have to first consider what prescriptions are conversationally implicated by its parts. As we have just seen, the antecedent of P1 conversationally implicates the prescription *don't lie* and the consequent of P1 conversationally implicates the prescription *don't get your little brother to lie*. Let me consider once again the second order reading inspired on Blackburn:

P1: H! (B!p => B!q)

The symbol '=>' denotes an involvement relation between attitudes, which I don't take to be a logical one. In section 2.1., we have seen that the involvement account of evaluative conditionals faces some problems. However, the problems it faces stem from the fact that Blackburn uses '=>' as a logical connective and tries

to give an account of the logical properties of evaluative conditionals, namely, that they can appear as part of valid arguments. Here, however, I neither treat '=>' as a logical connective nor assume that attitudes can stand in logical relations. Instead, I use it as a device to represent a psychological connection between attitudes, not a logical one.

Let us assume that '=>' is weakly analogous to the material condition. The only circumstance where a conditional of the form P→Q is false is where P is true and Q is false. Now, suppose we endorse an involvement claim of the form B!p => B!q. Here, in order to figure out under what circumstances H! (B!p => B!q) is breached we are not dealing with truth-values, but with the satisfaction conditions of the prescriptions implicated by the parts of the involvement claim put forward by the speaker. B!p implicates ¬p! and B!q implicates ¬q!. Thus, similarly to what happens to the material conditional P→Q, the involvement relation B!p => B!q is breached when the prescription implicated by the antecedent attitude (¬p!) is satisfied (which is analogous to P being true) and the prescription implicated by the consequent-attitude (¬q!) is violated (which is analogous to Q being false). The prescription ¬q! is violated when q! is satisfied. Now, let us check whether the conjunction of P1 and the prescriptions that would undermine the involvement relation give rise to a Moorean incoherent sentence. Let us call this conjunction S1.

(S1) If lying is bad, getting your little brother to lie is bad. But go ahead and don't lie and get your little brother to lie.

If we use *p!* for the imperative *lie* and *q!* for the imperative *get your little brother to lie*, we get p! v q!. S1 can be symbolised as follows:

(S1*) H! (B!p => B!q) ∧ (¬p! ∧ q!)

Given the above considerations, it turns out that S1 displays the same sort of conflict as Moore paradoxical sentences. After all, expressing approval of an involvement between attitudes and then commanding others to act in a way that breaches the involvement relation is incoherent. Therefore, the endorsement of the involvement relation B!(lying) => B! (getting your little brother to lie) is breached if the prescription *don't lie* is satisfied and the prescription *don`t get your little brother to lie* is violated.

As before, in order to solve the incoherence, we need to negate the second conjunct. The negation is then ¬ (¬p! ∧ q!). By the application of the De Morgan rule we get the formula p! v ¬q! – a disjunction of prescriptions: lie or don't get your little brother to lie. This is now the first premise of the prescriptive version of the LBA. Using Vranas' language to symbolize the prescriptive argument we get:

LBA – prescriptive version

P1*: p! v ¬q!

P2*: ¬p!

C*: ¬q!

Now it is easy to prove that ¬q! follows from ¬p! and p! v ¬q! by the application of the same *tableau rules* that are used in propositional logic. First, we negate the conclusion and get ¬¬q!. Then, we apply the disjunction rule to the first premise and break it open into two branches, the left one containing p! and the right one containing ¬q!. The right branch is closed because the formula ¬q! contradicts ¬¬q!. The left branch is closed because the formula p! contradicts the

second premise ¬p!. Since all branches are closed, the prescriptive version of the LBA is proven to be valid.

Explaining validity at the prescriptive level is in line with the idea that moral reasoning is, at bottom, practical reasoning. That is to say, moral reasoning is often a matter of finding out what to do. This is related to prescriptions insofar as we consider that there is a connection between finding out what to do and finding out what to prescribe. Conversational implicatures play an important role here. For we can tell people what to do by directly prescribing, by stating a norm or by making an evaluation that conversationally implicates a prescription.[266] This is a reason to think that a conversational implicature is not only an indirect way of communicating; rather, it is also an indirect way of issuing prescriptions, telling people what to do.

One might be suspicious about the fact that the little brother argument assumed a different form from what might have been expected. After all, when formulated in English, the little brother argument seemed to have the *modus ponens* form. However, as it has been argued, the later version of the LBA is not an exact translation of the evaluative sentences that composed the informal argument. Rather, the prescription version is constituted by the prescriptions conversationally implicated by these sentences. Therefore, I think that one should not worry about the fact that the prescriptive version of the LBA does not have the

[266] One shall not confuse the question whether a given agent has the authority to issue a certain prescription (either directly or indirectly), with the question whether an agent may indirectly get across a prescription by the assertion of an evaluative sentence that expresses a certain desire-like attitude. For an agent may issue (or implicate) a prescription that is not under his authority to do so. If this happens, the proper reaction would be 'you have no authority to issue/implicate this prescription' instead of 'you did not issue any prescription because you have no authority to do so'.

modus ponens form. For the prescriptive version of the LBA is not a formalisation of the contents of the evaluative sentences that compose the informal argument. The prescriptive LBA results from the prescriptions that P1, P2 and C conversationally implicate.

Lastly, it is worth noticing that there can't be a *modus ponens* purely constituted by prescriptions. Since a conditional prescription has always a descriptive antecedent, we cannot have a purely prescriptive conditional premise. Once we have this in mind, it is not actually surprising that the informal argument from P1 and P2 to C gets a different form when translated into the language of Blackburn's logic of attitudes and, subsequently, to Vranas' language of prescriptions. Therefore, the appeal to an intuition about the form of the LBA in natural language does not suffice to justify the rejection of the account I have provided in this section.

6 Chapter Six – Concluding thoughts

The goal of this short chapter is to summarise the main points of the preceding discussion. In this thesis, I defended the claim that the Frege-Geach objection – which has long been considered the most vexing problem faced by moral expressivists – is not a knockdown one. I hope to have shown that an expressivist does not necessarily have to follow the strategy indicated by Schroeder. For this matter, I have developed a framework within which it is possible to account for the validity of the little brother argument without endorsing the controversial claim that desire-like attitudes can stand in logical relations.

The main points of this thesis I take to be the following. In chapter one, before presenting the traditional formulation of the Frege-Geach problem, I provided a both historical and philosophical account of Frege's contribution to this discussion. In addition, I presented two different responses to the problem – these were respectively based on the views defended by R.M.Hare (1952, 1970) and Timothy Smiley (1996). In chapter two I provided a thorough examination of Blackburn's three different accounts of moral discourse, paying particular attention to the one presented in 'Attitudes and Contents' – the paper where Blackburn develops his logic of attitudes. The conclusion of that chapter was that Blackburn's logic of attitudes, as it is based on the implausible claim that *hooraying p* (H!p) is to be read as 'p is a goal to be realized in any ideal world', is not satisfactory. Indeed, I finished the second chapter with an objection to justify the idea that this claim is implausible.

In chapter three I argued that norm-expressivism does not provide a successful account of moral discourse mainly because it relies on a farfetched view about the relation between moral judgments and rationality judgments. In chapter four I discussed the main objections against Schroeder's version of expressivism. It turned out that Skorupski's objection about scope preservation really put a thorn in Schroeder's side.

Finally, in chapter five I argued that the traditional formulation of the Frege-Geach objection is problematic. I used Sinnot-Armstrong's notion of begging the question in order to show that Geach's argument against expressivism (under the assumption that Geach's purpose was audience justification) begs the question. Next, I formulated a non-question begging requirement (FR*) and showed how dispositional expressivism can comply with it. Following up the standard treatment of the Frege-Geach problem, I have placed my attention on accounting for evaluative conditionals and the validity of the little brother argument. In addition to an account of evaluative conditionals , I have also provided a two-level account of validity.

The account of evaluative conditionals is based on what I called 'dispositional expressivism', the view that moral attitudes are dispositional in nature and as such can be masked when the agent uses the sentence that would normally manifest the attitude in an embedded context. The two-level account of validity distinguishes between two levels of explanation: the psychological and the logical one.

Even if the account provided in chapter five is not watertight, I think that this investigation showed that there is a viable alternative for an expressivist account of

validity that does rely upon the contentious claim that desire-like attitudes can stand in logical relations. Rather, it relies upon the AP thesis and the plausible idea that we need maxims to regulate the conversational exchanges that take place in the moral domain of discourse. I hope to have made a good case for the AP thesis. Provided that desire-like attitudes implicate prescriptions – which can stand in logical relations – we can assemble the resulting prescriptions and use Vranas' logic to determine whether or not the resulting argument is valid.

The approach of this thesis was actually modest. Even if the solution to the Frege-Geach challenge provided here turns out to be successful and resist future objections, there is still a lot to be done in order to reach a fully developed expressivist picture, *e.g.,* to deal with the moral attitude problem, the problem of explaining the relationship between evaluations and norm, and also investigate in more detail what maxims can be formulated in respect to the conversational exchanges that take place in the moral domain of discourse.

Finally, engaging with the Frege-Geach problem has led me to think about a number of interrelated issues in logic and philosophy of language. Some examples include the nature of logical consequence, the question whether embedded imperatives always lose their prescriptive force, and the question whether or not the scope of the exclamation mark in a given complex prescriptive formula affects the validity of purely prescriptive arguments in which the formula occurs. These are issues that I would certainly like to investigate in future work.

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